

Bible Survey, part 17 – The New Testament
The Epistles – 1, 2 & 3 John
“Purifying Ourselves”

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1, 2 & 3 John all written c. A.D. 85-90

1 John:

- Written to the churches in and around Ephesus
- Hard to outline
- The presenting problem of 1 John was a **“theological problem”**

“*Docetists*” (Greek: *Dokeo* = “to seem”) taught that Jesus did not have a real human body – he only **“seemed”** to have one.

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked at and **touched with our hands**, concerning the Word of Life.” 1 John 1:1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1

“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 . . .”
1 John 4:2-3a

Another key theme of 1 John is **our need to love each other as Christians**.

“For this is the message we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” 1 John 3:11

“This is the commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should love his [Christian] brother also.” 1 John 4:21

2 John:

- Written to (verse 1) “the elect lady and her children”
- Warns her about this same *“docetic”* heresy

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.” 2 John 7a

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring [the true doctrine of Christ] – do not receive him into your house or give him a greeting – for he who greets him shares in his wicked work.” 2 John 10-11

Robert G. Gromacki – *New Testament Survey*

“The unique contribution of 2 John is its description of the attitude and actions a Christian should manifest towards false teachers.”

“To such teachers, no opportunity should be given to preach or to teach.”

“In the area of fundamental doctrines, there cannot be **any** tolerance of error in the name of ‘academic freedom.’”

3 John:

- Written to a church leader in Ephesus
- Concerns a **problem person** in the church named “Diotrephes”

“I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves the pre-eminence [RSV: loves to put himself first] will not accept what we say.” 3 John 9

Diotrephes personifies the single greatest problem in **our** church family, or in **any** church family – namely, Christians who love to “put **themselves** first.”

The only way **our** church family can work is if it is filled with Christians who love to put **other people** first!

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or fleshly conceit [don’t be Diotrephes] but in humility, let each of you esteem others as more important than yourselves.” Philippians 2:3

“Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians 2:4

I’m asking you to find joy in humbling yourself and putting other people’s needs ahead of your own – so that Jesus Christ and the Gospel can be exalted here!

So What?

In 1 John there’s one other theme: our need to live a life of **purity** for the Lord.

“How great is the love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1a

“... and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He appears, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2b

“**We shall be like Him**” = the new glorified bodies that Jesus is going to give us at His Second Coming.

“For our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body...” Philippians 3:20

“And everyone who has this hope in Him [Christ] **purifies** himself even as He [the Lord Jesus Christ] is pure.” 1 John 3:3

“... let us **purify** ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1

#1 – Purity of Mind

“Since you have been raised up with Christ... set your **mind** on things above [pure/right/godly]...” Colossians 3:1-2

“Whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **noble**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **virtuous** and **right**... **fill your mind** with these things.” Philippians 4:8

“I have made a covenant with my eyes [about how I look at a woman].” Job 31:1

#2 – Purity of Heart

“Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23

“Circumcise your heart . . .” Deuteronomy 10:16a

“Let all bitterness and anger . . . be put away from you, along with all malice.” Ephesians 4:31

“. . . just as the Lord forgave you, so you do also.” Colossians 3:13b

#3 – Purity of Motive

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do – do **all** to the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31

Motive is all about where we want the spotlight to land – on us – or on Jesus.

#4 – Purity of Words

“Do not let immorality or sexual uncleanness . . . even be named among you, as is proper for believers – nor filthiness or coarse joking, for this is not fitting . . .” Ephesians 5:3-4a

#5 – Purity of Action

“Keep a **clear conscience** . . .” 1 Peter 3:16

“. . . I do my best to always maintain a **clear conscience** both before God and before men.” Acts 24:16

Revival is fueled by **repentance**.

“Nothing between my soul and the Savior”

Nothing that hasn’t been (1) confessed to God and (2) made right with man

We must ask God to:

- Revive our consciences
- Remove the scar-tissue that has crept in
- Re-sensitize us to sin in our life
- Drive us to repentance and confession

Nothing between my soul and the Savior

So that His blessed face may be seen

Nothing preventing the least of His favor

Keep the way clear, let nothing between