

SEEING AND TESTIFYING

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A SERMON
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 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”
1 John 4:14

THERE are two things joined together in the text which must never be parted, “We have seen and testify.” In the first place, never let any man testify what he has not seen. If you are not personally aware of it, do not tell it, it is the personality of the testimony that is the power of the testimony. That truth which you have never experienced, you had better leave to somebody else to preach.

This is the cause of the failure of a great many ministers, there is no personal conversion at the back of their ministry, and consequently, no Christian life within them, their preaching is the testimony of a man who says that he heard such and such a thing, and you know how a judge will stop a witness when he begins to say what others have told him. “No, no,” says he, “what did you see yourself, my good man? What do you know about this business on your own account? I do not want to know what others said to you about it.”

So is it with the message delivered from the pulpit, what is wanted is that the preacher should bear testimony of what he has seen, and tasted, and felt, and handled. When you try to bring others to Christ, you must do it by bearing witness of what Christ has done for you. If He has never done anything for you personally, for *you*, you cannot testify for Him, and must not pretend to do *so*.

In the next place, what you have seen you should testify. If you have seen those things for yourself, do what Mary did when she had seen the risen Christ, she ran to bring His disciples word. What right have you to see for yourself alone? No, no, tell the glad tidings. The light is not put to your candle for the candle's sake alone, it is that men may be enlightened by its beams. If you have received light from God, let your light so shine before men that they may see it, and glorify God for it.

I am afraid that this observation ought to trouble a great many professing Christians. They say that they have seen the Lord. I have no reason to doubt the truth of what they say, but having seen, why do they not testify? In our text, it is written, “We have seen and do testify,” but in many cases nowadays, it might be written, “We have seen and do not testify,” for some who profess to have seen Christ by faith do not even come forward to confess Him in baptism, according to His Word, and many do not unite with the visible church, and do not occupy themselves in the Sunday school, or in any form of Christian usefulness.

What will become of you who, having a talent, never put it out to interest? O slothful ones, who have wrapped your talent in a napkin, how will you answer for it in the day when the Master calls His servants to give in their reckoning? If we are what we ought to be, we shall first make sure of the seeing, and then we shall make equally sure of the testifying. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. “We have seen and do testify.” There can be no divorce in this case, no breaking of the marriage bond, “We have seen and do testify.”

I am going to dwell upon these two topics, seeing and testifying, and first, I shall speak to you about *apostolic seeing*, for doubtless John may be understood as referring to himself and his brother apostles when he says, “We have seen and do testify.” That will be our first theme, *apostolic seeing*, and then, secondly, *our seeing*, or how far Christian men and women can say, “We have seen,” and then thirdly, *apostolic testifying and our testifying*, for they ought to be alike in a great many particulars.

I. First then, dear friends, let me speak a little about APOSTLIC SEEING.

John and his fellow apostles say, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

Note that this saying was, in their case, *eminently clear*. Let me read to you the beginning of this epistle—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” These men, who were chosen to dwell with Christ, to see His miracles, and to hear His teaching, come forward with a very clear witness. They tell us that which they had seen, that which they had heard, that which they had looked upon, and that which their hands had handled.

In the first place, they had heard Christ. This was a high privilege, for “Never man spake like this Man.” Never was there such hearing as when Christ preached. The apostles had heard their Master’s voice in private as well as in public, when He expounded to them truths which He did not fully explain to the multitude.

What marvelous sweetness there must have been in the voice of Jesus! I have no doubt that the melody of it would ring out in the apostles’ ears as long as they lived. They knew, from what they heard from His lips, that the Son of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was really before them, for they heard Him say things which no mere man could have uttered. They heard Him declare wonderful truths such as never fell from the lips of anyone but the long-promised Messiah, the divine Messenger, who was sent of God. They had heard from Him that which made them know that He was sent by the Father to save men.

John also says that the apostles had seen Christ. For more than three years, they had seen Him daily, constantly. They had also looked upon Him, the apostle adds, apparently meaning that sometimes, they had gazed upon Him with fixed attention.

You know what it is to merely see a person, but it is a different thing to look earnestly at him, to feel so struck by his appearance that you cannot help looking him up and down from head to foot. You are fascinated by him, your eyes are held captive by him, they seem to drink him in, and to photograph him on your soul.

Now, John says that the apostles did that with their Lord. They saw Him, and their eyes looked upon Him. They could not be mistaken about their Lord. John had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and He had also seen Him on the cross. He says in his Gospel, when writing of the soldier piercing Christ’s side, “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true.”

The apostles therefore, were hearers of Christ and seers of Christ. Besides that, they had handled Him. One of them had laid his head on his Lord’s bosom. After He had risen from the dead, Jesus said to them, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” They were not in any doubt that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, they could not doubt it, all their senses testified to the real incarnation of the Son of God. They knew that He was a real Person, clothed in real flesh and blood. Thus, they had heard, and seen, and handled the Christ of God.

Well now, perhaps some of you will say, “We wish we had their evidence, if we had been alive then, we could speak now with much greater confidence.” Harken to me, the mere hearing of Christ would not convince anybody, there were thousands and tens of thousands who heard Him, yet they heard nothing remarkable in His teaching, and even turned away loathing and hating Him because of the truth which they could not bear. There was not much advantage in merely seeing Him. Did not myriads see Him? Yet they saw not His glory and did not understand that He was the Redeemer of men. Even when He hung on the cross, many who saw Him only jeered and sneered, and turned their backs, and went their way.

As to handling Him, did not the soldiers handle Him when they scourged Him? Did they not handle Him when they laid the cross upon Him, and when they laid Him upon the cross? Oh! yes, there was

more than enough of handling, and rough handling too, but they were convinced of nothing even by touching the precious body of Jesus.

The fact is, brethren, genuine faith comes not merely by the ear, or the eye, or the hand, but it is flashed into the soul—peradventure through the ear—but always directly by the Spirit of God operating upon the heart, and if these apostles had not had another sense, a spiritual sense, they would still have remained unbelievers. So, after all, they had no great advantage over you, and you, beloved, who know the Lord spiritually, may also be able to truly say, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

But mark you next, granting that the apostles were spiritually enlightened, their seeing was *eminently conclusive as to the mission of Christ*. What they saw was this, not only Christ, but “that the Father sent the Son.” Now, beloved, this was seen in Christ’s miracles. It is specially recorded of our Lord’s first miracle, when He turned the water into wine, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on Him.” It was rather a simple miracle, the turning of water into wine, but Jesus did it in such a marvelous manner that the thought flashed upon the apostles as He did it, “This is the Son of God, his is the Messiah.”

A greater miracle which followed further on, is said to have had the same effect upon those who witnessed it. When our Lord Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, before He raised him, you remember that He said to Martha, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” And when He had called Lazarus back from the dead, those who were round about saw the glory of God beaming out in that miracle, and we read, “Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.”

If any of you had been with Christ during His earthly life, and had been spiritually enlightened, you would have seen, in His walking the waves, or in His opening the eyes of the blind, or in His healing all manner of sick folk who were brought to Him, something of His glory, and you would have felt that the evidence as to His mission was very conclusive.

But beloved, the apostles also had conclusive evidence as to the Savior’s mission in His life. What a life that was! I can admire the life of Elijah without wishing to imitate it. I can admire all the lives of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New, as I find them recorded, and I can even forget their failings, but there is not one even of the purest and best lives that we have ever read in the sacred page that leaves upon us the impression that the life of Jesus does. It is not only perfect, it is divine.

Singularly enough, it is more imitable than any other life, and yet it is inimitable. It is the most human of all lives, but it is superhuman to a very high degree, and yet in no one respect superhuman in the sense that it cannot be copied by our humanity. It was indeed an extraordinary life, one who could have seen it in its different phases, and learned by the Spirit’s teaching what it all meant, must have been convinced that none but the Son of God could have lived like this. What the centurion said about His death, the enlightened observer would have said about His life, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

I cannot stay to go into all the other proofs of this point, but I am sure of this, that those gracious men, with the Spirit of God instructing them, must have felt that Jesus Christ was sent of God when they saw His miracles, and when they saw His life, which was a greater marvel than all His miracles.

Still, I have not quite hit the nail on the head until I say that what they saw was *eminently conclusive as to His being sent to save men*, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” There was nothing about Christ’s life that was contrary to that declaration. He cursed no man, He called no fire from heaven upon any man. Even when wicked men had nailed Him to the tree, He breathed a prayer for them. Every way, He was not a destroyer, but a Savior. These men were themselves saved, saved from known sin, saved from groveling occupations, saved from themselves, and they knew it. They knew that the Father must have sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for He had saved them.

They had also seen Him heal the sick. What a sight it must have been to see Him going through the crowd, as He often did, when the people were laid on their beds in the streets, and others came thronging

about Him, when they saw Him laying a hand on one here, and healing another there, and another there, and yet others yonder, as though He marched through a regiment of devils, and cleared a pathway for Himself, not with sword and spear, but with His own gentle glance, and with a touch of His loving yet mighty hand! He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, and those innumerable cures, which He so freely dispensed, were clear proofs to the apostles that the Father had sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

But they knew it better still after they had seen Him die, after they had beheld His empty sepulcher, after they had felt the descending Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then, when the tongues of fire were given them and they went out to speak in His name, and three thousand felt the mighty touch of grace, they knew that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

And when the bonds were broken which held them in as preachers to the Jews, and they went throughout all Asia and boldly crossed to Europe, going everywhere preaching the Word, and Parthians, Medes, and Elamites heard the Gospel, and Greeks and Romans bowed in penitence, and Philipians and Colossians flocked to Christ, then the apostles understood that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. All along their lives there was this clear line of evidence of which they were quite certain, and they came forth to testify that it was even so.

Thus I have brought before you the first point, that is, apostolic seeing.

II. The second thing is OUR SEEING.

Let me put a few matters very plainly and personally, and let each person ascertain how far he can follow me.

Brethren, some of us have seen that Jesus is sent of God to be the Savior of the world. How have we seen it? Well first, *by the power of His Word*. You have noticed, I daresay, that singular incident concerning the woman of Samaria. The woman told the men of Sychar that she had met a man who had told her all that ever she did, and she believed that He was the Messiah. They listened to her words and then they went out to hear the Savior Himself. He preached to them, and what was the result? The Samaritans said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Do you not think that when John was writing this epistle, the record of what the woman of Samaria said was in his mind, and that he unconsciously repeated the words, "The Saviour of the world" using the very same phrase as the men of Sychar had done? They were convinced of Christ's Messiahship simply by the power of His Word.

Brothers and sisters, there are many of us who have the same evidence as these Samaritans had, we have experienced the power of Christ's Word. I do not mean that we have felt the force of human eloquence, or that we have known the weight of human argument, but we have proved the might of the Word of the Lord. There is a certain something which goes with the Word of God which is altogether independent of the mannerisms of the preacher, it is the truth itself which thrills us, conquers us, holds us in chains, leads us captive, sets us free, puts a new song into our mouths, and makes us dance with holy joy. You know that experience, do you not?

I believe that often, in this house of prayer, my brethren and sisters, you have felt a power far beyond any force that human lips can possess, you know it has been so. You have gone home saying, "God has spoken to my soul today, and I know that the Gospel is true, and that the Christ is divine. The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for I have felt the matchless power of His Holy Word."

Then there are three evidences, mentioned by John in the latter part of this epistle, each of which is a present power to us. He says, in the eighth verse of the last chapter, "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

Have you not felt *the influence of the Holy Spirit* as well as the power of the Word? Did not the Spirit come, and wither your righteousness, as the Sirocco of the desert destroys the flowers of the field? Did not the Spirit of God come and put life into you when you lay like the dead? Did He not come and point you to the Savior, even giving you eyes with which to look to Him? Has not the Spirit of God

often illuminated you, quickened you, comforted you, guided you? Has He not been to you as the fire, and the dew, and the wind? Then, if you know the operations of the Spirit of God, and you do unless your profession is a lie, you also have seen that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

The next witness is concerning *the purging by the water*. Now, has not the water which flowed from Christ's riven side, operated upon you? If you are what you profess to be, my dear brother, you are a clean man. Once you were foul enough, but you have been washed and you are a different man now. The things you then loved are now horrible to you, and you hate them, for a great change has come over you. You have been washed from your love of filthiness and your delight in sin, ay, and the washing process goes on every day, you are daily helped to leave off one sin and another, you are made not only to see the evil within you, but to conquer it.

Is it not so, dear friends? You know that if the grace of God has not sanctified you, you are without one great evidence of its power, but if it has changed your character, then depend upon it you have an evidence that it came from God. Thus, we also, "have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," because He has cleansed us, and made us to love holy things, and to hate everything which God hates.

The third witness tells of *the cleansing by the blood*. Do you know anything about cleansing by the blood of Jesus, the blood that speaks to a conscience all in a tempest through sin, the blood that gives access to God to sinners far off from Him by wicked works, the blood which we plead in prayer, the blood which has become the foundation of all our hope? I can truly say that when I first learned the doctrine of the substitution of Christ, His dying in my room, and place, and stead, and understood that I had nothing to do but to look to Him and live, it was with me as when the sun shines in Lapland after months of midnight. Oh, what a blessed dawning was that to my soul!

Now, if you know the power of the blood of Jesus upon your conscience and your heart, then you also can say, "We have seen," and I hope you may truly be able to add, "and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Besides all this—the power of the Word, the influence of the Holy Spirit, the purging by the water, and the cleansing by the blood of Jesus, we have other evidence, namely, *the aspirations of our souls*. Are there not, within you, longings and desires for which you never can account if there were not a Savior for men? When God gave to humanity the appetite of hunger, you might have inferred from it that He meant to provide food to satisfy it. When He gave to us the capacity for thirst, we might be sure that somewhere there would be rippling rills from which that thirst might be slaked.

When the Lord gave to us, as He has given, a sighing after holiness, a longing after nearness to Himself, a devout hope that we shall be caught up to be with Him where He is, these heaven-given longings are proofs that they will be gratified, and they cannot be unless there is a Savior of men. Thank God, there is such a Savior who will give us all that for which we are sighing. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

But I need not talk of mere aspirations, as far as I am concerned, I can speak about matters of fact, which prove to me the power of my Lord and Master, for I have seen *the triumphs of Christ*. I saw some of them last Tuesday, I am always seeing them, and God willing, I shall see some more of them next Tuesday. I have seen men who used to live in sin and drunkenness, made honest and sober, and I have seen fallen women brought to Jesus' feet as penitents.

All along what is growing to be a long ministry, the chariot of the Gospel, in which I have ridden, has had captives to grace Christ's triumphs. All along, multitudes have decided to quit the ways of sin, and have turned to the living God, and I must believe in the power of divine grace, I cannot doubt it. The proof of what the tree is, surely, is found in the fruit, and the fruit is most abundant.

Ask the missionaries what Christ has done in the Southern Seas, and they will tell you of islands once inhabited by naked cannibals, where now men are clothed and in their right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. The whole world teems with trophies of Christ, and shall yet more fully teem with them. "We

have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,” and we preach with the full conviction that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

III. So now I come to my last point, and that is a practical one. Thirdly, let me speak about APOSTOLIC TESTIFYING, AND OURS.

I trust that many of you can join in what the apostle John said, “We have seen that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Now let us bear our testimony concerning it as the apostles did, and first, *we should do it in the same manner*. What was the apostolic manner of testifying? Well, I should say that it was very fervent and ardent.

Those first preachers of the Gospel never preached cold sermons. Why, some sermons hang like icicles upon the lips of the speaker, but the apostles preached as if they were all on fire. Their lips were like the mouth of Etna when it vomits lava, every word burnt its way into the hearts and consciences of men. Never talk coldly of Christ who was on fire with love to you, preach the Gospel ardently.

The apostles also proclaimed their message very simply. I do not believe there ever was an apostolic sermon in which the preacher tried to show himself off, there is no record of any display of oratorical fireworks, no grand closing peroration. I always tell my students that this is the twelfth commandment, “Thou shalt not perorate.” Yet many preachers will do it, there must be something very splendid at the end of the discourse to impress people with the idea of how wondrously they can do it.

Do not do it, brothers, do not do it! Tell the people the way to heaven, and point it out to them as plainly as ever you can, and if there are two or three little words of plain Saxon that will do it, use them, and fling the long Latin words on the dunghill where they ought to rot, they are no good whatever in the pulpit, for we need speech that can be easily understood by the people, the plain speech of the common folk of our day. So the apostles spoke, and so should we.

But they also spoke very boldly. You never meet with any timidity in them. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Do not some preachers appear to apologize for what they are about to say? They trust that they will be excused for venturing to intrude their opinion. I would ask your pardon if I intruded my opinion, but in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ I have not any opinion of my own, I preach God’s Word to you, and at your peril do you reject it. You are bound to receive it as it comes from Him, and no apology is to be made by the man whom God sends.

So the apostles spoke boldly in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and Jesus Christ of Nazareth backed up their words. If God has not sent you my brother, go home, but if He has, in God’s name, do not apologize for His message. There is an honor put upon you by your Lord who sent you, and you must put honor upon your Master by being faithful to Him.

Thus, like the apostles, we have to bear testimony for Christ, and *we should do it in the same power*. What was the power with which the apostles testified? Was it the power of their superior education? They had not any, perhaps with the exception of Paul. They could manage a boat better than most of us can, but that was their principal attainment. Did they speak in the power of being (—what is the word now?) “*en rapport* with the spirit of the age”? I may as well use a fine expression sometimes!

Did they speak as men “keeping themselves abreast of the times”? Not a bit of it. They hated “the spirit of the age” in which they lived, and struggled against it with all their might. What was the source of their power? Their only power was the Holy Ghost, and brethren, we also must come to see that there can be no power in us to win a soul for Christ but the supernatural energy of God the Holy Spirit. If we have that, the work will be done, if we are without it, we shall be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Then again, if we are to testify as the apostles did, *we should do it with the same message*. What was that message? “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Then, the world was lost, we

must not stammer in saying that. And every man in the world is lost, by nature and by practice lost, with a great loss, a loss from which he cannot recover himself, a loss from which only God could save him.

We must bear our testimony to that truth. Then we must dwell upon the Sender of the Savior, “The Father sent the Son,” that great Father against whom we have rebelled, who will bring His wandering children home again, “The Father sent the Son.” We must also testify much about the Sent One, “the Father sent the Son,” not an angel, not a man prepared by education or training, but He sent the Son out of His own bosom, the Son out of the glories of heaven. The eternal Son of God, commissioned by the Father, came to earth.

And with what design did Jesus come? He came to save, to save by making such a propitiation for sin that God could be justified, and also the Justifier of him that believeth. He came to save by delivering us from the dominion of sin, that henceforth we should not serve sin, but should be lifted above it, right away from the power of everything that held us as slaves to Satan.

And what was the scope of Christ’s work? “The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it, that the world, through Him, might be saved. His one mission here was to be the Savior. He will come a second time to be the Judge of all, but in His first coming, He came to be a Savior, and only a Savior. He has gone up into heaven, but He is still the Savior, able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him, and He is the only Savior.

In a certain district there may be many who pretend to cure the sick, but only one who is qualified to act as surgeon, and there are many who pretend to save, but there is only one qualified Savior beneath the cope of heaven, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here styled “the Saviour of the world” because He is the only Savior in the world. As a man may be said to be the doctor of a district because he is the only doctor in the district, so is Christ the Savior of the world because He is the only Savior who ever was or ever will be in this world.

He is “the Saviour of the world,” that is to say, of all ranks, and classes, and conditions of man. No difference of color, no difference of race, no difference of wealth, no difference of talent, no difference of standing and rank, no difference of education and attainment makes any difference to Him. Jesus Christ has come to be the Savior, not of the rich, nor of the poor, the Savior, not of the learned, nor of the ignorant, but “of the world.”

He comes to save men as sinners. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” not merely great sinners or little sinners, open sinners or secret sinners, but plain “sinners.” This is the sort of people for whom He laid down His life. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost, not that which was lost in one particular way or in another special way, but that which was lost any way, lost to itself, lost to God, lost to goodness, lost to hope, lost to heaven, ay, if lost to morality, Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

He was sent to be the Savior of the world because no man, believing in Him, is excluded from the merit of His death. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

He will ultimately, as a matter of fact, save none but His elect. This will be the end of all His coming, and living, and dying, but that does not conflict for a single moment with the universal invitation that is to be given to you and to every creature under heaven—“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Whosoever believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life. “Come unto me,” says Christ, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

What I am saying is the result of what I have seen, and of what many here have seen. “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Will you, dear hearers—I speak to some who have never heard me before—will you accept our testimony? If you judge us to be

false, you will not receive it, but if you have judged us to be honest and true men, accept what we declare to you.

I pray you, receive our message, for to what end do we bear our testimony? I should like John to say a final word to you, and then I will have done. This is why we bear our testimony, *we do it with the same design* that led John to write concerning the life of Christ, “and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

There is salvation, there is Christ ready to save. Look to Him, blind eyes; look to Him, dead souls; look to Him. Say not that you cannot, He in whose power I speak will work a miracle while yet you hear the command, and blind eyes shall look, and dead hearts shall spring into eternal life by His Spirit’s effectual working. God grant that it may be so, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 JOHN 4

Verse 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

It was so in John’s day, it is so in these days. If there were only one false prophet, we should have need to be on our guard, but “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” If false prophets were all shut up in a cage, and we had to go to seek them, there might be some danger to be apprehended from them, but there is so much more danger now that we can truly read, “Many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

2. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*

Where the Godhead and the manhood of Christ are truly and properly confessed, so far, at any rate, the confession is of God.

3. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

So that there were deadly errors very early in the history of the Christian church. The loving apostle John did not handle them with gloved hands, but he dealt with them honestly, and sought to destroy them. We must not wonder if, in our days, the church has many heresies in it, but they are not to be tolerated, but to be cut up, root and branch.

4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

The people of God are few, feeble, and weak, but there is a Spirit in them mightier than the spirit of the world, and as the ultimate victory will depend upon the strength of the indwelling Spirit, the church of God will yet overcome the world that lieth in the wicked one.

5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

These false prophets teach doctrines that suit carnal men, “They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world.” They take their cue from “the spirit of the age.” They speak according to the fashion of the world, and therefore it is no wonder that the world hears them.

6. *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*

Here is an inspired answer to those who say that they attach no importance to the epistles. They profess to be the followers of Christ, but they say that they do not agree with Paul and with John. Very well, John speaks in the name of all the apostles when He says, “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.”

6. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

If you reject any part of the Word of God, the spirit of error is within you. Truth is one, and the revelation of God is one, let us not rend it, let us hold fast by it all, and so prove that the Spirit of truth is in us.

7. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

The spirit of love, kindness, self-sacrifice, holy charity—this is of God. This is the distinguishing mark of the Christian dispensation, the distinguishing mark of the Christian, that he abounds in love, not in malice, anger, revenge, bitterness. “Let us love one another: for love is of God.”

8. *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

I have known men, professing to be Christians, at enmity with their brothers. I have heard of a father and a son who have not spoken to one another for months. Did I hear of a mother and a daughter who would not speak to each other, and of sisters who had fallen out? This will not do, you must either give up your Christian profession or give up your hatred. The very attempt to combine enmity and Christianity is a sin against God, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love.”

9-10. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Sometimes people say, “How can we love a person who is not lovable, one who will not love us in return?” Yet God did so, He loved us when we loved Him not, He loved us when there was nothing lovable in us, and we ought to take God as our pattern in all things.

11-12. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

Though we cannot see God, yet if we love one another, that is a proof that we have Him dwelling within us.

13-16. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.*

The two things go together, knowing and believing.

16-18. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:*

There is no slavish dread, no spirit of bondage, perfect love casts it all out. May we all have that love and get rid of all fear!

18-20. *Because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because He first loved us. If a man says I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:*

That is very plain language. John does not mince matters, He is all love, but he is also all truth. Some people think that if you love, you will never use strong language, but that is not the case. Sometimes, because a surgeon loves the patient, he cuts the more deeply.

20-21. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God loveth his brother, also.*

Now I do not know to whom this message may specially apply in all this great congregation, but there is the Word of God as plain as a pike-staff. If you do not live in love, you do not live in God, and if any of you are harboring any animosities, ill-feelings, and unkindnesses, get rid of them, get rid of them at once.

The sun has well-nigh gone down, remember the apostle Paul’s injunction, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” but as God has forgiven you, forgive all others for Christ’s sake, and dwell in a loving-hearted Christ-like spirit toward all mankind.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 408, 561

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