

CHAPTER 12

Powerful Little Books (1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Jude)

This chapter will consider four little books which God in His perfect wisdom has decided to include in our Bible. Three of these books are only one chapter each and the book of 1 John is only five small chapters. These four books combined contain about the same number of verses as the letter to the Ephesians. Yet, even though these books are few in words, they contain powerful messages for believers then and now.

1 John--Assurance of Salvation

The Apostle John is the human author of this book. He also wrote 2 John, 3 John, the Gospel of John and Revelation. History tells us that during the end of his life, John served the Lord in the city of Ephesus which is located in Asia Minor. Can you find Ephesus on a Bible map? During this time in his life (possibly around 90 A.D.) John wrote the book of 1 John.

The Ephesian believers were blessed with some excellent teachers and preachers in their church! Who spent nearly three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:16,31)? _____ Paul wrote a letter to another preacher who was at Ephesus. What was his name (1 Timothy 1:2-3)? _____ John the apostle spent the latter part of his life in this same city. There was no shortage of good preachers and teachers in Ephesus!

Why did John write the book of 1 John? John gives us several reasons. In 1 John 1:4 he says, "And these things we write unto you, that your _____ may be _____." John wanted believers to have that full joy that comes from being in fellowship with the Father and with His Son and with other believers (1 John 1:3).

Another reason for writing this book is found in 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye S_____ N_____." John wanted believers to live lives that were holy and pure. He also wanted believers to know what to do when they commit sin (1 John 1:9; 2:1).

The most important reason John wrote this book is found in 1 John 5:13. According to this verse, did John write these things to believers or unbelievers? _____ John wrote these things so that believers might (circle the correct answer):

- a. **Hope** that they have eternal life
- b. **Feel** that they have eternal life
- c. **Know** that they have eternal life
- d. **Think** that they have eternal life

We have already learned why John wrote the Gospel of John (see **Chapter 3**). It is helpful to compare John's purpose in the Gospel of John with his purpose in the book of 1 John. Perhaps this chart will help:

JOHN	1 JOHN
John's purpose is given in John 20:31: "But these (things) are written, that ye might BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life."	John's purpose is given in 1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that you have eternal life."
Written to all the world (a good book to recommend to an unsaved person)	Written to believers (a good book to recommend to a saved person, especially a new believer)
Written in order that people might believe and have life (20:31)	Written in order that believers might know that they have life (5:12-13).
Written so that people might be saved	Written so that saved people might have assurance of salvation
Written so that people might come to the Father (John 10:9; 14:6)	Written so that believers might be at home in the Father's house and enjoy His fellowship (1 John 1:3; 3:1)
Written so that the dead might have life (John 5:24)	Written so that the living might know they are alive (1 John 3:14) and that they might show forth and express this life

Assurance of salvation is something very wonderful that God wants every child of God to have. The person who has assurance is able to say, "I _____ that I have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). "I am **sure, certain** and **convinced** that I have God's Son and God's Life! **I know so because God said so:** "He that hath the _____ hath _____; and he that hath not the _____ hath not _____" (1 John 5:12).

It is a sad fact that most people today, even people who are very religious, do not have **assurance of their salvation**. Very few people **know for sure** that God has saved them and that they have eternal life. Most people "hope so" or "think so" but very few "know so." You can discover this for yourself. The next time you meet a person who belongs to a cult or a person who is very religious or who goes to church, ask him (or her) this question: "If you were to die today, do you know for sure that you would be with the Lord? Are you sure that you are saved and that you have eternal life?" By his (or her) answer you will be able to tell if he (or she) has assurance of salvation.

According to 1 John 5:12, every believer (everyone who has the Son) possesses L _____. The person who is not a true believer does not have L _____ (1 John 5:12).

Let's think about physical life for a moment. How can we tell if a person is alive? If you were to see a man walking, talking, eating and laughing, you would certainly conclude that this person must be alive physically! Dead people simply do not do such things!

What are some of the **signs** of physical life?

- a. heart thumping and pulse
- b. bodily movement
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

If you found a body on a couch or lying on the floor, how could you tell whether the person were merely sleeping or actually dead?

In the physical realm there is a great difference between those who are alive and those who are dead. This is also true in the spiritual realm. There is a great difference between those who are alive in Christ and those who are dead in _____ (Ephesians 2:5). The book of 1 John shows this difference very clearly. Please put the following verses in the right places (the first one is already done for you):

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 John 2:9-11 | 1 John 3:10 | 1 John 4:7-8 |
| 1 John 2:15 | 1 John 3:14 | 1 John 5:9-10 |
| 1 John 2:22-23 | 1 John 4:5-6 | 1 John 5:12 |

THOSE WHO ARE DEAD	Verse(s)	THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE
Those who are still abiding in death	1 John 3:14	Those who have passed from death unto life
Those who do not know God	_____	Those who do know God
Those who are children of the devil	_____	Those who are children of God
Those who are in darkness	_____	Those who are in light
Those who love the world	_____	Those who love the Father
Those who do not have the Son of God	_____	Those who have the Son (they have received Him as their Saviour)
Those who deny Christ	_____	Those who acknowledge or confess Christ
Those who are of the world (belong to this world system)	_____	Those who are of God (belong to God and are His children)
Those who reject what God says about His Son and who because of their unbelief are really calling God a liar.	_____	Those who receive the witness (testimony) of God and believe what God says about His Son

If we truly have God's life, then there should be certain **signs** in our life that clearly show that we have really been saved. Just as there are signs of physical life, so also there are signs of spiritual life. If the living God is really **in me** (2 Cor. 13:5) and if He is really **working in me** (Philippians 2:13), then this will certainly make a difference in my life! The book of 1 John

shows us very clearly what some of these **signs of life** are (please MATCH):

1. _____	Because I'm alive in Christ, I have a love for my brothers and sisters in Christ.	A. 1 John 1:9
2. _____	Because I'm alive in Christ, I want to keep God's commandments and do what God says.	B. 1 John 2:3-4
3. _____	Because I am alive in Christ, I want to be in fellowship with the Lord. This means I must confess my sins whenever necessary.	C. 1 John 2:29; 3:7
4. _____	Because I am alive in Christ, I believe what God says and I receive His witness or testimony as being true.	D. 1 John 3:6,8,9; 5:18
5. _____	Because I am alive in Christ, I want to live a righteous life--being right, acting right, speaking right, thinking right.	E. 1 John 3:14; 4:7-8, 20
6. _____	Because I am alive in Christ, I do not keep on sinning and I do not continue to practice sin. I know that sin does not please my Saviour.	F. 1 John 5:9-10

Do you show forth these **signs of life**? Are you spiritually **DEAD** or **ALIVE**? If these signs are missing from your life, then you need to recognize that you have a serious spiritual problem. Either you are very sick spiritually or you are spiritually dead. A true believer can fall and fail in many ways. He can backslide and be out of fellowship with the Lord. But the loving Heavenly Father **chastens** those whom He loves, seeking to bring them back to Himself. The blessed Holy Spirit **convicts** the heart of the sinning believer seeking to woo him and win him back to the Lord. It is the joyful privilege of every sinning child of God to **confess** his sins to the Father and enjoy God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). But if there is no **chastening** (see Heb. 12:7-8), if there is no **conviction** (the believer should be miserable in his sin), if there is no **confession** (the person keeps going on in sin, not even seeming to care), then something is terribly amiss. It could be that there is NO LIFE. If this is the case, then the person needs to obey God's commandment: "And this is His commandment, That we should _____ on the name of His _____, Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23)!

2 and 3 John--Whom To Receive and Whom Not To Receive

The Apostle John also wrote the two very small letters of 2 John and 3 John. Both of these letters speak about **receiving brethren**. In 2 John 10 we read, "R _____ H _____ N _____" and 3 John 8 says: "We therefore ought to _____ such." There are some people we should receive and there are some people we should not receive. If we receive the wrong person, we become a partaker of his E _____ D _____ (2 John 11). If we receive the right person, we become F _____ to the truth (3 John 8)!

What does this mean? In the days when John wrote these letters there were preachers and missionaries who would travel about, even as Paul traveled about on his three missionary

journeys. As these men would go from city to city, they would need places to lodge and food to eat. The public inns and motels back then did not have a very good reputation, so these traveling ministers really depended upon the hospitality and kindness of believers so that their needs would be met. Thus, when 2 John or 3 John speaks of "receiving" a person, it means supporting and sponsoring that person, giving them a bed to sleep in and a home to stay in and food to eat. As you read the book of Acts, you will see that there were people who helped Paul in this way (see for example, Acts 18:2-3,7).

In 2 John the traveling preachers are described as unsaved false teachers who **deceive** people with their poisonous doctrine (see 2 John 7-11). Certainly it would not be wise to help and to support these people because they are enemies of the cause of Christ.

The brethren described in 3 John are quite different. These were godly men who were worthy of support because their **motive** was right, their **mission** was right and their **message** was right:

1) **A right motive:** "for His name's sake they went forth" (3 John 7). They were concerned about God's Name! They did not preach so that they could get rich! They did not have a money motive (verse 7 says that they took nothing from the unsaved Gentiles). They were concerned only for the glory of God.

2) **A right mission:** Verse 7 of 3 John could be translated: "they went forth on behalf of His Name." In other words, these men went forth on Christ's behalf--they represented Him. They were His witnesses (Acts 1:8). They were A _____ for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

3) **A right message:** 3 John 8 tells us that when we support such men we become fellowhelpers to the T _____. This tells us that these men must have been teaching the truth! Their message was right! They were preaching God's Word of truth!

These are the kind of missionaries that ought to be received (3 John 8), but there was one man who refused to receive them! His name was D _____ (3 John 9). He refused to receive these good brethren and he told others not to support them. He even threw out of the church any that did support them (3 John 10).

Diotrephes had a **pride problem**, even as many do today. He loved to have the P _____ (3 John 9) or the first place. He loved to be the number one person! He wanted power and position, and he did not want to take second place to anyone, not even to the Lord! According to Colossians 1:18, who is the only one who is to have PREEMINENCE or first place? _____

Today we need men like Gaius (3 John 1) and Demetrius (3 John 12) in the church, not men like Diotrephes. Gaius was a healthy believer. He could sing the hymn, "It is Well with my Soul!" and really mean the words! John prayed for him that he might prosper and be in health physically **even as his soul was prospering** (3 John 2).

If someone were to pray that prayer for you, would that be a blessing or a curse? Suppose you were as healthy physically as you are spiritually. Would you be in the hospital? Suppose your body were just as healthy as your soul. Would you be well or sick? Suppose you were to feed your body as well as you feed your soul. How healthy would you be? Would you eat more than once a week?

There are many other lessons we can learn from 2 and 3 John, but let us go on to our fourth little book:

Jude--Contending For The Faith

Jude was written by the brother of J _____ (Jude 1). We learned about James in **Chapter 11**. Was Jude (sometimes spelled "Juda" or "Judas") also the half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3)?

We learn why Jude wrote this book in verse 3. Jude was going to sit down and write a wonderful letter about God's great S _____, but God had something else in mind. Suddenly Jude realized that he must warn believers about the false teachers and encourage the believers to earnestly C _____ for **the faith** (the body of truth which all Christians believe). This word "**contend**" in verse 3 means that believers are to **fight** for the faith! We are in a real battle, and as good Christian soldiers we must fight for the truth of God.

False Doctrine

In a school examination the teacher asked the following question: "What is false teaching?" Up went a little boy's hand, and there came this answer: "It's when the doctor gives the wrong stuff to the people who are very sick."

The analogy is a good one. Just as wrong medicine can be fatal to the person who is physically sick, so false teaching can cause great harm to the souls of men. The one thing we need more than anything else is the truth of God, as found in the Word of God (John 17:17). It is so sad that in many churches today, error is being taught, often disguised as the truth. Error is like poison!

The Bible describes the problem in this way: "**Preach the word (the truth!);** be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;** but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And **they shall turn away their ears from the truth,** and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

What are some verses in Jude which describe the false teachers and the awful judgment that will come upon them? _____ What are some verses in Jude which encourage believers to be strong in the faith? _____ The book of Jude is very similar to 2 Peter chapter 2. Can you find some of these similarities? Jude's letter was probably written after Peter wrote his second letter.

Is there a need to fight for the faith today? Are there false teachers around today? Is it possible for false teachers to creep into the church? How should believers fight for the faith today? The early Christians lived and even died for the truth! Even today, God has no greater joy than that His children be walking in the T _____ (3 John 4)! The letters that John and Jude wrote help us to do that.