



**St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church**  
Heliopolis, Egypt



**Commentary on  
The 1st Epistle of John**



*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
the One and Only God,  
Amen.*

*An exegetical study of the Holy Bible*

**"commentaries on the New Testament"**

**The First Epistle of St. John the Beloved**

*prepared and published by priests and servants of  
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church  
Heliopolis, Egypt*

*Translated by George Ishack, Ottawa, Canada, 2025  
All biblical quotations are taken from the New King James version of the Holy Bible*

St-Takla.org



*His Holiness Pope Tawadros II  
118<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria  
and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark*

## Prelude

### 1. The author:

As agreed by the Church's forefathers, it was authored by St. John, the Beloved, disciple of our Lord Christ. It bears similarities with St. John's gospel, in purpose and expressions such as, "love," "life" and "birth from on high."

### 2. The epistle's intended audience:

It was addressed to the regions surrounding Ephesus, as well to the entire world.

### 3. Timing of the epistle - where it was written:

It was written in Ephesus, around 90 A.D, towards the end of St. John's life, following Jerusalem's destruction, after which Christians' persecution had decreased.

### 4. The epistle's purpose and features:

a- Proving Christ's Divinity: This fights heresies which emerged during the first century, such as Docetism, which holds that Jesus Christ did not have a real physical body, but only an apparent or illusory one, and Gnosticism which teaches that the material world is evil and that salvation can be achieved through knowledge. Christianity believes that matter is not evil, that it was God's creation which humans used for their wickedness, and that Christ took a material body like all humans.

b- Belief on Christ and on eternity.

c- The new birth and sonship to God.

d- Brotherly love.

### 5. The epistle's sections:

a- Incarnation and Christ's humanity (Ch. 1)

b- Love and warnings against the anti-Christ (Ch. 2)

c- Our sonship to God and practical love (Ch. 3)

d- Love and steadfastness in God (Ch. 4)

e- Belief on the incarnate Lord (Ch. 5)



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

*An exegetical study of  
**The First Epistle of St. John the Beloved***

*Chapter 1*

***Christ is the Light of the World and the Forgiver of Sins***

**1. Witnessing for Christ - verses 1 - 4:**

***"That which was from the beginning [this refers to the eternal Christ], which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."***  
(1 John 1:1 - 4)

**Verse 1:**

***"the Word of life"*** - Christ is the Word of God - He is God's Mind and Divine wisdom. Here, He is labelled ***"the Word of life"*** because He is the source of life for the entire world.

St. John the Beloved was the last living disciple. Here, he testifies for the eternal God, Who was incarnate in the fullness of time, and Whom he saw, heard and perceived, along with the other disciples plus the multitudes. St. John was an eye witness for Christ's incarnation, teachings and redemption; moreover, he was among the closest to Christ. These introductory verses impart power to his epistle, since the source is authentic, taken from the incarnate God.

**Verse 2:**

We saw the eternal God through Christ's incarnation; He is the eternal, immortal, life. He appeared to us to redeem us, and to grant us life through His propitiating death. St. John clearly bears witness to Christ's Divinity and immortality, and His being the source of life for all mankind. He was with the Father since eternity, and He was incarnate in the fullness of time to grant eternal life to all who believe on Him. This is evangelism's aim for St. John and all the other apostles.

### **Verse 3:**

St. John declares that the purpose of his epistle and his witnessing for Christ, is that we may believe on Him - this qualifies us to fellowship with John, plus all the disciples and believers on Christ who enjoy fellowshiping with God the Father Who was known in Old Testament times, and fellowshiping with the Son Who manifested Himself in the New Testament. "Fellowshipping" means membership in His body - the Church - plus union with Him through the holy Eucharist.

### **Verse 4:**

The purpose of the gospel and fellowshiping with God is perfect joy; hence, we liberate ourselves from the authority of sin and death, and we enjoy a continuous relationship with God, both in this life and the next.

+ *Meditate on Christ's love for you each day; you will then be able to speak to Him and fellowship with Him. Christ, and only Christ, is the source of all life and joy in the world. He is close to you, and He desires to unite with you through the holy sacraments. As He indwells you, He stimulates your desire to love Him; He will embrace you, comfort your heart, and support you throughout all your endeavours.*

### **2. The enlightened life - verses 5 - 7:**

***"This is the message [Christ's teachings] which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*** (1 John 1:5 - 7)

### **Verse 5:**

In his epistle, St. John reiterates the underpinning of Christ's teachings, namely, God is the Light of the world; thus, He is perfectly pure and righteous, devoid of any darkness - hence, devoid of any sin.

### **Verse 6:**

St. John emphasizes that belief on, and fellowshiping with, Christ are insufficient - these should be substantiated by deeds. Since light and holiness cannot co-exist with darkness and sin, we cannot possibly be children of light by indulging in sinfulness. God is light, hence, His children also live in light, behaving righteously and repenting hastily when they sin.

### **Verse 7:**

Our sonship to God - the Light of the world - is evidenced through our enlightened conduct which, in turn, will be reflected in our having a pure,

loving, relationship, with those around us. Such a life can be acquired through Christ's precious blood, given in the Church's holy sacraments.

+ Each day, with the twilight of dawn, we must remember our sonship to God, the Light of the world. We should adhere to purity and repent speedily whenever we fall. We should cling to all positive deeds edifying us in the enlightened life.

### **3. God forgives repentants - verses 8 - 10:**

***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."*** (1 John 1:8 - 10)

#### **Verse 8:**

Believers are liable to falling into sin. However, through the sacrament of penance, sin is lifted from them. No one should ever boast of being sinless; such a claim is not only purely an attempt to trick oneself and others, but is also a new sin labelled "self justification" steering the person away from repentance. Persistence in non-repentance leads to perdition.

#### **Verse 9:**

The Lord's mercy and love are demonstrated through His forgiveness for all who repent. He is faithful to His promises to be merciful to all repentants. At the same time, He is just, having taken our sins to His Cross, on which He bore all our sins, and on which He died to redeem us - thus, He paid our sin debt in full. Hence, Christ's mercy and justice are united through the sacrament of penance.

#### **Verse 10:**

Those who fail to confess their sins, deprive themselves from God's forgiveness; they stray away from the truth, and implicitly claim sinlessness, thus accusing God of lying, since Christ's death on the Cross, as well God's calling to repentance, would be pointless. Such individuals would have also rejected God's word, as well as His call to repentance.

+ Hasten to repentance, through ardent prayer, self-examination, and confession; then you will enjoy God's mercy and forgiveness. God loves the meek and resists the proud.



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

*An exegetical study of*  
**The First Epistle of St. John**

Chapter 2

**Faith - Brotherly Love**

**1. Christ the Mediator - steadfastness in Christ - verses 1 - 6:**

***"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."*** (1 John 2:1 - 6)

**Verse 1:**

St. John aims to protect his children against falling into sin. However, being human and liable to sin, no one is sinless. Therefore, the postle offers us the only solution, namely, Christ the Redeemer, Who mediates for us through His blood shed on the Cross. Being holy, sinless and righteous He is ready to forgive all repentants. Christ died for us and mediates for us with His blood before the Divine justice, seeking forgiveness for all who believe in Him.

**Verse 2:**

Christ's blood is sufficient for atonement of sins for all humans who believe and repent. Being infinite, His unlimited atoning blood forgives all believers' sins everywhere.

**Verse 3:**

In Christianity, knowing God is not theoretical, rather, it is practical by keeping His comandments. When we love someone, we do what they say. In order to please God, those who love Him will gladly obey His commandments, however hard they may seem.

#### **Verse 4:**

A person who claims to know some theoretical aspects about God, while neglecting His commandments, is deceiving himself - God is not in him. On the other hand, we will surely seek to keep Christ's commandments if we partook of His body and blood.

#### **Verse 5:**

Keeping of Christ's commandments is proportional to love for Christ. Whoever keeps all of Christ's commandments shall be perfect in love. Whoever loves God shall be edified in Him, and God will indwell him.

#### **Verse 6:**

The apostle re-confirms that following Christ's example in love is proof of Christ's indwelling that person. Christ's perfect love and selflessness were manifested through His death on the Cross. Whoever loves God will keep His commandments - even unto death.

+ Renounce your sin - regardless of its appeal. Reject sin, however minor it might be, and draw closer to God with all your might. This will demonstrate your love for Him, and His mercies will envelop you.

#### **2. Brotherly love - verses 7 - 11:**

***"Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."*** (1 John 2:7 - 11)

#### **Verse 7:**

In St. John's discussion of love, he asserts that it is not a new commandment, rather, it existed since the beginning of creation. Hence, Adam loved his wife since she was a part of him, and Cain's absence of love for his brother drove him to kill Abel. Finally, in the last six of the ten commandments, we are instructed to honour, and to harm no one.

#### **Verse 8:**

"Love" may constitute a new commandment for Christians, from two perspectives:

a- more profound meanings, hence, unto the death of the Cross, and

b- the possibility of executing such love through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who indwells believers.

God is love and truth. Love is the perfect truth in God Who works through us. Love is also proof of the enlightened life which we acquire through Christ, the Light of the world, Who gave Himself up for us. Darkness - hence, sin - will dissipate through the light within us. Sin includes hate, selfishness and wrongdoings.

**Verse 9:**

Those who do not love their brethren, cannot claim to know the true light - rather, they continue to stray and live in the darkness of sin.

**Verse 10:**

Loving our brethren proves our love for, and steadfastness in, God. We become, like Him, a source of light, attracting others towards love. Consequently, we would not offend anyone, nor steer anyone away from God, since we would have rid ourselves of hate and wrongdoings.

**Verse 11:**

Whoever rejects love, in favour of selfishness and wrongdoings, will have fallen into the darkness of sin, and deviation from godliness - even if that person's thoughts seemed right to him.

+ *Beware of Satan's provocations, which may induce you to resent others' conduct, despite your awareness of their need for your love. Pray for them, and demonstrate your love. This will edify you in God, and you will enjoy His peace and blessings; others will be attracted to Him.*

**3. Commandments for parents and children - verses 12 - 14:**

***"I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him Who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."*** (1 John 2:12 - 14)

**Verse 12:**

St. John addresses applications of love in various age groups. He starts by the "**little children**" whose nature has been purified through baptism and, consequently, have developed a tendency to love God and others. By "children," the apostle could also mean the Church's children who have enjoyed the grace of baptism and forgiveness of sins.

### **Verse 13:**

The apostle addresses his message to all age groups:

a- ***"I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him Who is from the beginning..."***

This is addressed to seniors and Church elders, since they would have experienced God's love from the beginning calling them to love everyone.

b- ***"I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one..."***

Those are the young, strong, youth, whose hearts are inflamed with love, with which they vanquish Satan's wiles.

c- ***"I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father..."***

This could be addressed either to young ones or the Church's children. They are reminded that, having experienced the love of God the Father, Who gave His only begotten Son to redeem us, they should adhere to that love throughout their conduct towards others.

### **Verse 14:**

The meaning conveyed in earlier verses is accentuated here, confirming the apostle's message about love, given in his epistles and his gospel.

+ *Love is our strong weapon against Satan's snares. We should always forgive, regardless of others' wrongdoings. We should offer words and deeds of love as much as possible, and keep ourselves protected against Satan's darts.*

### **4. The world's vanity/futility - verses 15 - 17:**

***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*** (1 John 2:15 - 17)

### **Verse 15:**

St. John emphasizes God's love, which leads to loving our brethren. The primary impediment is loving the world - hence, loving, and becoming attached to, the world's material issues. Put differently, the heart will love either God or the world. For this reason, Christ commands us: ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,..."*** (Luke 10:27)

### **Verse 16:**

Loving ***"the world or the things in the world"*** is explained as follows:

- ***"the lust of the flesh"***

This encompasses all material and carnal desires which deviate from the Lord's commandments. They also include excessive preoccupation with the body's needs, in reference with Christ's first temptation on the mount, namely, transforming stones into bread after Christ had fasted for forty days.

- **"the lust of the eyes"**

This is the desire for material acquisitions, for appearances, and for boastful social stature. This is in reference to Christ's second temptation, when Satan suggested that Christ cast Himself from the temple's pinnacle, in order for angels to carry Him, and for the multitudes to praise Him.

- **"the pride of life"**

This refers to acquiring much wealth, which reflect Christ's third temptation, when Satan offered Him all the world's kingdoms.

These three, clearly, steer a person away from loving God.

**Verse 17:**

The apostle alerts us to the fact that all worldly desires are temporal, having no place in eternity. On the other hand, the love of God lasts forever. Our soul's salvation lies in following His commandments and adhering to this love.

+ *Whenever confronted with a material desire, we must remember that it is temporal. All material issues should be used to the extent that we do not become attached to any. Simultaneously, we must persevere in our prayers and reading of the holy scriptures - this will replace our love of the world with love of God, and lasting fellowship with God.*

**5. Heretics - steadfastness against them - verses 18 - 29:**

***"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the***

***Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.***" (1 John 2:18 - 29)

**Verse 18:**

**"...the last hour..."** - This refers to the time period between Christ's incarnation and His second coming. It is our last chance for repentance during our life on earth. Christ offered us this opportunity after His redeeming death on the Cross, and after proclamation of all the tenets of our Faith.

**"...antichrists..."** - This refers to all who deny Christ's Divinity, and who deceive many, by preaching principles contrary to Christ's commandments.

St. John is warning believers against heretics, who emerge during end times, signalling the approach of Christ's second coming, which our Lord had mentioned (see Matthew 24:24).

**Verse 19:**

Those heretics were Church members, and were labelled "Christians," yet they failed to have the Orthodox Faith. God never considered them "Christians" due to their deceptive thoughts and wicked hearts. Their heresies, denying Christ's Divinity, separated them from the Church and its teachings.

**Verse 20:**

Believers are encouraged to remember that, through Chrismation and the Holy Spirit indwelling them, they are guided and edified in the Orthodox Faith. The Holy Spirit will reveal to them the heretics' deceptions, guiding them to the right path and the Church's teachings.

**Verse 21:**

The apostle confirms and edifies believers' faith in Christ - Who is the Truth. Their faith is also edified in the Holy Spirit indwelling them, and through Whom the heretics' deceptions, against Christ are exposed.

**Verse 22:**

The heretics' lies are exposed. They deny God the Father, and Christ's Divinity. God the Father sent His only begotten Son to be seen by the world, since, **"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."** (John 1:18)

**Verse 23:**

Christ the Son is the image and essence of God the Father. Denying Christ's Divinity is denying the Father, and accepting Christ is accepting the Father.

**Verse 24:**

The apostle accentuates the importance of adhering to the Faith preached to, and believed by, us, believers. Adhering to the Faith, and steadfastness in God, will guard us against heresies challenging our Faith.

**Verse 25:**

We earn God's promise of eternal life through steadfastness in the Faith.

**Verse 26:**

The aim of the epistle is warning against heretics straying from the Faith.

**Verse 27:**

Believers are reminded that the Holy Spirit indwelt them through chrismation. They learned the Orthodox Faith, and they have acquired all the knowledge about Christ. Consequently, believers are in no need of new, strange, doctrines, such as those propagated by heretics. Chrismation imparts truth - rather than deceptions.

**Verses 28 & 29:**

Believers are required to remain steadfast in their faith, in order to enjoy eternal life at Christ's second coming. Proof of steadfastness in the faith of Jesus Christ is a godly, righteous, lifestyle, and doing good deeds to others.

+ *Reject all strange teachings outside the Church's, regardless how glamorous they may be, and regardless of the closeness to you of the person conveying such teachings. Consistently resort to prayers and regular sessions with your confessor, to edify your faith and to pave the way for eternal life.*



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

An exegetical study of  
**The First Epistle of St. John**

Chapter 3

**Attributes of God's Children**

1. **Purity - verses 1 - 9:**

***"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us [the world rejects our conduct], because it did not know Him [it did not believe in God]. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."*** (1 John 3:1 - 9)

**Verse 1:**

The apostle is proud of the grace of God, which was granted to us through sonship to Him. Great indeed are His love and condescension, that He should call us His children! Much significance is associated with this sonship. It gives us the right to approach God, to fellowship with Him, and to claim His protection; it also grants us permanent presence with Him in eternity. The evil world's rejection of our pure conduct is expected: the world rejected God our Father - therefore it does not accept His children.

**Verse 2:**

The apostle elevates the level of sonship's blessings, that we enjoy partially on earth, to a significant level of sublimation and greatness, namely, our sonship to, and fellowship with, God in eternity. An important fact about eternity is hereby emphasized, namely, being His children, we will be like Him in radiance; put differently, His fatherhood will bestow upon

us a high level of splendour, spirituality and glory - He is infinite, and he will grant us to the extent our finite nature can endure.

**Verse 3:**

Our adherence to our Faith and sonship to God will lead us to reject sin, and to lead a pure lifestyle, akin to our all-holy heavenly Father.

**Verse 4:**

We reject sin and adhere to a lifestyle of purity because sin constitutes a rebellion against God's commandments, and because we are God's children. This sonship is incompatible with rebellion against Him and His commandments. We consistently reject sin by continually reminding ourselves of our sonship to God.

**Verse 5:**

Christ, Who appeared in the flesh to cleanse us from our sins, is pure and sinless; we lead pure lifestyles, being His children.

**Verse 6:**

Steadfastness in our sonship to God leads us to reject sin, which is a rebellion against His commandments, because we love Him and, consequently, we do not want to incur His wrath. Anyone accepting sin rejects sonship to, and steadfastness in, God. We cannot possibly know God, or sonship to Him, by persisting in sin.

**Verse 7:**

Through His righteousness, God grants His children the grace of performing good deeds.

**Verse 8:**

Satan promulgates sin and rebellion against God. Sinning constitutes a declaration of sonship to Satan. Christ was incarnate to redeem mankind, delivering us from Satan's grip, and returning our sonship to Him.

**Verse 9:**

It follows that, all who are born of God will live in righteousness, rejecting sin, since the new nature acquired through baptism creates a tendency to be likened unto God, and to remain steadfast in His sonship. Put differently, by adhering to our sonship to God, we shun sin; nevertheless, our human weakness leads us to sin, of our own free will. Through His love for us, God will accept us upon sincere repentance.

+ *At dawn, we must remember each day our sonship to God, and draw closer to Him through prayers and good deeds. This will reinforce the barrier between us and sin, regardless of its appeal.*

## 2. Love - verses 10 - 17:

***"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one [Satan] and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"*** (1 John 3:10 - 17)

### Verse 10:

The apostle gives two indicators, characterizing people as God's, rather than Satan's, children:

- a- righteousness, purity and a godly lifestyle (see verses 1 - 9), and
- b- loving brethren, reflecting God's love, and sonship to Him.

### Verse 11:

***"....the message that you heard from the beginning..."*** - This refers to the Old Testament commandment: ***"....you shall love your neighbor as yourself..."*** (Leviticus 19:18) This also refers to an essential tenet of Christianity as given by our Lord in Matthew 22:39. The apostle thus asserts that loving our brethren is proof of our sonship to God.

### Verse 12:

The apostle gives an example of the lack of love, namely, Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, who had obeyed God and offered an acceptable animal sacrifice, following his father's example. Cain's heart, filled with wickedness, led him to murder Abel. Thus, Cain's hatred towards his brother identifies/identified him as Satan's son.

### Verse 13:

Being under Satan's control, the evil world hates God's children, filled with love - since their love exposes the world's wickedness.

### Verse 14:

The wages of sin - selfishness and hatred - is death; our forefathers had thus been sentenced to death. However, having believed on Christ, and acquired a new nature leading us to love others, we have been absolved

from eternal death, and have acquired the new life in Christ. The death sentence remains applicable to all who reject loving others.

**Verse 15:**

Anger, followed by hatred, engender the sin of murder. Those who insist on hating others have sentenced themselves to eternal perdition.

**Verse 16:**

Christ presents to us the example of perfect love. He laid down His life, and died, for us, on the Cross. We follow His example by believing on His love and redemption. We would thus be prepared to sacrifice ourselves, unto death, for those whom we love.

**Verse 17:**

***"...whoever has this world's goods..."*** - This refers to those whose wealth permits them to help others. The apostle gives the example of a wealthy person who ***"sees his brother in need"*** - refusing to help is an indication that the love of God does not abide in him.

+ *Love proves your sonship to God. Be sensitized to the needs of those around you - especially if they need simply someone to talk to, or a smile, or words of encouragement. Why hold back from them, when God's mercies and blessings abound??*

**3. Obeying the commandments - verses 18 - 24:**

***"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts [our conscience] before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."*** (1 John 3:18 - 24)

**Verse 18:**

In addition to purity and love, St. John points out a third attribute, namely, practical obedience of the commandments since faith and theoretical knowledge, without deeds, are insufficient, as St. James said, ***"Even the demons believe--and tremble!"*** (James 2:19)

**Verse 19:**

Practical love confirms our sonship to God - hence, our sonship to the Truth.

**Verse 20:**

If, by soul-searching, we identify a weakness in our love for others, then our omniscient God will accept our repentance and help us return to Him, and to love others.

**Verse 21:**

Having a clear conscience with respect to loving others, imparts to us comfort and confidence that we can draw upon God's grace to foster our growth in such love.

**Verse 22:**

God is pleased with His children's petitions - those who obey His commandments and do good deeds. He grants them blessings and greater power to help their spiritual growth and their love for others.

**Verse 23:**

St. John sums up Christ's commandments:

- a- Belief on Christ and the ensuing love for Him.
- b- Loving others as Christ commanded several times (see John 13:34).

**Verse 24:**

Obedying God's commandments and demonstrating practical love towards others, edifies us in God and in His love, and edifies God's work in us. Evidence of the latter, in turn, is shown through the work of the Holy Spirit, Who grants us fruit such as long-suffering, tenderness and love towards others....(see Galatians 5:22).

+ May you have lasting love towards others, even if you were experiencing hardships or stressful circumstances, and even if they wronged you. Your love should not wane, and you should not quench the Holy Spirit indwelling you - He consistently calls you to help them.



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

An exegetical study of  
**The First Epistle of St. John**

Chapter 4

**Discernment - Loving Others**

1. **The Antichrist - verses 1 - 6:**

***"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."***

(1 John 4:1 - 6)

**Verse 1:**

In addition to his discourse about love, St. John draws our attention to an equally significant issue, namely, discernment between Church teachings and insidious heresies promulgated by heretics. He attaches the label "**Antichrist**" to such heretics who deceive many.

**Verses 2 & 3:**

The apostle warns against propagation of the most significant heresy, namely, denial of Christ's Divinity and incarnation, which is a fundamental tenet of our Faith. Heretics are driven by Satan who resists God. Christ had foretold the emergence of such false prophets (see Matthew 24:4 & 5). Their emergence dates back to the apostolic age, and they continue to spread their heresies throughout the world; some of them introduce themselves to unsuspecting believers as "Church servants." Thus, believers must always ensure that they follow Church teachers who believe in Christ's Divinity and incarnation, and who adhere to all the Church's teachings.

#### **Verse 4:**

The apostle encourages his children to remain steadfast in their Faith, since the Spirit of God indwelling them will vanquish Satan and all his heresies. God is more powerful than Satan, and He will overcome all heresies regardless of their magnitude or intensity.

#### **Verse 5:**

Heretics harbour the world's wicked principles. They seek wealth, fame and all the world's carnal desires. They will be followed by all who seek similar desires, characterized by loving the world's lusts.

#### **Verse 6:**

On the other hand, apostles such as St. John, propagate true, godly, teachings. Anyone seeking a pure, godly, lifestyle, will adhere to the apostles' teachings - hence, the Church's. By submitting to the Church's teachings, received from Christ through the apostles, we can discern between false heresies and true teachings.

+ Loving others does not imply, in any way, relaxation of our Faith. Regardless of their apparent appeal, we should reject any, and all, strange doctrines, while steadfastly adhering to our Church and its teachings. The heretics' evil boldness should never introduce doubts concerning our Faith. Our Church will remain stoic and unwavering until Christ's second coming, and subsequent rejoicing of the Church's children in eternity.

#### **2. Love for others - verses 7 - 11:**

***"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*** (1 John 4:7 - 11)

#### **Verses 7 & 8:**

A reborn person through Baptism, acquires a new nature, tending to be likened unto God; the Holy Spirit then indwells that person through Chrismation. Consequently, that person will know God - Who is love - and loving others then becomes easy. Put differently, loving others proves our love for God - the converse is true: hatred towards others proves hatred towards God.

### **Verse 9 & 10:**

God manifested His love for mankind by sending His only begotten Son to die for us, thus atoning our sins, and enabling us to live through Him. No love is greater than God's love for us: He died for us so that we may live through, and in, Him. Therefore, "love" is God's initiative towards us, not the other way around. However, we learn love from God, so that we may love Him. God loved us, and replaced our death sentence with a new life, namely, a life of love.

### **Verse 11:**

A positive response to God's love induces us to love others. This is a necessary and spontaneous reaction.

+ *Be aware that Satan will create problems, provoking you to wrong and hate others - even for a short while. This will separate you from God - the true love. Thus, be wary of Satan, and be strong by finding excuses for others, and pitying them; you will finally love them for God's sake - Who loved you first.*

### **3. Steadfastness in loving God and associated blessings - verses 12 - 21:**

***"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this [steadfastness in God]: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world [as Christ lived in this world]. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."*** (1 John 4:12 - 21)

### **Verse 12:**

God is a limitless Spirit, transcending all human capabilities to see Him, due to His radiant and splendid greatness. However, we can feel and see Him, by expunging all evil from our hearts, and loving one another.

Increasing our love for others, edifies God within us, because then, His love would be perfected within us. Sensing God's presence is proportional to our love for others.

**Verse 13:**

The Holy Spirit indwelling us moves us to love others. He edifies God within us when we respond to Him positively. Put differently, by loving others, we proclaim the Holy Spirit indwelling us, and submission to God.

**Verse 14:**

The most sublime expression of love is that expended on the Cross for our salvation. That was the essence of the apostles' evangelizing throughout the world.

**Verses 15 & 16:**

All who believe in the incarnate Christ, professing their Faith, do believe also in God's love expended on the Cross; their Faith and positive response to God's love please God, and edifies Him within them. Practical profession of the Faith is expressed through loving others. Growth in the knowledge of God is fostered by consistent application of this Faith in a person's life.

**Verse 17:**

Steadfastness in love implies constant growth. In turn, this imparts tranquility and confidence in Christ's loving forgiveness, such that the approach of judgment day would not cause any anguish. A lifestyle of love towards others, following Christ's example, would be the norm.

**Verse 18:**

**"Fear"** in this context refers to the fear of losing material possessions - for those attached to such possessions, as Tertullian had pointed out. Loving God leads to being unattached to material possessions and, consequently, unmindful of losing them. Saints and martyrs who sacrificed everything for the sake of God's love had experienced the perfect love which, in turn, had rendered them fearless with respect to anything worldly. Heartfelt anguish, psychological perturbation, and feelings of dejection, follow fear of losing possessions.

**"Fear"** may also refer to fear of God's punishment for our sins. Ridding oneself of such fear may be achieved through perfect love of God - hence, the perfect example set by saints, such as St. Anthony. On the other hand, we can mitigate such fear through rapid repentance, fasting and prayer. Persistence of such fear, indicates a person's reluctance to steer clear of those sins in which he had fallen, plus a lack of love of God.

**Verse 19:**

God is the source of love for the entire world, manifested through His death on the Cross for our sake; His death draws us closer to Him and motivates us to love Him. Our love for God is our response to His initiative to love us. He came to us through His incarnation, He offered His love on the Cross, and He offers His love daily on the altar through the holy sacrament of Eucharist.

**Verses 20 & 21:**

the apostle reaffirms that loving our brethren is proof of our love for God, according to Christ's commandment (see Matthew 22:35 - 39). Subsequently, he reasons that it is impossible to claim loving God while hating our brethren. Hence, "**....he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?....he who loves God must love his brother also.**"

+ Be sympathetic towards others; be quick to forgive whenever wronged - remember that God has forgiven you throughout your past life. Remember that those who err are weak, and are in need of prayers and supporting love.



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

*An exegetical study of  
**The First Epistle of St. John***

*Chapter 5*

***Christ Guides Us to Eternal Life***

**1. Belief on Christ - verses 1 - 5:**

***"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"*** (1 John 5:1 - 5)

**Verse 1:**

Anyone who believes on the incarnate Christ, was baptized, and demonstrates his faith practically by loving others, merits the label "child of God." Being a son of God, that person must love God, his Father, and, consequently, His Son, Jesus Christ. He believes on Him out of love, as proof of sonship to God, rather than solely out of fear, akin to demons.

**Verse 2:**

By loving Christ, the Head of the Church, we would naturally, love our brethren, hence, His body. Our love for God, our Father, confirms that our love for our brethren is genuine, sincere, spiritual love, rather than a mere, emotional, temporary love. Loving Christ, and His Father, induces us to keep, and adhere to, His commandments - the most important of which is our love for others (see Matthew 22:39).

**Verse 3:**

Keeping God's commandments, and proof of our love for Him, are summed up in loving others. Executing such a commandment is not difficult, since Christ offered Himself as an example for us to follow: He gave up His life on the Cross and, through the grace of His Holy Spirit, He granted us to love others, such that we pity even those who wrong and mistreat us.

### **Verses 4 & 5:**

Our faith in Christ bestowed upon us His sonship through baptism. Thus we acquired a new nature that vanquishes the world's evil, through love to all - even to those who mistreat us.

+ Let not others' wrong-doings perturb you; rather, seek God's help, and rest assured that He will support you, and fill your heart with compassion towards them. In this way, your love will vanquish evil, you will win salvation, and you will attract them towards Christ.

### **2. Witnessing for Christ - verses 6 - 10:**

***"This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in Himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son."*** (1 John 5:6 - 10)

### **Verse 6:**

Christ's witness - hence His salvation that He offered us - is through belief on His blood, shed on the Cross; we acquire its effect on us through baptism. Christ did not come solely with water, akin to John's or any other baptisms - like baptizing Jews who entered Judaism - rather, He came with baptism's water plus His blood on the Cross. The Holy Spirit witnesses for Christ, when He grants us salvation, that was fulfilled on the Cross, through the Church's holy sacraments. He is the Truth granted to mankind through the Church.

When Christ was pierced on the Cross, blood and water came out of His side, proving His humanity - He was the incarnate Son of God. This rebuts first century heresies, such as Docetism, which rejected Christ's humanity.

### **Verse 7:**

The three Hypostases testify in heaven for Christ's salvation offered to mankind - hence, the Father, the Son (thr Word), and the Holy Spirit, as they appeared during Christ's baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. This is among the clearest verses confirming the Holy Trinity.

### **Verse 8:**

Salvation's fulfillment on the Cross was witnessed by Three: the human spirit, united with Divinity, that Christ yielded at His death, plus the blood and water which came from His side when He was pierced. The Three are One - hence, Christ, Who died to redeem us. We acquire the Three during the Sacrament of Baptism: at baptism, the Holy Spirit takes the salvation that Christ's blood fulfilled on the Cross, and sanctifies the baptism's water, giving us birth with a new nature.

### **Verse 9:**

Mosaic law stipulates: ***"...by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."*** (Deuteronomy 19:15) Thus, as mentioned in Verse 8, we should accept God's testimony witnessed by His Three Hypostases, at Christ's baptism, as well as at His death on the Cross.

### **Verse 10:**

***"...the witness in Himself"*** - This refers to the Holy Spirit's work in a person, calling him to believe on Christ.

The Holy Spirit calls all mankind to believe on Christ. Following their belief and baptism, He indwells them through Chrismation, and edifies their faith. All who reject the Holy Spirit - hence, God's testimony - and fail to believe on Christ, are accusing God of lying.

+ *The Holy Spirit calls you to believe in God throughout your daily life. Do not be perturbed, rather, believe God, and rely on Him - then you will enjoy His blessings throughout your life.*

### **3. Eternal life - verses 11 - 21:**

***"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death. We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been***

***born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*** (1 John 5:11 - 21)

**Verse 11:**

Our attainment of eternal life is the goal of God's testimony, and His Three Hypostases, imparted to us through the Church's holy sacraments. We experience this eternal life partially on earth through Christ's work in us. It is perfected in heaven when we unite with Him and enjoy His fellowship. Eternal life is the salvation that we acquire through Christ.

**Verse 12:**

Eternal life is awarded to all who believe on, and live for, Christ the Son. There is no place in the kingdom of heaven for anyone rejecting Christ and life for Him.

**Verse 13:**

The purpose of this message is belief in Christ, and being edified in Him, in order to attain the eternal life prepared for us.

**Verses 14 & 15:**

Our faith in Christ supports us, thus enabling us to petition God for anything, trusting that He will respond. Such petitions, though, must be in accordance with His will and our salvation, that leads us to eternity.

**Verse 16:**

***"...sin not leading to death.."*** - This refers to any sin, regardless of its seriousness, provided the person is prepared to repent. We pray for that person's repentance, forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. However, prayers are useless for whoever insists on non-repentance from a ***"sin leading to death."*** The apostle did not instruct us to refrain from praying for that person, rather, he left it entirely up to him: there may be some imperatives forcing his persistence, which may be eliminated through prayer - or, he may choose to persist, regardless. In any case, we will never know, until after the person's demise, whether there had been persistence in the sinful path; examples include the Church's refusal to perform funeral rites for someone who had committed suicide, or for someone who had persisted in denying Christ. For this very reason, we continue to pray for repentance of all living sinners.

**Verse 17:**

**"Unrighteousness"** - According to the Greek version, this refers to "transgressing others' rights."

**"Sin"** - This refers to "transgressing the word of God."

All wrongdoings to others constitute weakness of love. However, this may be rectified through repentance, leading to deliverance from eternal perdition.

**Verse 18:**

Acquiring the new nature through baptism, leads to a lifestyle befitting a child of God, who loves others, and is shielded against sinfulness, and Satan's wiles.

**Verse 19:**

All-loving believers in Christ, living within the Church's fold, enjoy their sonship to, and fellowship with, God. Their conduct differs from the world's children, living in sin, and labouring under Satan's control.

**Verse 20:**

Christ's incarnation aims to change our nature through the Sacrament of Baptism, which leads to enlightenment of our inner perception. We would thus know the truth: belief on Christ, loving Him, and loving others. This, in turn, secures our life in eternity with Christ.

**Verse 21:**

The apostle reminds us of our sonship to God, leading us to a lifestyle of faith in, and love for, Him. This, in turn, will steer us away from idolatry, namely, adherence to the world's various lures such as money, power and carnal desires. Satan and his wiles are thus kept at bay.

+ *Do not lose sight of your goal amidst life's preoccupations. Your sole aim is eternity. Your path to eternity is loving Christ by loving others and remaining within the Church's fold.*

