Introduction

Welcome to a study of 1 John, a most relevant and needed epistle in the life of the church today. With eyes wide open and ears that are acutely attentive, we can’t help but give ruminative notice to the world around us that holds quite the potential to grip a life with doubt, fear, and uncertainty.

* The great and rapid sin of decaying morality engulfing most of mankind
* The overwhelming rise in false preachers, false teachers, self-proclaimed prophets, and apostasy (*the embracing of their false theology and doctrine*), among professing believers
* The blasphemous yawning in the face of God toward His law, testimonies, statutes/precepts, commandments, and judgements of the Lord.\*
* Heightened self-awareness, self-preoccupation, self-created wills for self-awarding ambitions
* Nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, ruler against ruler, people against people, family against family, believer against believer
* The growing and barbaric persecution and unprecedented suffering of Christians
* Calling evil good and good evil – normalizing sin and criminalizing righteousness
* Cradling a temperament of tolerance when the Truth (the Word of God) is being compromised for the sake of comfort and affluence
* Wrongfully handling the Word of God – lack of love for and study of God’s Word - exchanging truth for ‘new revelations’ and ‘personal interpretations’
* Increase of Gnosticism, Pantheism, Universalism, Post-Modernism, Emerging Church philosophies (undermining and dismissing Scriptural clarity and certainty), and Henotheism among professing Christians
* The clandestinely calloused heart of self-deceived hypocrites who profess Christ, yet, live lukewarm
* The lack of assurance of salvation – *many* live professing Christ; not possessing Christ *(Matt.7:21-23)*

\**Psalm 19:7-9 -the Scripture is called the law, testimony, statute, commandment, fear and judgment. All are synonyms for the Scripture speaking of its characteristics; it is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true.* [*Gty.org*](https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-19/the-sufficiency-of-scripture-part-2)

**Why do we have the book of 1st John?**

As a loving and father-like pastor with respected apostolic (authoritative) leadership among the 7 churches of Asia Minor, and with the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, John wrote his 1st epistle to address the issues you just read in the above bulleted list. You see, John’s world *then* was much like our world *today*. He lived in a culture full of idolatry and growing beliefs and practices that were impacting the early Christians behaviors that were profoundly at odds with the truth of the Gospel of Christ. There were false religious teachings being spread by false prophets among the church in a pagan culture dominated with gods and goddesses. And John, as we will discover throughout the study of this epistle, simply was not a man to turn a blinds eye, throw out the statement, “It’s not my place to judge,” or “we all need to just come together and accept each other’s beliefs peacefully” and pray that somehow, someway, at some point the heresy would stop. He was much wiser than that.

John is now around 80+ years of age, and is involved in a lively writing ministry, under the empowering of the Holy

Spirit. He was the last apostle left who was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. As Paul and the

other apostles had already departed the earth and entered heaven, John was now left to write some of the remaining

words of God before the biblical canon was closed. For five years, he wrote the Gospel of John, the epistles of John

and the Revelation.

If there was only one word that described this apostle’s life during and after Christ’s earthly ministry, it would be this – TRUTH. John devoured truth. He longed for truth. To know truth. To understand truth and to walk in truth. And that is what we find in his epistles. John wrote truth – spoke truth – wielded truth – loved truth - and practiced truth until that glorious day when he saw his Jesus again face-to-face in heaven. What a brave, fatherly, truth-embracing, compassionate and dogmatic apostle of love and truth we find in John!

Because John was certain of the Truth, his certainty bled into every page, paragraph, sentence, word and thought as he wrote his letters. There is nothing ambiguous in John’s writing. Nothing vague and nothing left in the grey. He wrote with black and white distinctions. He wrote with clarity and never left his reader to wonder ‘what did he mean by that.” His readers knew his apostolic authority. John was a true leader who rightly handled the truth, taught the truth, preached the truth, practiced the truth, and made known *most certainly* the truth of Jesus Christ. And as regenerated born again believers of Jesus Christ, we, too, can live absolutely certain in an uncertain world.

* + *Who* were to be the recipients of his epistles? He wrote to the seven early Christian churches in Asia Minor. Jews and Gentiles were of these churches and they all faced trials and on-going persecution and challenges to their faith in Christ. John exercised apostolic leadership among them all. He wrote to those among the churches of Asia Minor\*, primarily the Jews and Gentiles of Ephesus, but to all professors of faith in Christ in all the churches of that region. The church in Ephesus was the ‘mother church” and the other 6 churches in Asia Minor (Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Pergamum, Sardis, Thyatira - modern day Turkey) were started in neighboring cities because of Apostle Paul pouring nearly 3-years of ministry into the church of Ephesus.
  + *Where* did John write? He was in the city of Ephesus as he wrote his three epistles; his physical personal residence. It was a thriving place for commerce for people from all over the world and a growing anti-Christian Roman empire. It was the center of the cult worship of Artemis (fertility and life goddess beginning in 1000 BC). The worship of Nero and Domitian and many other pagan deities was also enforced throughout the Roman empire.

Ephesus During John’s Writing Ministry – VIEW the Video of Ephesus Below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpJ-IWw5_Mc>

* + *When was the 1st epistle of John written?* It was around 93-94AD. He had already written the Gospel of John 90-92AD and it was before he was exiled to the island of Patmos in 95AD (under Domitian’s reign) when he wrote the Revelation.
  + *Why* did John write? The answer to that is what we will explore and discover together as we meet each week to study this powerful epistle verse by verse. And the *why* is what will truly change our life.

John was a true leader who rightly handled the truth, taught the truth, preached the truth, practiced the truth, and *made known* most certainly the truth of Jesus Christ. And as regenerated born again believers of Jesus Christ, we, too, can live absolutely certain in an uncertain world.

*\*For more on the churches of Asia Minor, continue watching the series by Our Daily Bread in YouTube*

**Our Daily Bread – The 7 Churches of Revelation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPRxbvcu7Bw&list=PLPOUA7GLxXIG-Cc84xHWAB9dw25R2Og3Y>

**Home Assignment**

* **Read all of 1 John** – underscore or highlight each time you come to the word “know” throughout the epistles. Count the usage of that one word and then write that number here \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is the theme of this epistle…that you may KNOW the truth. To know truth from error with certainty.
* View the remaining 6 videos of the churches of Asia Minor
* Read and ponder on these verses: Philippians 1:8-10. Now, write in the blank the missing words of verse 9 and 10.

And this I pray, that your love [for God and for one another] may abound [grow] still more and more in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [true] knowledge and \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, [knowing good from evil; knowing truth from error] so that you may approve [with established certainty; no doubting] the things that are excellent [of God], in order to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [non-hypocritical] and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [holy, pure] until the day of Christ;

Based on that Scripture, what is Paul encouraging?

What Christian characteristics are to be a distinguishing mark of our life if we desire to live non-hypocritical and pure?

*Real* knowledge is obtained how?

All *discernment* includes what?

* Now read and ponder Hebrews 5:14 and write it in the space below.

What does your translation say?... “practice” or “constant use” or “have been trained?” Underline that word because it is a key word in that verse. It directs us to the ‘action’ we’re to demonstrate. If you have the English Standard Version, it reads in the way it was really expressing in its original Greek –

*“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”*

The use of the word “powers” is giving glory to Who deserves the glory when we do discern. It’s like I mentioned in class, as this discernment is sharpened in your life, as you mature in the faith, you may not always know ‘what’ it is that isn’t right, but you the Powers of discernment are at work and that is the presence of the Holy Spirit working through the truth – the truth of Scripture. If we aren’t eating solid food, still milk drinkers, then we position ourselves to be bewitched by false teaching. Paul is the only apostle who ever used that word – bewitched – and he used it to the Galatians because they were beginning to fall for disastrous self-exalting, self-promoting, idolatrous heresies! Remember, the definition we discussed in class for ‘idolatry’ is this:

Man attempting to make God in his image.

Man attempting to make God a god on his terms.

*“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

* **Before you come to class next Wednesday** -
* Spend time in casual reading as many times as you can in 1 John. Not in study, but ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes that you may see wonderful things in His Word, ( Psalm 119:18 ) as you simply read to enjoy His presence.
* Spend time evaluating and examining your own life of discernment. True discernment only comes when the heart and mind are saturated with the truth. It’s just like the old familiar analogy – when you want to train someone to recognize a counterfeit bill, you continually have the real and authentic bill in front of them. Their discernment is trained by constant practice to distinguish a true bill from a lie – a fake bill. Place this analogy into the instructions of Philippians 1:9-10 and Hebrews 5:14 and you begin to understand why Paul referred to this as ‘powers’ of discernment .. it is a glorious and wonderful thing when the Holy Spirit opens our minds to discern truth from error!

**And that was why John wrote his 1st epistle.**