

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 4:20-21

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read 1Jn 4:7-12

Someone else read vv13-21

Someone read v.20.

“If someone says..”

There are 4 “conditional” IF ;. THEN phrases in Greek

1. First Class – the IF clause is assumed to be true
 - a. Col 3:1
2. Second Class – the IF clause is assumed to be false
 - a. Luk 7:39
3. Third Class – the IF clause is probably true, but it is uncertain
 - a. 1Cor 13:2; Heb 6:3
4. Fourth Class – the IF clause is possibly true, but it is also uncertain
 - a. 1Pet 3:14

So, which class do you think is meant here?

#3 – The author supposes some degree of probability, but it is not certain.

Someone read v1:6 and someone else read v2:4.

1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we ⁽²¹⁾ lie and ⁽²²⁾ do not practice the truth;

So, what are we when we walk in darkness?

2:4 The one who says, "⁽¹⁰⁾ I have come to ⁽¹¹⁾ know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a ⁽¹²⁾ liar, and ⁽¹³⁾ the truth is not in him;

What are we when we fail to keep His Commandments?

And what are we when we hate our brother?

Someone read GJn 8:44. Who is the father of lies, and speaks his native tongue when he lies?

Satan. So, in whose realm are we dwelling when we do these things?

In the Greek, it literally reads: “If one says ‘I love God,’ and the brother he hates...”

‘God’ and ‘the brother’ are juxtaposed. Why do you think John expresses it this way?

Contrast of these two emotions, and suggesting the same person cannot be the object of both at the same time.

Love and hatred are mutually exclusive; there is no middle ground. The love in view here is constructive – it seeks to build up the beloved. Hatred by its nature is destructive – it seeks to destroy its object.

BTW, do you have to be familiar with the Greek to follow what John means?

The word “hates” is present tense. Why is this significant?

Continuing attitude, not merely a passing moment of hatred.

We always reveal what we are by what we do. In this case, John is unflinching in his conclusion: “He is a liar.” Literally, “A liar he is.” (*pseustēs estin*) John does not mean a matter of making a false assertion; he insists that it is a falseness of character. The one who hates his brother is either morally blind or a hypocrite, in light of the fact that he professes to love God.

Now, who do you think John was talking about, here?

John’s target is the heretics and their spurious claims.

“For...”

What’s the “for” there for?

It introduces John’s reason for the stern verdict: He is a liar. What does he say?

John says “If you can’t love the brother who is visible to you, you cannot love God who is invisible. “The brother” is probably a member of his local congregation; it points to someone with whom one has a personal connection.

The present tense verb “has seen” (not ‘can see’) suggests this is a brother that we have had frequent visual contact with. As John Stott says: “It is obviously easier to love and

serve a visible man than an invisible God, and if we fail in the easier task, it is absurd to claim success in the harder.”

“cannot love God” vs “how can he love God”

These two translations arise from textual differences between the MSS used for the KJV and the NKJV and the modern English translations. Remember, the older Greek MSS are more accurate, and the KJV was based on more recent Greek texts that were not available at the time it was made. In the late 1900’s, older Greek MSS were discovered which were closer to the original Greek text.

But the meaning is essentially the same either way. Love must be displayed in the here and now, if it is love at all.

Someone please read v21.

Who gave the commandment that we should love God, our neighbor, and our brother (“one another”)?

The Father (Mosaic Law, quoted by Jesus – Matt 22:37-39) and Jesus (John 13:34)

Does the precise identity matter?

My view is that it does not. If it had been, John was perfectly capable of drawing any necessary distinction. “Clearly, John feels no need to make a rigid determination of the source of this commandment” – D. Edmond Hiebert

For something similar, see 1 Jn 2:10-11. In Chapter 2, the focus is primarily upward, and here it is primarily outward. These two aspects cannot be separated. John thus refutes the heretics’ claim to love God while hating their brother.

The verb ‘love’ is in the present tense – why?

To signify an ongoing obligation.

I like John’s bluntness in this passage. He lays it right on the line. Look, he says, where does love come from? Don’t forget, we love because he first loved us. That is where it comes from. If you know the love of God, if you know how fully he accepts you even when you are as stinky, nasty, and as miserable as you are, yet he takes you, forgives you, and deals with you; then you know what love is. You can love, because you have been loved. “We love, because he first loved us.” It is not, “We love him.” That is not what it says. It says, “We love -- anyone -- because he first loved us.”

Then John really takes the gloves off. He says, “Look, don’t be self-deceived about this!” It is very easy to kid yourself. But if you can say, “I love God,” and yet you hate your brother, you’re kidding yourself. You’re a liar. How can you love God, whom you can’t see at all, and not love

your brother, when you can see his needs, his problems, and see what love can do in his life? God doesn't need your love, but your brother does. Also, the commandment of God, always based upon his availability to make it possible, is, "that he who loves God should love his brother also." If we have the life of God, we can show the love of God.

One of the most important things I've learned in Biblical counseling is to see how I sought to scratch and fight like a wildcat to say that I cannot love my wife when God says that I can. We all want to find an excuse for lovelessness. It is not that we cannot love; it is that we *will* not. Is that not true? Then let us face it. John deals bluntly and honestly with us. If you really cannot, then you are not a Christian, he says. You are a liar when you say you love God. But if you love him, and you know you do, then you can love your brother -- and you must!