

The Second Panel, 2:29-4:6

Overview

The body of the book is organized as three panels, each dealing with the signs of righteousness, love, and belief (Table 1).

The second panel, like the first, associates key words with each sign (Figure 1).

The righteousness element describes the readers as “children [τέκνον *teknon* G5043] of God”¹ (light blue) who have been begotten [γεννάω *gennaō* G1080] of God (dark blue). The argument is “like father, like son”: because the Father is righteous, those who are born of him, his children, will also be righteous. Two other words also characterize this element: righteous(ness), and the verb “to do.”

The love element, as in the first panel, is marked by the word “brothers” (red), and follows from the first. If we are children of the same Father, we are brothers, and should love one another.

References to the (Holy) Spirit (green) in the belief element recall the anointing in the corresponding element of the first panel, emphasizing that our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God results from the instruction of the Spirit whom the Lord has given us.

2:29-3:10, The Sign of Righteousness

In addition to the words in Figure 1, two other words peak in the second righteousness element, are “righteous(ness)” (the noun δικαιοσύνη *dikaiousunē* G1343 and the adjective δίκαιος *dikaios* G1342), and the verb “do” (ποιέω *poieō* G4160) (Figure 2, chart).

These words, like the new birth language, do not appear in the corresponding element of the first panel (2:3-6), which instead emphasizes “keeping” (τηρέω *tēreō* G5083) God’s “commands” (ἐντολή *entolē* G1785) and his “word” (λόγος *logos* G3056). Both elements emphasize the importance of conduct (“keep” in the first, “do” in the second), but in the first panel this conduct is defined by a law, while in the second it is defined by a Person.

	Righteousness	Love	Belief
2:3-28	2:3-6	2:7-17	2:18-28
2:29-4:6	2:29-3:10	3:11-24	4:1-6
4:7-5:12	4:20-5:4	4:7-19	5:5-12

Table 1: The three signs of eternal life

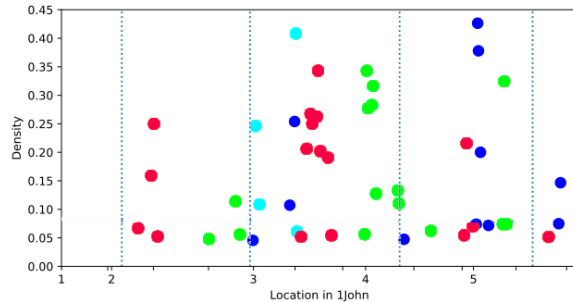


Figure 1: Distinguishing vocabulary. Red: brother. Green: anointing (ch. 2) or spirit (elsewhere). Light blue: children [of God]. Dark blue: begotten.

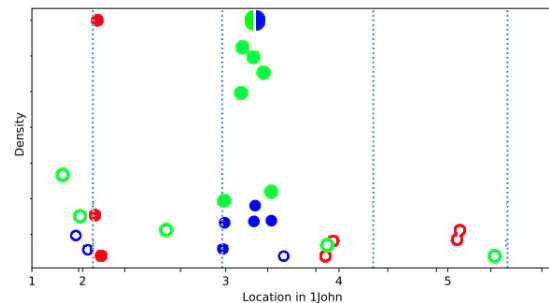


Figure 2: Distinctive vocabulary in the “righteousness” sections (solid points). Red: keep commands (τηρέω *tēreō* G5083). Blue: righteous(ness) (δίκαιος *dikaios* G1342, δικαιοσύνη *dikaiousunē* G1343). Green: do (ποιέω *poieō* G4160).

1 Not “sons,” as KJV often renders the word. That term is reserved in 1 John for the Lord Jesus.

This section has three paragraphs, divided into three parts by the vocatives in 3:2, 7. Each part relates our righteous behavior to a different person (Figure 3).

- 2:29-3:1 relate it to the Father.
- 3:2-6 relate it to God’s Son.
- 3:7-10 relate it to the Devil and his followers.

True righteousness is **defined** by the character of the Father, **manifested** by the life of the Lord Jesus, and **opposed** by the children of the devil. In the case of both the Father and the devil, moral characteristics are presented as family traits that the children inherit from their parents.

2:29-3:1, The Father Defines Righteousness

In this paragraph John emphasizes this first point, the role of the Father in our righteousness. The first verse answers the question: “What does it mean to be righteous?”

1Jn 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that **doeth** righteousness is **born of him**.—Three items in this statement invite our attention.

1. Who is the antecedent of “he, him”?
2. What is the scriptural background of the statement that “he is righteous”?
3. What does his righteousness have to do with our behavior?

Who is “he,” “him”? Most recently, 2:28 described the coming Lord Jesus, the most natural antecedent for “he,” who is certainly righteous. He challenged his Jewish opponents (chart),

Jhn 8:46 Which of you convinceth me of sin?

At his trial, Pilate declared him “just,” that is, “righteous”:

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of **this just person**: see ye to it.

And Hebrews insists,

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, **yet without sin**.

But 2:29 goes on to say that we are “born of him,” and we usually think of our spiritual father as God the Father, not the Son, who is described as our brother.

The tension is resolved if we keep in mind a third statement that John expects us to remember from the previous section: “Jesus is the Son of God.” We expect children to resemble their parents. We all recognize the Lord Jesus as righteous. When we remember that God is his Father, we realize that this righteousness is a family trait, belonging to all those who are born of God. Thus the first “him” probably refers to the Lord Jesus, and the second to his Father and ours.

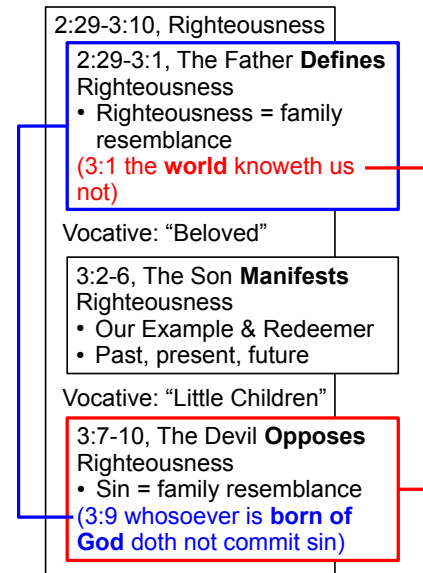


Figure 3: Two Spiritual Families

What does it mean that “he is righteous”? The righteousness of Christ reflects the righteousness of his Father, a theme that pervades the Bible.² The Old Testament repeatedly puts God’s righteousness in parallel with his salvation of his people:

Psa 40:10 I have not hid **thy righteousness** within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and **thy salvation**:

Psa 71:15 My mouth shall shew forth **thy righteousness** and **thy salvation** all the day;

Psa 98:2 The LORD hath made known **his salvation**:
his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

And Jeremiah boldly claims that this righteousness of God is the possession of his people:

Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. [cf. 33:16]

Paul picks up this theme when he teaches that our salvation is basically an exchange: Christ takes our sin upon himself, and gives us his own righteousness, the righteousness of God.

Rom 4:3-6 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted [imputed] unto him for righteousness. ... 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God **imputeth righteousness without works**,

2Co 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**.

Thus we know that “he is righteous.” But that leads to the third question:

What does his righteousness have to do with our behavior? Unfortunately, some who emphasize most clearly the imputation of God’s righteousness to us are careless about their own conduct. John expects the children to behave like the Father, and emphasizes this by concentrating the verb “doeth” (ποιέω *poieō* G4160) in this section (Figure 2). This righteous behavior is a consequence of the new covenant that our Lord ratified with his people by his death:

Ezk 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye **shall keep my judgments, and do them**.³

Ezekiel’s promise would lead us to expect the statement, “every one that is born of him doeth righteousness.” And that would be true: we are to judge a tree by its fruits (Matt 7:16, 20). John later makes this statement:

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ...

But John’s statement has a different emphasis (Figure 4, chart). Recall Venn diagrams from high school math: sets are geometric regions, and two regions intersect when they share elements.

- 2:29 asserts that every person who does righteousness is born of God. So on the left of Figure 4, the ellipse representing those who do righteousness is inside the ellipse representing those who are born of God.

2 See note, and the blog post <https://cyber-chapel.org/blog/the-righteousness-of-god/>.

3 “Do them” in the LXX is the verb *poieō* that dominates the second righteousness element. It has no object (*AV* “them” is in italics), anticipating John’s contrast between keeping commandments and doing righteousness. “Keep my commandments” recalls the emphasis of the first righteousness element, 2:3-6, on keeping God’s commands. John uses a different verb (τηρέω *tēreō* G5083) than does the LXX (φυλάσσω *fulassō* G5442), though both are in the semantic field of guarding or keeping (Louw and Nida §36.19).

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- In 3:9, the more restricted set is those who are born of God (right of Figure 4). Now every person who is born of God is represented as not doing sin.

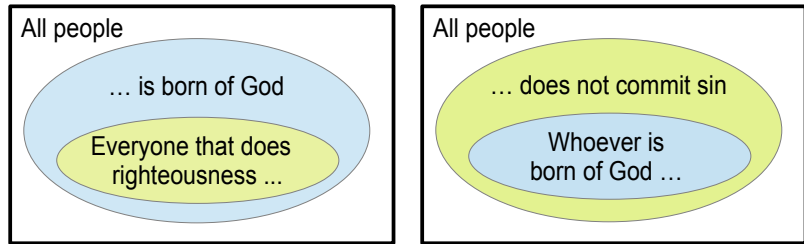


Figure 4: The difference between 2:29 (left) and 3:9 (right)

Logically, the combination of the two allows us to identify these two characterizations. The set of people who are born of God is identical with the set of people who are righteous. But the two statements emphasize different things. Let's focus on the distinctive message of 2:29.

There are many who perform actions we think of as righteous, and yet know nothing of salvation. Isaiah himself confesses on behalf of sinful Israel,

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;**

...

Paul deprecates outwardly righteous deeds done in the strength of the flesh:

Php 3:6 touching the **righteousness** which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those **I counted loss** for Christ.

2:29 is not just saying that those who are born of God do righteousness,⁴ but that *only* those who are born of him do righteousness. The unbeliever is incapable of performing truly righteous deeds, of doing anything that merits God's approval. Here is the advance over the first panel. An unbeliever's deeds may conform to the *law*, but they are not true righteousness unless they are produced by the Spirit of God as a result of the new birth. The Jewish leaders kept the law, and rejected the Messiah. People may keep the law for many carnal reasons: to maintain their identity with a particular social group, to have other people think well of them, to try to make up for ways in which they have failed spiritually. None of these law-abiding actions is true righteousness. Truly righteous deeds can only be performed by those who are born of God, in whom that righteousness is the natural sign of their family resemblance to their heavenly Father.

3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God τέκνα θεοῦ:—If the Father has begotten us (2:29), that makes us his offspring. (Throughout 1 John, when believers are called “sons of God,” the word used is always τέκνον *teknon* G5043, those who are born of God, distinct from the word υἱός *huios* G5207 that is always used of the Lord Jesus.) We see that relation in how he recreates his own righteousness in us, and that is evidence of his love for us.

Note again the direction of the inference. God does not love us because we are righteous:

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his **love** toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

On the contrary, we are righteous because he loves us, and has given us his righteousness in Christ. Our righteousness shows our family relation to him.

But that relation has other consequences. God loves us, but the world hates us:

⁴ This inference is also true, since it is the contrapositive of 3:10.

therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.—When we are born into God’s family, we become strangers to the world, as our Savior taught in the upper room,

Jhn 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world **hateth** you.

This statement anticipates the discussion of the devil in 3:7-10, just as 3:9, in that section, will remind us of our position as children of God (Figure 3).

3:2-6, The Son Manifests Righteousness

The next verse starts with a vocative, “Beloved,” marking a shift. From God as our Father, we turn to the Lord Jesus as our Savior and example. Another vocative at 3:7, “little children,” marks the third section, describing righteousness by contrasting it with the works of Satan.

John uses three features to organize these five verses, highlighted in Figure 5 (chart).

1. He emphasizes their unity by a repetition of the word “appear” or “manifest” (φανερῶω *faneroō* G5319), marked in **blue**.
2. He divides them into two halves, shifting from Christ’s purity in 3:2-3 to our sin in 3:4-6, marked in **red**.
3. He further divides each half by shifts in verb tense, indicated by the three columns.

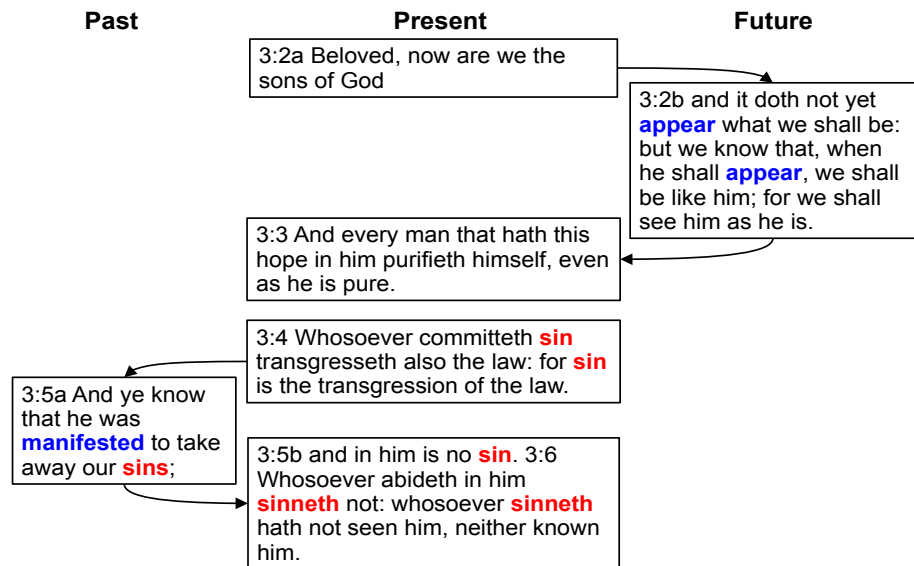


Figure 5: Manifestation: Christ as example (2-4a) and redeemer(4-5), through time (past, present, future)

The word “appear” or “manifest” (φανερῶω *faneroō* G5319) deserves special attention. With one instance of the cognate adjective φανερός *faneros* G5318 in 3:10, 1 John uses this word more frequently than any other NT book (see note). Figure 6 (chart) shows the instances.

- The first two, in chapter 1, describe how the shared life of the Father and Son was manifest during our Lord’s earthly ministry.
- The last one, in 4:9, recalls how that incarnation manifested God’s love toward us.
- The central peak begins and ends with references to the manifestation of the antichrists (2:19; 3:10 via ellipsis of the adjective), and centers on the second righteousness element, 2:29-3:10.

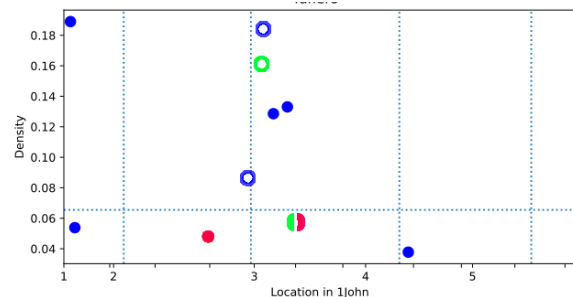


Figure 6: *faneroō*, *faneros* (3:10). Blue: Christ, life, love of God. Red: false teachers. Green: believers. Hollow: future tense

This emphasis on teaching that is open and manifest contrasts with the secret knowledge often boasted by false teachers, reflecting the “mystery religions” that Roman soldiers brought back from Persia as the Roman empire expanded to the east.⁵ These ideas, which coalesced in gnosticism, emphasized salvation through acquiring secret knowledge, which a person could acquire only through a complex process of initiation (and monetary payments to the priests).

Our faith is not like that. As Paul told king Agrippa, “this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). Recall our Lord’s defense to the high priest:

Jhn 18:20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

He has commanded us, not to hide his truth, but to proclaim it openly to the world.

This manifestation spans past, present, and future, and is reflected both positively (in our purity and imitation of Christ) and negatively (in avoiding sin) (Figure 5).

2-3, Christ is Manifested as our Example

Positively, Christ’s life manifests the righteousness of God as an example for our imitation, a process that has already begun and that will be perfected at his return. This section moves from the present to the future and then back to the present.

2 Beloved,—This is the first of five times that John addresses his readers as “beloved.”⁶ We naturally understand this term to reflect the writer’s affection for his readers, and often in the NT it conveys this sense (particularly in Paul, e.g., Phil 4:1). But given what John has just said, the emphasis may be more here in recognizing that they are those whom God has loved (3:1).

now are we the sons of God,—John begins in the present tense. He and his readers are the offspring of God (as in 3:1, *teknon*, not *huios*). In 2:29-3:1 he explained the implications of this family relationship: we are born of God, and thus will bear the family resemblance.

and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:—Contrast “we are” and “we shall be,” our current position and our aspiration. We are now, without qualification, the children of God, partakers of his righteousness. But we look forward to an even more glorious future.

but we know that, when he shall appear,—“He” is the Lord Jesus, whose return John promised at the end of the first panel,

1Jn 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—The effect of his appearing will be to conform us completely to his righteous image. This promise involves a fundamental principle: you become like that on which you focus your attention. We’ve all seen this operate in the worldly realm, under the name of “hero worship.” When people make someone their hero, they tend to dress the way the hero dresses, walk the way he walks, and talk the way he talks.

Paul already told the Corinthians how this process operates now to bring about godliness (chart):

2Co 3:18 But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

5 S. Angus, *The Mystery Religions*. Dover, 1975, reprint of 2nd edition, John Murray, London, 1928.

6 The others are 3:21; 4:1, 7, 11.

A powerful means of becoming like Christ is to meditate on him as we see him in the Scriptures. Our current vision of him is imperfect: “as in a glass” refers to something seen in a mirror, and mirrors in the first century were made of polished metal and gave a very dim image. Compare Paul’s use of the same image in 1 Corinthians 13,

1Co 13:12 For now we **see through a glass, darkly**; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

John is describing the future event that Paul here anticipates. When Christ returns, we see him, not just in the imperfect representations of the gospels, but face to face, as he truly is, and our imitation of him will become more perfect and complete.

We don’t have to wait for his return, though, to profit from the power of hero worship.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—John returns to the present tense. Recognizing that the Lord will return, and knowing of his purity, we seek to imitate him now.

2:28 gave us the *motive* for godly living, “that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Now we have the *mechanism*: imitating what we can see now of his person and character.

4-6, Christ is Manifested as our Redeemer

The second paragraph describing the manifestation of Christ is marked by a sudden concentration of the noun and verb for “sin”(Figure 7, chart). We saw a similar concentration at the end of chapter 1, where John warned of the deceptiveness of sin and gave instructions on how we should deal with it. Those instructions emphasized the Lord Jesus as the one who is able to deliver us from our sin:

1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of **Jesus Christ his Son** cleanseth us from all sin.

1Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous**: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now he amplifies this central role of the Messiah in delivering us from sin.⁷ Again, he starts and ends in the present tense, but this time, instead of moving to the future and considering the second advent, he draws our attention back to the first advent.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law [doeth also lawlessness]: for sin is the transgression of the law [lawlessness].—The AV translation of ἀνομία *anomia* G458 as “transgress the law” is unfortunate. It suggests that as long as we don’t violate a specific commandment, we’re OK. The word is broader, implying a rejection of the whole concept of law

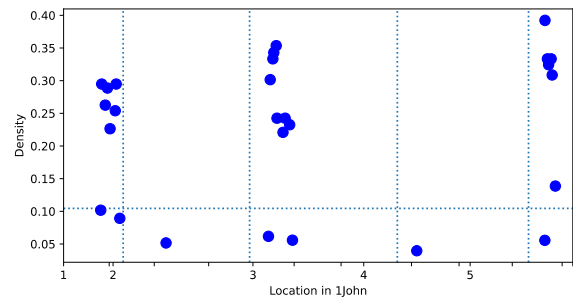


Figure 7: Sin (noun ἁμαρτία *hamartia* G266; verb ἁμαρτάνω *hamartanō* G264) in 1 John

⁷ A final peak in this word family, in 5:16-18, will describe how the Lord continues to protect us from sin through the ministry of the body of Christ.

and of an authoritative lawgiver. A better translation is “lawlessness,” which helps us align it with a second definition that John gives for sin, “unrighteousness” (ἀδικία *adikia* G93) (chart):

1Jn 5:17 All **unrighteousness** is sin.

A-nomia “lawlessness” denies the idea of a standard imposed by our creator, while *a-dikia* “unrighteousness” rejects the conduct prescribed by this standard:

2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in **unrighteousness**.

5 And ye know that he was manifested *faneroō* to take away our sins;—From the future hope of his return, John looks back to the Lord’s earthly ministry, focusing on his mission “to take away our sins.” This mission has two aspects.

1. In fulfillment of God’s promise in Exod 34:7 (Hebrew), he has borne our “iniquity and transgression and sin,” taking our load upon himself and dying as our substitute, so that God now justifies us (declares us righteous).
2. But he did more than deliver us from the guilt of sin. The plural “sins” refers to the multitude of specific offenses. This is what the angel told Joseph, again using the plural “sins”:

Matt 1:21 thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The mechanism for removing sins is the indwelling Holy Spirit, who modifies our conduct:

Ezk 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Importantly, God’s Spirit must first come into us, before we can walk in his statutes. Our righteous lives do not earn our salvation. They are the result of that salvation, and thus they are evidence that we are already saved.

This past manifestation of the Lord Jesus delivers us from sin (both its guilt and its practice), just as his future manifestation motivates us in imitating his righteousness.

and in him is no sin.—Returning to the present tense, his role as sin bearer is finished forever.

Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

His present sinless condition makes him a safe refuge for us:

6 Whoever abideth in him sinneth not:—Abiding in him, deliberately and persistently cleaving to this sinless one, enables us to escape the lure of sin.

whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.—This discussion of how the Son manifests righteousness ends with a summary that covers both halves.

- “Seen him” recalls 3:2, “we shall see him as he is,” and the dynamic that we become like the heroes on whom we focus our attention.
- “Known him” recalls 3:6a, our abiding in the one who at his first coming took away our sin.⁸

⁸ “Know” here is γινώσκω *ginōskō* G1097, the verb that reflects a dynamic relationship (like “abide”), not οἶδα *oīda* G1492, reflecting an abstract mental grasp of a fact (as in 2:29; 3:2, 5).

3:7-10, The Devil Opposes Righteousness

In 3:7, a second vocative (“little children”) marks the end of the second part of his discussion of righteousness, and introduces the third, the place of the devil.

Sometimes, it helps understand a thing to consider its opposite. From our meditations on the Father and the Son, John now directs us to the devil and his followers. He refers to this being elsewhere in the book, but always under the title “the wicked one” (Figure 8, chart).

The Greek word “devil,” like the Hebrew word “Satan” that it translates, means “accuser, slanderer.” It is particularly appropriate here because the focus is on our righteousness as evidence of our eternal life, and the devil is trying to persuade God (and us) that we do not have eternal life, by drawing attention to our sins.

John has encouraged us in righteousness so far by reminding us of our family resemblance to our righteous Father, and the example and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. Now he offers a third encouragement: we should seek to deprive the devil of any basis for his accusations.⁹

7 Little children,—The Greek word τεκνίον *teknion* G5040 is the diminutive of the name in 3:1 *teknon*. John used this word once before, in 2:1, “my little children,” reflecting his role in leading them to Christ. But now, having defined them as beloved [of God] and those begotten of God (3:1), he leaves off the possessive pronoun. They are God’s children. But they are yet little children, immature, and in need of warning. Just as a parent would tell children “don’t take candy from strangers” and “look both ways before crossing the street,” John warns God’s little children of the major danger in the world in which they must live.

let no man deceive you:—Recall the emphasis on deception in the opening to the book and in the first deceit section (Figure 9).

1:6 we **lie** ... 8 ... we **deceive** ourselves ... 10 ... we make him a **liar**

2:21 no **lie** is of the truth. 22 Who is a **liar**? ... 27 the anointing ... is no **lie**

The false teachers were deceiving the faithful with two errors: thinking that sin didn’t really matter (ch. 1), and thinking that the man Jesus was not the divine Christ (ch. 2). Here, in discussing how the Devil illustrates the sign of righteousness, John probably is focusing on the deception of ch. 1. He answers this lie by restating 2:29 both positively and negatively.

he that doeth ποιέω righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.—This is a positive restatement of the principle of 2:29 (Table 2, chart).

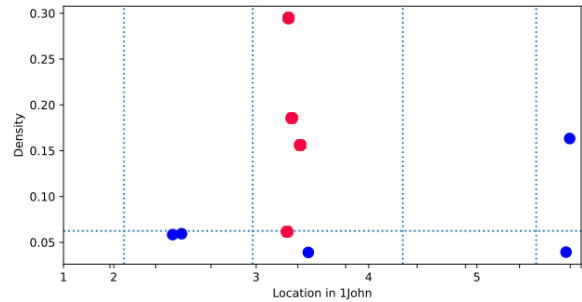


Figure 8: The wicked one (blue), the devil (red)

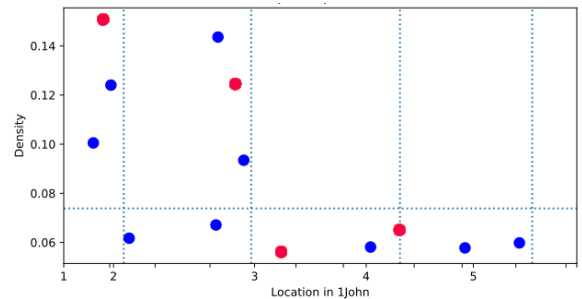


Figure 9: Words for deception in 1 John (see discussion of 2:21, 26). Blue: lie, deceive. Red: error, mislead

⁹ A focus on the devil’s slander may also anticipate the following section on the sign of love, since Paul identifies slanderous behavior as the opposite of love (1 Cor 13:5-7).

8 He that committeth ποιέω sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.—This verse also reflects 2:29 (Table 2), and like that verse, emphasizes the family resemblance between an individual and his followers. The Lord Jesus taught of both families and their practical influence on the children in his dispute with the scribes and pharisees:

	The Father		The Devil, 3:8
	2:29	3:7b	
Personal Characteristic	He is righteous even as he is righteous	... The devil sinneth from the beginning
Family Resemblance	... Every one that doeth ποιέω righteousness is born of him ἐξ αὐτοῦ .	He that doeth ποιέω righteousness is righteous, ...	He that committeth ποιέω sin is of the devil ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ...

Table 2: The Families of the Father and of the Devil

Jhn 8:41 Ye do the **deeds** of your father. ... 42 ... If God were your Father, ye would love me: ... 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the **lusts** of your father ye will do.

John clearly has John 8:41-44 in mind, for he echoes them:

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested *faneroō*, that he might destroy the works [deeds] of the devil.—This statement leads to two questions.

1. What are these “works of the devil” that our Lord was manifested to destroy?
2. How does this purpose of his first coming relate to the purpose in 3:5?

1Jn 3:5 And ye know that **he was manifested to take away our sins**;

“The works [ἔργον *ergon* G2041] of the devil” are referred to elsewhere only in John 8:41, “the deeds [ἔργον *ergon* G2041] of your father,” whom he identifies as “the devil” in 8:44. In John 8:44, he calls these “the lusts of your father,” to which his followers succumb. In other words, Satan’s work is to stimulate ungodly lusts in us. He did this when he tempted Eve in the garden, and again when he tempted our Lord in the wilderness.

Paul also uses “lust” and “works” in parallel, in Galatians 5:

Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil **the lust of the flesh**. ... 19 Now **the works of the flesh** are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 John 3:8 says that the Son of God was manifested to destroy these works, these acts of rebellion against God’s law. We should understand this statement in parallel with the purpose assigned to his manifestation in 3:5,

1Jn 3:5 And ye know that **he was manifested to take away our sins**;

“The works of the devil” in 3:8 is parallel to “our sins” in 3:5. The works of the devil are the sinful actions performed by his followers, as a result of his influence. As we have seen, the manifestation of the Son of God at his first advent saves us from our sins, that is, from the works of the devil in our lives.

9 Whosoever is **born of God** doth not **commit sin**; for his seed **remaineth in him**: and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God**.—Just as 3:1b mentioned the opposition of the world in discussing righteousness in relation to the Father, so here, in concluding the discussion of the devil, we are reminded of the section about the Father in 2:29b.

10 In this the **children of God** are manifest *faneros*, and the children of the devil:—We saw in Figure 6 that the concentrated references to manifestation begin and end with the manifestation of the antichrists. Here is the final reference to that manifestation, and the first was

1Jn 2:19 ... they went out, **that they might be made manifest** that they were not all of us.

The clue that gives them away is the sign of righteousness, showing that they are not in God’s family:

whosoever **doeth not righteousness is not of God**,—“Of” is ἐκ (*ek* G1537), the preposition used to describe family descent in 2:29 and 3:8a.

By way of transition, he anticipates the second sign of life, which he is about to discuss:

neither he that loveth not his brother.—This keyword transitions to the next section.

3:11-24, The Sign of Love

We begin this new section, like every section, by discerning its external limits and its internal structure. Then we can work through how John develops his theme.

External limits: This section, like the other two signs in the second panel (Figure 1, chart), is clearly marked by distinct vocabulary that it shares with the love section in the first panel, in this case, the word “brother” (ἀδελφός *adelfos* G80). The first instance of this word in the second panel is in the transitional verse 3:10,

1John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

All the others are squarely within the section, and extend through 3:17. The noun and verb “love,” though not as restricted to the love section as “brother,” begin in the same transitional 3:10, and continue through 3:23 (Figure 10, chart).

The scope of the love section is marked not only internally by the keywords “brother” and “love,” but also externally, by lack of the distinctive keywords for the neighboring sections, “children” and “begotten” for the sign of righteousness, and “spirit” for the sign of belief.

Internal divisions: In this section, two devices mark the internal structure: a comparison between two examples of love (or its lack), Cain and the Lord Jesus; and a subsection marked by distinctive keywords.

3:12-17 contrasts the lack of love by Cain toward Abel (12-15), and the love of our redeemer toward us (16-17). In each, the example is followed by the implications for us.

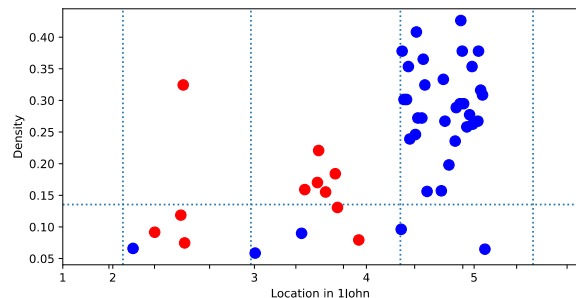


Figure 10: Love (noun and verb) in 1 John. Red dots are in the “love” sections of the first two panels.

3:18-24 present the internal evidence that we have eternal life (twice “hereby we know ...”), emphasizing three things: the testimony of our *heart*, our obedience to God’s *commandments* (recalling the sign of righteousness), and the *Holy Spirit* (anticipating the keyword of the third sign of life in this panel).

The initial verse doesn’t fit into either of these parts, but is a fitting summary of the second discussion of the sign of love, and recalls the opening of the first love section in 2:7-8, both of which take us back to the Lord’s new commandment in the upper room from .

In sum, we can discern the structure outlined in Figure 11.

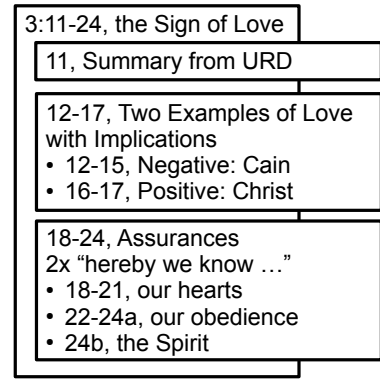


Figure 11: Structure of the Second Sign of Love

11, Summary from URD

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.—This section begins by announcing a “message” (ἀγγελία *aggelia* G31). This is one of only two instances of this word in the NT, and the other is also in 1 John (chart):

1John 1:5 **This then is the message which we have heard of him,** and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

This repetition suggests a relation between God’s light and our love for one another.

There was a strong relation between God’s light and the love sign in the first panel. Figure 12 shows all the instances of the words for “light” (φῶς *fōs* G5457) and “darkness” (σκοτία *skotia* G4653) in 1 John. They are all concentrated in two sections: the introduction, and the sign of love in the first panel. Let’s explore their relation.

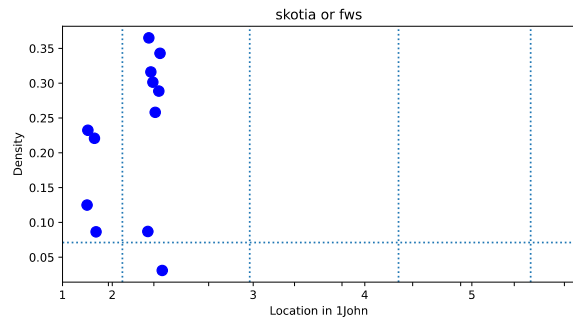


Figure 12: “Light” or “darkness” in 1 John

Recall the argument of the introduction: our Lord’s life on earth demonstrated what it is for a man to live in intimate fellowship with God.

1Jn 1:2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

John and the other apostles observed this life, and now declare its principles to their converts, realizing that the only way we can have fellowship with each other is by joining the fellowship between the Father and the Son:

1 Jn 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

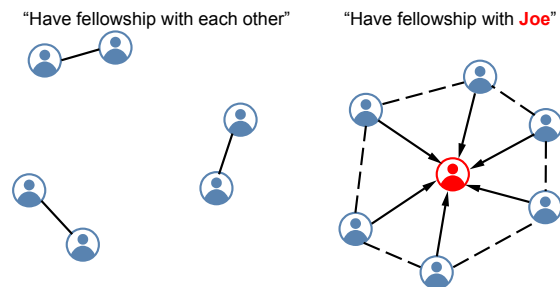


Figure 13 illustrates the underlying principle.

But God is light, so for us to have fellowship with him, we must walk in the light, as he is (chart):

Figure 13: How having fellowship with the Father, as the Son does, brings us into fellowship with one another

1Jn 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is **light**, and in him is no **darkness** at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in **darkness**, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the **light**, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The first message, in 1:5, tells us that to enter into this close fellowship with the Father, we must walk in light, as he is light. So it is not surprising that when John first expounds the sign of love, he again emphasizes the theme of light (Figure 12):

1Jn 2:9 He that saith he is in the **light**, and hateth his brother, is in **darkness** even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the **light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11 But he that hateth his brother is in **darkness**, and walketh in **darkness**, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that **darkness** hath blinded his eyes.

The first message is that God is light. Our fellowship with one another depends on our fellowship with God. That fellowship requires us to walk in God's light. So our love for one another depends on walking in the light. The first message, in 1:5, thus leads directly to the second message, that we should love one another.

from the beginning—The first exposition of the sign of love began with a reminder of the Lord's command to his disciples, in the upper room, to love one another:

1Jhn 2:7 I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, ...

What is this "old commandment" that is yet "new"? The notion of a "new commandment" recalls our Lord's words in the upper room,

Jhn 13:34 A **new commandment** I give unto you, **That ye love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

The second message, in 3:11, takes us directly to that command to love one another.

12-17, Examples of Love, and their Implications for Us

John develops this responsibility with two examples, one negative, the other positive.

12-15, Negative Example: Cain

12 Not as Cain,—The first example is Cain (chart). Physically, he was the eldest son of Adam and Eve. The record here is in Genesis 4:

Gen 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou

shalt rule over him. 8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

who was of (ἐκ) that wicked one,—Genesis emphasizes that Cain was the first child of Adam and Eve. But spiritually, he had another parent. The preposition “of” is the one we have seen used before to describe family descent. We are born of (ἐκ) God (2:29; 3:9, 10), evildoers are of (ἐκ) the devil (3:8), born of their father the devil (Jn 8:44), and now Cain is of (ἐκ) the wicked one (leaving the name “devil” behind in this new section).

and slew his brother.—He bore witness of his inward character by his outward action, in slaying his brother.

And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.—Consider two questions: 1) What were his evil works? 2) Why did he slay Abel?

The only works recorded of the two brothers before the murder are the sacrifices that they brought to the Lord.

Gen 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4a And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.

Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong with either type of offering. Both are later commanded as part of Israel’s worship. But Hebrews draws our attention to the attitude with which the offerings were brought:

Heb 11:4 **By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, ...

Abel brought his offering as an expression of his faith in God. That was not Cain’s motive. Perhaps he did it out of a sense of duty, or of self-righteousness. This lack of faith is reflected in how each selected his offering. Cain just brought some of his produce, reserving plenty for himself. But Abel brought the firstlings of his flock. He saw the animals reproduce, and gave the first ones to God, trusting that the Lord would provide more for him.¹⁰

Hebrews tells us that this faith made his sacrifice “more excellent,” and the record of Genesis goes on to state,

Gen 4:4b And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.

To “have respect unto” means to gaze at (שׁוּחַ *shaḥah* H8159). He paid attention to Abel, but not to Cain. Note that his attention is directed first to the person, and only then to the offering. Later Scriptures tell us the significance of God’s attention:

Psa 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
16 **The face of the LORD is against them that do evil**, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

Hab. 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold (רָאָה H7200) evil, and **canst not look** (נִבֵּט H5027) **on iniquity**:

The Lord paid attention to Abel because he was righteous, and ignored Cain because he was not. Hebrews confirms this explanation:

10 Compare the faith of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, who out of her meager stores first fed the prophet of God, trusting the Lord to provide for her and her son later. Cf. Prov 3:9-10; Matt 6:33

Heb 11:4 **By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which **he obtained witness that he was righteous,**

God's attention to Abel's sacrifice showed that Abel was (already) righteous. Abel, a man of faith, brought his sacrifice out of worship and thanks to the Lord. Cain, who was "of the wicked one," perhaps thought to win God's favor by his sacrifice. But Proverbs twice reminds us that this gets things backwards:

Pro 15:8 **The sacrifice of the wicked** is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Pro 21:27 **The sacrifice of the wicked** is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Now we can answer the first question: what were Cain's evil works? They were his sacrifice! Spiritual exercises are of no intrinsic value. Cain treated worship as a way to gain God's approval, rather than as an expression of gratitude for a relationship that already existed. From Cain on down, the children of Adam try to put God in their debt by their service toward him, but the only service he accepts is gratitude for a relationship into which he has already brought us.

Now we turn to the second question: how does the failure of his sacrifice motivate the murder of Cain? Cain desired something that his brother had and he did not have—the approval of God.

If Cain wanted God's attention, he should have consulted Abel. Instead, he succumbed to envy. This attitude is the antithesis of love, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13 (chart),

1Co 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; **charity envieth not**; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

That envy led him to slay his brother Abel, and become the prototype of the lack of love.

Later, when God gave Israel the ten commandments, he capped the list with the command, "thou shalt not covet." For example,

Ex 20:7 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

Coveting is closely related to envy.¹¹ If my neighbor has something that I want, coveting describes my attitude toward the object, while envy describes my attitude toward my neighbor (Figure 14, chart). Paul, in his spiritual autobiography in Romans 7, says that this commandment brought him to realize his sin:

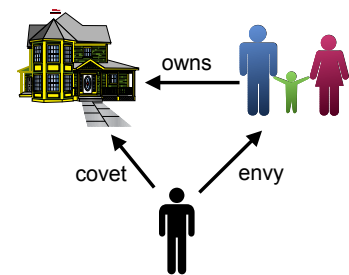


Figure 14: Coveting and Envy

Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

There is strong evidence that this tenth commandment summarizes the others,¹² characterizing a self-centered attitude of heart. Cain's attitude toward Abel is a prototype of all sin.

11 See note on the relation between coveting and envy.

12 D.N. Freedman, *The Nine Commandments*. New York: Doubleday, 2000. Summary at <https://jewishlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/freedmand.pdf>.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.—As often, the vocative marks a break, here between Cain’s example, and the implications for us. The particular vocative, “my brethren,” emphasizes the relation that Cain violated and that we ought to observe.

The first implication is that the world will hate us. The Lord warned his disciples in the upper room:

Jhn 15:18 If **the world hate you**, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore **the world hateth you**.

We saw this warning already in 3:1, discussing the sign of righteousness:

1Jn 3:1 therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

The children of the devil have always opposed the righteous, and that will continue.

The second implication is that we we ought not to hate our brethren. In fact, our love for the brethren is evidence of eternal life:

14 We know οἶδα oida G1492 that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.—Contrast the indicative with the commandment of 2:7-8 (based on John 13:34), the “should” of 3:11, and the imperatives of 3:18 (“let us love”) and 4:7 (“Beloved, let us love one another”). John assumes that his readers are believers. He writes “that ye may know that ye have eternal life,” and the indicative reflects this orientation. But he also is aware of the continuing pressure of sin (ch. 1), and urges them (imperative) to keep their focus on the things that matter.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.—It’s always worth noticing John’s use of the verb “abide” (μένω *menō* G3306, sometimes translated “remain,” “continue,” or “dwell”).

Once we have passed from death unto life, we are to abide in Christ as branches abide in the vine, sharing his life and bearing fruit for him (2:6, 2:24d, 27b, 28a; 3:6, 24 (2x); 4:13 (2x)). But as with our family, there are two options. We can be the children of God or of the devil; we can abide in Christ or in death.

Note that the default state is death, and we abide, continue, in that state until we “pass from death unto life.” This sequence echoes what John taught in his gospel,

Jhn 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God **abideth** on him.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.—If we abide in death, then death, not life, abides in us, just as in John 3:36, the wrath of God abides on us.

16-17, Positive Example: Christ

Again, he states the example first, then outlines the implications for us.

16 Hereby perceive we¹³ the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:—Here is the positive example that balances v. 12.¹⁴

13 Ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν, perfect tense, the finished work of Christ. Other instance of the clause are present tense, based on the Spirit’s ongoing work in our lives.

14 John will develop this further in the third panel: 1Jn 4:9-11. 2 July 2025: The use of ὅτι in this verse deserves more study. It may be exegetical, explaining the love of God, rather than causal, and “hereby” may look back.

When he described the non-love of Cain for Abel, he gave practical implications for us. So now, he tells us the implications of our Savior’s love for us.

and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—The Lord’s command in John 13:34 was that we should love one another “as I have loved you.” He showed his love for us by giving his life for us, so we should be willing to die for the sake of our brethren.

In our day and age, this is a fairly safe commitment to make. The occasions when we could help a brother by dying are few and far between. But if we are truly willing to make that kind of sacrifice, it ought to show itself in lesser sacrifices that present themselves more often. Just because they are more common, they present a more pointed test of the truth of our love.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?—Are we sensitive to the material needs of our brothers and sisters? Recall James’ admonition to his readers (chart):

Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

True love for one another will show itself in action, just as hatred shows itself in action. Once again, we are reminded of the critical relation of abiding (here translated “dwelleth”).

At this point, we may be a bit confused. As long as we were distinguishing righteousness (obedience to God’s commands) from belief (a mental attitude) and love (an emotion), the three signs seemed distinct, each in its own neat category. But here, and in fact in the first panel, John is commanding them to love. How is the sign of love related to the sign of righteousness? The next section explains.

18-24, Assurances of Eternal Life

18 My little children,—The vocative marks a break. Up to this point, John has been exploring the three signs in isolation from one another. Before he turns for the second time to the sign of belief, he introduces this paragraph, which has two functions.

1. It pulls the three signs together, showing them to be facets of the same pattern of behavior. We see this in v. 18 (love, deed, truth) and again in v. 23 (commandment, believe, love) (Table 3).
2. It reminds us why we care about the signs: they assure us of our standing with God. At the beginning and end of the section (vv. 19, 24), he reminds us, “Hereby we know.”

Sign	3:18	3:23
Righteousness	In deed	His commandment
Love	Let us love	Love one another
Belief	In truth	Believe on his Son Jesus Christ

Table 3: 3:18, 23 as summaries of the three signs

let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.—Here is the first of the two summary verses (the second being 3:23). True love must be “in deed and in truth.” But deeds are what we do, and belong to the domain of keeping God’s commandments, while truth is the hallmark of appropriate belief. Words for truth and deception peak in the first belief section (Figure 9), while the verb “to do” peaks in the most recent righteousness section (Figure 15). John is telling us that the three signs are really facets of the same pattern of behavior.

This unification is important. The signs are not alternatives. Abundant love for the brethren does not make up for lack of righteousness, or a false belief about the Lord Jesus. All three will be manifest in one who truly has eternal life.

19-20, Our Heart

The next verse takes us back to the reason we care about these signs: validating our spiritual condition. 3:19 is the first of the two “hereby we know” statements that set off the paragraph.

This paragraph is built around two key words (Figure 16, chart). The first, “heart,” appears only in 3:19-21. The second, “commandment,” is common in the first righteousness section, but appears only here in the second panel, in 3:22-24. Together they clearly pick out this section (Figure 16), and the shift from heart to commandment marks two paragraphs in the section. We begin with the discussion of our heart.

19 And¹⁵ hereby we know¹⁶ that we are of the truth,—Now John anticipates his purpose in writing (5:13), knowing that they are indeed on the side of truth.

Hereby” refers to the love he has just described, a love in deed (righteousness) and truth (orthodox belief). These signs show the life of God in us.

He explains this in other words:

and shall assure our hearts before him.—What does John mean by the “heart”? Unlike Greek, Hebrew has no distinct word for the conscience.¹⁷ But the heart, the center of the inner life, frequently describes what we would call a conscience. Paul (a Jew, writing in Greek) describes the work of the law in the *heart* as stimulating the *conscience* and the *thoughts*:

Rom 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their **hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

And twice, David’s guilty conscience is described in terms of his heart:

1Sa 24:5 And it came to pass afterward, that **David's heart smote him**, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

2Sa 24:10 And **David's heart smote him** after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

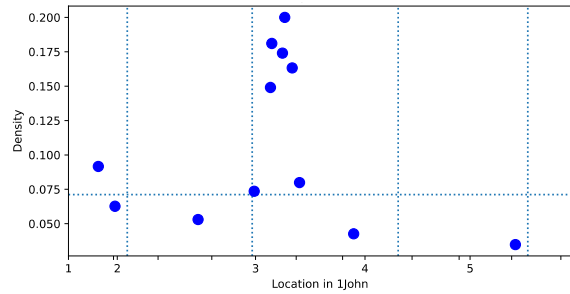


Figure 15: "To do" (ποιέω ποιεῶ G4160) in 1 John

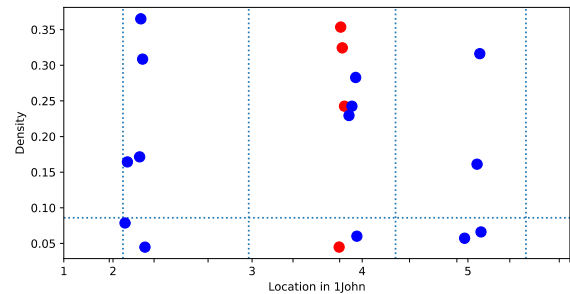


Figure 16: Commandment (blue) and heart (red) in 1 John

15 The conjunction is missing in Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, but present in Sinaiticus and Ephraimi (5th cy), and is also the majority reading. Its presence is critical to the exposition here, which takes “hereby” as looking back to the behavior described in v. 18, rather than starting a new thought.

16 γνώσκω G1097. MT has the present tense, though eclectic texts prefer the future.

17 συνείδησις appears only 1x, in Eccl 10:20, for “thought”: שׂמֶלֶךְ

Repeatedly, John has encouraged us that we can know we are God's children based on our actions (righteousness, love) and our belief. But God's children often have tender consciences. Paul, as an unbeliever, thought he was blameless before God:

Php 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

When we receive the Lord, suddenly we are much more conscious of our sinfulness.

How should we respond when our hearts are uneasy, torn with doubts? John immediately confronts this circumstance:

20 For if our heart condemn us,—As the Holy Spirit conforms us to the image of Christ, he often makes us aware of sins with which we need to deal. Our conviction is not unhealthy. Recall how John started the book (chart):

1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

A claim to be without sin (like Paul in Php 3:6) is self-deception. How do we reconcile 1 John 1:8 with the high standards of righteousness, love, and belief that John has been presenting?

God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.—The answer is that our conscience is not the final arbiter of our spiritual condition. God is. Compare Paul's words in 1 Cor 4:

1Co 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. **4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.** 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

In fact, the next verse in 1 John 1 has already told us God's perspective:

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

For the believer, a guilty conscience is the signal, not to despair of our salvation, but to confess our sin and claim the complete cleansing that he has already promised. The result is that our heart no longer condemns us, preparing us to perform God's commandments.

21-24a, God's Commandments

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,—The vocative leads us from the Heart section into the Commandment section. As with the vocative in 3:18, the leading sentence recalls the previous key word (heart) while introducing the next section. As we have just seen, the doubts of our heart are silenced, not by complete victory over sin, but by the assurance of the effectiveness of the means God has provided to lead us step by step toward Christlikeness.

then have we confidence [παρρησία *parrhsia* G3954 boldness] toward God.—The benefit of having our consciences clear before the Lord is confidence, or perhaps better, boldness. John is particularly fond of this word, and uses it four times in this epistle, and nine in the gospel. In the gospel, the word describes the Lord's boldness in speaking to the people. But in the epistle, it always describes our attitude in the presence of God:

1John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have **confidence**, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The Second Panel, 2:29-4:6

1John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we **confidence** toward God.

1John 4:17 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.

1John 5:14 And this is the **confidence** that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Before the resurrection of Christ, when sinful people confront the Lord, or even one of his angels, they inevitably shrink away in shame (chart):

When the Lord comes to visit Adam and Eve in the garden after their sin:

Gen 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God** amongst the trees of the garden.

When Israel, at the foot of Mount Sinai, receives God's law (Ex 20:1-17):

Exo 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

When Isaiah sees a vision of the Lord high and lifted up:

Isa 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

When the Lord Jesus fills Peter's net as he is calling him to discipleship:

Luk 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

What has changed, to allow sinful people to come before God boldly, rather than in terror? The answer is the finished work of Christ, which neither Adam, nor the Israelites, nor Isaiah, nor Peter in Luke 5, had yet seen, but which John has set forth in the introduction to this epistle:

1:7 the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin

1:9 he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

2:1-2 we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.

When we avail ourselves of this provision, our hearts no longer condemn us, and we have boldness to approach God.

Like many other points in 1 John, this teaching is anticipated in the Upper Room Discourse, where the Lord anticipated that disciples will sometimes have troubled hearts, and where he tells them the solution:

Jhn 14:1 **Let not your heart be troubled:** ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Jhn 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. **Let not your heart be troubled**, neither let it be afraid.

In the gospel, the disciples' hearts were troubled because the Lord was announcing his departure, first in death and then in ascension, and they did not want to lose his fellowship. But sin also

breaks our fellowship with him, and the solution, emphasized in 1 John 1, is the same: “believe in me.”

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him,—We come into his presence in order to lay our concerns before him, with the assurance that he will grant our requests.

Note the parallel between this verse and Heb 4:15-16 (chart):

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly [with boldness *μετὰ παρρησίας*] unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

In both cases,

- we have boldness to approach God
- the basis for this boldness is the work of our high priest
- the purpose of the boldness is to find help.

The unconditional nature of 22a may seem troubling. Even John later adds a qualification:

1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence *παρρησία* that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

But the rest of 3:22 effectively adds that qualification.

because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.—

The assurance that he will grant our requests rests on the assumption that we keep his commandments, which is defined as doing what pleases him. Our focus is not on an external checklist, but on an inner alignment of our will and desire with his. But if we are “keeping his commandments” in this way, “whatsoever we ask” will indeed be “according to will.” 3:22 and 5:14 are saying the same thing.

In t3:18-24, it is interesting that obtaining a clear conscience comes before keeping his commandments. The world says, “If you obey God’s law, you will enjoy a clear conscience.” John says, “If your conscience is clear, you can ask God for what you need to obey his law.” Obedience is the result of our forgiveness, not the cause of it, “lest any man should boast.” Obedience without forgiveness is fleshly, and not pleasing to God.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.—Like 3:18, this verse brings together all three of the signs of eternal life:

- focus on his commandments: righteousnesses
- believe on the name: belief
- love one another

So there are not really three distinct signs, but one: obedience to his commandments, which enjoin us to love one another and to believe that the man Jesus is the divine Son.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.—John connects this emphasis on keeping God’s commandments with a theme that recurs throughout the book, that of abiding in Christ, last seen in 3:6.

The final verse in this section looks ahead to the role of the Holy Spirit in the next section.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.—John will repeat this key statement in the third panel:

1John 4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

He mentions it here because it is relevant to our assurance. Also, it prepares us for the role of the Spirit in propagating the true belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the subject of the next section.

4:1-6, The Sign of Belief

3:24 introduced a new word to the epistle: Spirit (πνεῦμα *pneuma* G4151). Readers of the gospel will recognize this word as the name of the divine being who is in focus at several points. To name only a few:

He came upon Jesus at his baptism, and would one day come upon his people:

John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

He brings the new birth:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

He is the one whom Christ promised would come upon his people after his ascension:

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This word dominates the second belief section (Figure 17). But John prepared us for it in the first belief section, where we learned of the anointing that God has given us. When we studied that passage, we saw that in the OT, anointing is a symbol for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon someone. The first belief section taught us that we have been given this anointing, in the form of the promised Spirit of Pentecost. The present section will teach us how to recognize this Spirit and what we can expect from him. The three instances in the rest of the epistle reinforce the assuring role from 3:24. The first of them repeats that promise:

1John 4:13 **Hereby know we** that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

The last two also assure us, teaching that the Spirit bears witness with our Spirit:

1John 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is **the Spirit that beareth witness**, because the Spirit is truth.

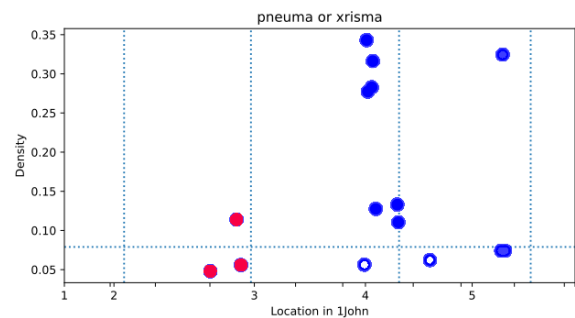


Figure 17: Spirit (πνεῦμα *pneuma* G4151) (Blue) and Anointing (χρῖσμα *chrisma* G5545) (Red). Solid dots mark belief sections.

1John 5:8 And there are **three that bear witness in earth**, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

These in turn echo Paul’s teaching in Romans 8,

Rom 8:16 The **Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit**, that we are the children of God:

In this section, the function of the Spirit is to promote the true doctrine of the Lord Jesus.

The section is chiastic, X-ABC-X-CBA. Each panel is introduced by a vocative and a summary with a reason (“because”) (Figure 18, chart). The first panel diagnoses the spiritual condition of the world, occupied by two kinds of spirits. The second panel gives the prognosis: victory for God’s children, in the midst of rejection. Each panel has three elements:

- “Here we know,” emphasizing the two kinds of spirits
- A description of the Holy Spirit and the sound teachers
- A description of the false spirits (the spirit of Antichrist)

1-3, Diagnosing the Spirits

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:—The Holy Spirit is not the only spirit being active in the world. The gospel speaks frequently of evil or unclean spirits, over whom the Lord had power. Paul also warns that their appearance is an expected part of the great apostasy (chart):

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and doctrines of devils;

They were active in apostolic times, for one of the gifts in the church at Corinth was “discerning of spirits” (1 Cor 12:10). Now John wants all the believers, not just a gifted few, to be able to make this critical discrimination between the Holy Spirit and Satan’s demons.

because many false prophets are gone out into the world.—The false teachers of 2:18-28 are evidence of the activity of false spirits. They had recently left (ἐξέρχομαι *exerchomai* G1731) the church (2:19). Now, with his only other use of this verb in 1 John, John explains the spiritual power that guided and empowered them.

The episodes with evil spirits in the gospels suggest dramatic exhibits of their power, but John teaches that they also work through false teachers, whose behavior may appear quite normal.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:—Now he gives the criterion by which God’s children can detect the false teachers.

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:—Compare the error as it is described in the first panel:

1Jn 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

And in the third panel, it takes this form:

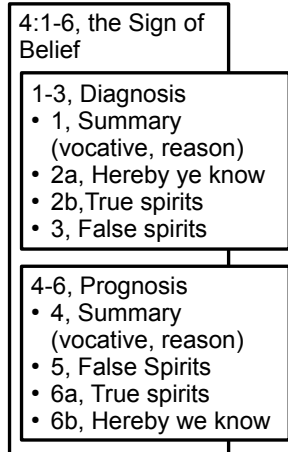


Figure 18: Structure of Second Belief Section

1Jn 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that **Jesus is the Son of God**, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

1Jn 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that **Jesus is the Son of God?**

In the phrasing in 4:2, John draws directly on the gospel,

John 1:14 And **the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us ...

In 2:22, the point is that the man Jesus is the Christ, the Greek translation for Hebrew Messiah, the promised descendant of David, who would be called “the Son of God”:

2Sa 7:14 I will be his father, and **he shall be my son**. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

Psa 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, **Thou art my Son**; this day have I begotten thee.

The false teachers denied the relation of Father and Son between God and the man Jesus. The crucial issue is the union of the human and divine. So here, one must recognize that the Messiah, whom the believers named “Jesus Christ,” actually came in the flesh, as a real man.¹⁸

Paul, like John, warns of the danger of deceiving spirits, and like John, he gives us a test to detect them (chart):

1Co 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth **Jesus accursed**: and that no man can say that **Jesus is the Lord**, but by the Holy Ghost.

Paul’s statement that (the man) Jesus is Lord (Yahweh, the eternal God) is parallel to John’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The statement with which Paul contrasts this statement, “Jesus is accursed,” is less clear,¹⁹ but note that it uses only the human name “Jesus.” It is true that Christ, the God-man, was accursed for us:

Gal 3:13 **Christ** hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, **being made a curse for us**: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

But one form of false teaching at the end of the first century²⁰ is that the divine Christ left the man Jesus at the crucifixion, so that God’s curse rested on the man, but not on the Son of God. If this is Paul’s meaning, the first test of 1 Cor 12:3 is also a close parallel to 1 John 4:2-3.

and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.—The reference here is perhaps to 2 Thessalonians 2, which predicted the coming of the man of sin:

2Th 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the **mystery of iniquity doth already work**: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And **then shall that Wicked be revealed**, ... :

18 See note for an exposition of the spiritual significance of the incarnation.

19 Thiselton lists 12 explanations that have been proposed. NAC quotes a 13th by Winter.

20 That attributed to Cerinthus, who was a contemporary of John, according to Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* (*Against Heresies*), 3.3.4 (<https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/john-and-cerinthus/>)

“That Wicked [one]” is the one John calls the Antichrist (2:18), and “the mystery of iniquity” is John’s “spirit of antichrist,” which both Paul and John recognize as already active.

4-6, The Prognosis

The antichrist is a scary adversary to anticipate, and John hastens to reassure his readers.

4 Ye are of ἐκ God, little children,—Once again, the use of the preposition, recalling 2:29, alludes to our being born of God, the children of God. He addresses them, not as my little children (2:1; 3:18), but simply as little children, probably referring to their relation to God, and their need for his particular care and nurture in the light of the danger.

and have overcome them:—This verb (νικάω *nikaō* G3528) and the cognate noun “victory” (νίκη *nikē* G3529, only in 1 John 5:4) are favorites of John. 1 John uses them most densely of any NT book (3.25/1000 words), and the Revelation is second (1.72/1000). These uses grow out of the Lord’s assurance, the single use of the word family in the gospel:

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have **overcome** the world.

The verb in the Revelation and in 1 John reflects the conflict with the spirit of Antichrist that dominates both books. John is preparing the “little children” for the combat that culminates in the great struggle with Antichrist in the last times.

1 John concentrates the word family in three places (Figure 19). Interestingly, each concentration is in a different sign. 2:13-14 is in the midst of the first sign of love. Our current instance is in the sign of belief, and the four instances in the third panel, 5:4-5, are discussing the sign of righteousness, keeping God’s commandments. All three characteristics are essential in our conflict with the spirit of Antichrist.

Both 2:13-14 and 4:4 claim that victory has been achieved (perfect tense verbs, contrast the present tense verbs in 5:4-5). Three points invite comparison in these two cases (Table 4).

First: *who does the overcoming?* In 2:12-14, the three titles “fathers,” “young men,” and “little children”²¹ suggest a scale of spiritual maturity. In 2:13-14, robust young men have achieved victory, but now it is little children, whom we might think are particularly vulnerable. How can this be?

The second comparison concerns *who is overcome*. The young men are in direct combat with the wicked one. The little children have overcome “them,” the spirits motivating the false prophets. A young Christian with a firm grasp on the basic truths of the gospel can detect the errors of seductive teaching, even if they are not yet ready to engage direct Satanic attack.

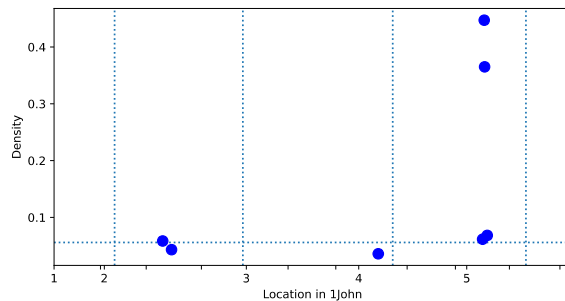


Figure 19: “Overcome” and “victory” (5:4) in 1 John

	2:13-14	4:4
Who overcomes?	Young men	Little children
Who is overcome?	The wicked one	The false teachers
What brings victory?	Personal strength; indwelling Word of God	Indwelling Holy Spirit

Table 4: Promises of Victory

21 2:12 uses τέκνιον (G575), the word used in 4:4, while 2:13 uses παῖδιον (G3813).

The third comparison is in *the means of victory*. The young men overcome because they are strong, and the word of God abides in them. They have deep knowledge of God’s word. So it was that our Lord overcame Satan in the wilderness, three times answering him with the Scriptures. But the resource of the little children is simply the indwelling Holy Spirit:

because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.—His presence should assure the little children of protection.

Now we return to the contrast we saw at the end of the second righteousness section, between the children of God and the children of the devil.

5 They are of the world:—The false teachers belong to the world system.

therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.—This association governs both what they say, and the welcome they receive.

6 We are of God:—We are God’s children. (9/3/25: Parallels with the other two belief sections suggest that this final verse is a test of belief. In this case, “we” would be the authoritative apostles of 1:1-4, and the test would be reception of their teaching.)

he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.—So we can expect God’s people to hear us, while those who are not of him will not understand or receive (apart from a supernatural work of the Spirit).

Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.—So John concludes his analysis of the two spiritual forces active in the world, and with that, the second panel.

Review of the Second Panel

John has now taken us twice through the three signs of eternal life. He has not been simply repeating himself. Each presentation of the signs adds new detail and brings new perspective.

Figure 20 shows the percentage of each panel that is devoted to each sign. We observe:

- The sign of love receives the most attention in all three panels.
- The emphasis in the first panel was on the sign of belief, reflected in the conflict with the false teachers, recently departed from the assembly.
- In the second panel, belief receives less emphasis than in the other two panels, and the focus is on righteousness.

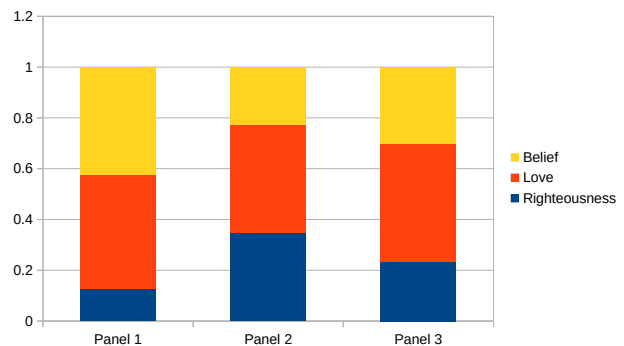


Figure 20: Emphasis on the Signs in Each Panel

The Sign of Righteousness

We observed a major shift in how righteousness is characterized between the first two panels (Table 5). The first panel emphasizes God as the lawgiver, and speaks of keeping his commandments. The second panel describes him as our father, and righteousness as our family

resemblance to him. The Lord Jesus is presented as our example, in contrast with the devil and his family.

	2:3-6	2:29-3:10
Vocabulary	Keep, Commandments	Child, Begotten, Righteous(ness), Do, Sin, Devil
God's role	Lawgiver	Father

The Sign of Love

Table 5: The Sign of Righteousness in the First Two Panels

The two love sections have two points in common.

- Both of them emphasize the word “brother,” motivating our love by our spiritual relation to other believers.
- Both of them have an extended assurance section.

	2:7-17	3:11-24
Vocabulary	Light	Heart
Assurance Section	Sins forgiven, overcomers, know Christ	God is greater than our heart

We can discern some distinctions (Table 6). In the first panel, the distinctive keyword is “light,” the external direction from God introduced in 1:5-7. In the second panel, the love section is marked with “heart,” God’s internal guidance to us. The assurance section in the first panel focuses on the experiences common to each stage of spiritual growth, while in the second panel, it urges us to rest in God’s provision.

Table 6: The Sign of Love in the First Two Panels

The Sign of Belief

Table 7 compares how the first two panels characterize the sign of belief. Both of them use the verb “go out” (ἐξέρχομαι *exerchomai* G1731), the only two instances of this verb in the book, to describe the departure of the false teachers.

	2:18-28	4:1-6
Vocabulary	Anointing, Abide	Spirit(s)
Test	Jesus = Christ; Father and Son	Jesus Christ is come in the flesh

Table 7: The Sign of Belief in the First Two Panels

The first panel exhorts the faithful to abide in the Lord and let his word abide in them. It tells of the anointing (the Holy Spirit) that God has given us to teach us, though it does not use the word “spirit.”

The second panel focuses on the spiritual context, warning that other spirits are also active, in the departed false teachers. The test becomes more focused in the second panel: the issue is the incarnation of the promised Messiah.

We will update this analysis of the themes as we move through the third panel.

Notes

Characteristic Vocabulary in 2:29-3:10

Numerous vocabulary items peak in the righteousness element of the second panel. Let's collect them.

Figure 1: “children [τέκνον *teknon* G5043] of God”, those who have been begotten [γεννάω *gennaō* G1080] of God

Figure 2: “righteous(ness)” (the noun δικαιοσύνη *dikaio sunē* G1343 and the adjective δίκαιος *dikaios* G1342), and the verb “do” (ποιέω *poieō* G4160). Contrast the corresponding element in the first panel, which focuses on “keeping” (τηρέω *tēreō* G5083) God’s “commands” (ἐντολή *entolē* G1785) and his “word” (λόγος *logos* G3056).

Figure 6: “appear” or “manifest” (φανερώω *faneroō* G5319), and the cognate adjective φανερός *faneros* G5318

Figure 7: noun ἁμαρτία *hamartia* G266; verb ἁμαρτάνω *hamartanō* G264)

Figure 8: the devil

2:29 The Righteousness of the Father and the Son

There is a deep relation between the righteousness of the Father and that of the Son, one that extends to our righteousness. John’s gospel makes this particularly clear. Consider five passages.

Jhn 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.—The Son’s behavior is an *imitation* of the work of the Father. Here is the fundamental dynamic.

Jhn 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

And in particular, he makes the Father’s righteous works visible to us.

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.—This verse adds the dimension of *purpose*. His actions are not just an unintelligent imitation, but an attempt to achieve what the Father wants done.

John 8:28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. 29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.—To the previous two points, the Lord adds *the divine claim*, “I am.” He as the divine Son naturally seeks to do only what the Father does (5:19, “what he seeth the Father do”), and only in keeping with the Father’s purposes (5:30, “the will of the Father”).

John 9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.—This verse adds the *urgency* of such behavior. “I must.” This is the driving purpose of his life.

Jhn 14:10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.—Finally, we learn of the *mechanism* by which this unity of behavior and purpose is achieved: the dwelling of the Father and Son in one another. The word “dwell” here is μένω *menō* G3306, which he is about to open up in ch. 15, and which is so central to our relation to him in 1 John. As we abide in him and he abides in us, we will bring forth much fruit. We will demonstrate his righteousness, as he demonstrates the Father’s.

Keeping and Doing

John contrasts keeping God’s law or word with doing righteousness. This may reflect the paired use of these terms in several OT texts that use שמר and עשה in parallel. Unless otherwise noted, LXX has φυλάσσω for שמר and ποιέω for עשה. (In the light of this usage, it is curious that John uses τηρέω rather than φυλάσσω.) Asterisks mark verses that distinguish the objects of the verbs. Here are the hits through Deut, and selected ones after that

* Gen. 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall **keep** φυλάσσω the way of the LORD, to **do** ποιέω justice and judgment;

* Ex. 15:26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt **do** that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and **keep** all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

Ex. 31:16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall **keep** the sabbath, to **observe** the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

Lev. 18:4 Ye shall **do** my judgments, and **keep** mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.

Lev. 19:37 Therefore shall ye **observe** all my statutes, and all my judgments, and **do** them: I am the LORD. *Direct object pronoun is present after עשה. Parallel expressions in 20:8, 22; 22:31; 25:18; 26:3.*

Deut. 4:5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. 6 **Keep** therefore and **do** ~~them~~;

Deut. 5:1 And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and **keep**, and **do** them.

Deut. 5:32 Ye shall **observe to do** therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. *Also 6:3, 25; 7:11; 8:1; 11:22, 32; 12:1, 32; 15:5; 17:10; 19:9; 24:8; 28:1, 15, 58; 31:12; 32:46*

Deut. 7:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and **keep**, and **do** them,

* Deut. 13:18 (MT 19) When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which is right* in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Deut. 16:12 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt **observe** and **do** these statutes.

Deut. 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to **keep** all the words of this law and these statutes, to **do** them:

Deut. 26:16 This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore **keep** and **do** them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Deut. 28:13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:

Selected:

* 1Kings 11:38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and **do** that is right in my sight, to **keep** my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

* 1Kings 14:8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who **kept** my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to **do** that only which was right in mine eyes;

* Ezek. 18:21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and **keep** all my statutes, and **do** that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

* Psa. 106:3 Blessed are they that **keep** judgment, and he that **doeth** righteousness at all times.

2Chr. 7:17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and **do** according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt **observe** my statutes and my judgments;

φυλάσσω G5442 in John

Table 8 shows the LXX correspondences.

Just once in 1 John:

1John 5:21 Little children, **keep** yourselves from idols. Amen.

Only 2 instances in the gospel:

John 12:25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall **keep** it unto life eternal.

John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I **kept** them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

	שמר	נצר	זהר		Total
φυλάσσω	363	9	7		457
διαφυλάσσω	13	0	0		30
τηρέω	9	7	0		37
διατηρέω	8	4	0		24
προσέχω	16		1		120
φρουρέω	0	0	0		3
Total	469	62	22		

Table 8: LXX Correspondences for φυλάσσω and related words

So for John, when he does use φυλάσσω, it means to protect a thing from harm.

But John is very fond of τηρέω, and in the gospel often uses this word of keeping God’s word: 8:51f; 14:15, 23f, 15:10, 20; 17:6 (but also of the Father protecting them in ch.17 *passim*).

τηρέω dominates Song and Prov (1.97 and 1.34 /1k words, respectively, others < 0.25), and is very rare in the pentateuch and historical books. φυλάσσω is much more evenly distributed (Figure 21). Perhaps John knows Deuteronomy in Hebrew, but Prov in Greek? Proverbs uses τηρέω twice of keeping a father’s commandments,

Prov. 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep τηρέω my commandments:

Prov. 3:21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep τηρέω sound wisdom and discretion:

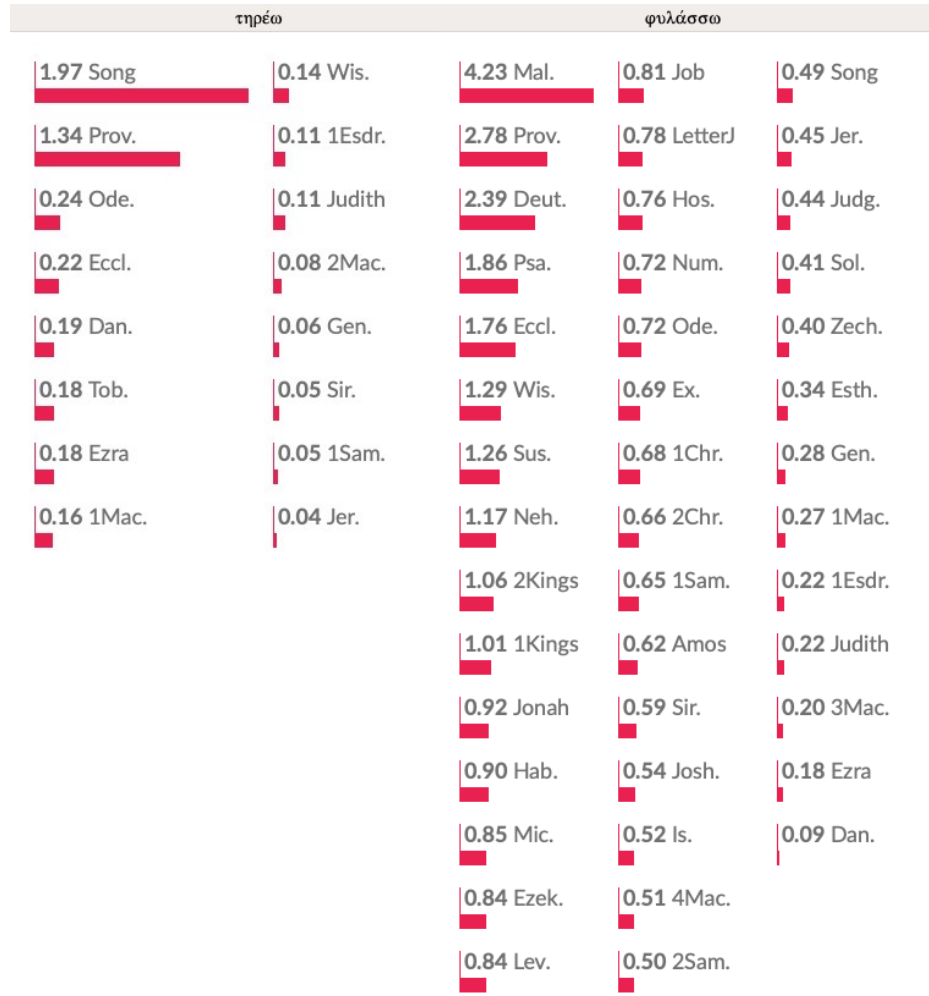


Figure 21: Hits/1000 words by book for τηρέω (left) and φυλάσσω (right)

but 19:16 follows the Deuteronomic pattern,

Prov. 19:16 He that keepeth φυλάσσω the commandment keepeth τηρέω his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

But perhaps this is the point! John views the commandments as those of the heavenly Father, and applies the family term rather than the legal one, even in the first panel.

φανερός G5318, φανερώω G5319

This word family is a favorite of 1 John, appearing 10x out of 69 in the NT, 4.65/1000 words in the book. No other NT book has more than 9 instances (2 Cor, John), 2.48/1000 (Col). Within 1 John, Table 9 analyzes the instances by who or what is revealed, and whether the revelation is past, present, or future.

Ref	What	When
1:2a (For the life was manifested , and we have seen it, and bear witness,	The Lord's life with the Father	Past
1:2b and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)	The Lord's life with the Father	Past
2:19 they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.	False teachers	Past
2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear , we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.	Christ	Future
3:2a Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:	Believers	Future
3:2b but we know that, when he shall appear , we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.	Christ	Future
3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;	Christ	Past
3:8 For this purpose the Son of God was manifested , that he might destroy the works of the devil.	Christ	Past
3:10a In this the children of God are manifest [adj] ,	Believers	Present
3:10b and the children of the devil [are manifest [adj]]:	False teachers	Present
4:9 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.	Love of God	Past

Table 9: φανερός and φανερώω in 1 John

Relation to ἀποκαλύπτω G601

Cremer on φανερώω: "It differs from ἀποκαλύπτω as to exhibit differs from to disclose, so that in their relation to each other ἀποκαλύπτω must precede φανερώω, cf. 1 Cor. iii. 13, ἀποκαλύπτω refers only to the object revealed, but φανερώω directly refers to those to whom the revelation is to be made. Comp. Col. iv. 4, Eph. iii 5 [but Eph 3 mentions the recipients!]; Col. i 26, iii. 4; Tit. i 3 . See especially the combination in Eph. iii. 3."

Covet τῆν H2530 ἐπιθυμέω G1937 and Envy, Jealousy κἰν H7065 ζηλόω G2206

Table 10 shows the vocabulary mappings in the LXX.

Cf Matt 5:28, But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust ἐπιθυμέω after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

	τμη	κιν	κη	κιν		Total
ἐπιθυμέω	7	0	19	0		55
ἐπιθυ*	13					169
ώραϊος	2					36
ζηλόω	0	27	0			49
παραζηλόω	0	4	0			10
παροργίζω	0	1	0			57
παροξύνω	0	1	0			52
Total	21	34	30	112		

Table 10: Vocabulary for coveting, envying, jealousy

The emphasis in the tenth commandment is admiring something with a wish to possess it, to take it from your neighbor. Coveting is an attitude toward a *thing* that your neighbor possesses; envy is the attitude toward your *neighbor* because he has something that you do not.

Heart in John's Gospel

Only here in 1 John do we read about the heart. The term is similarly concentrated in the gospel (Figure 22), in the URD. The first three references are to unbelievers—Isaiah's prophecy of hard hearts in 12:40 (2x), and Satan entering the heart of Judas (13:2). But the other four comfort the hearts of the disciples:

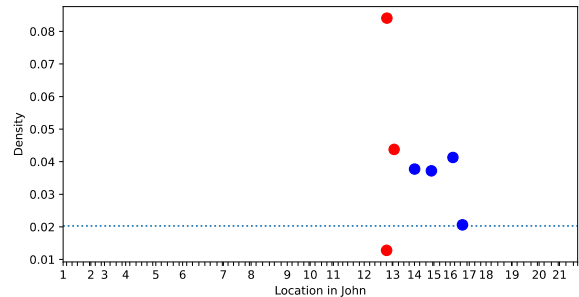


Figure 22: Heart (καρδία kardia G2588) in the gospel of John

John 14:1 Let not your **heart** be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your **heart** be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 16:6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your **heart**.

John 16:22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your **heart** shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

Now in the epistle, John is telling how they can enjoy this peace of heart, through loving one another.

ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ G4100 vs. ΠΕΙΘΩ G3982

Table 11 shows the LXX correspondences. The two verbs appear together here:

2Tim. 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed πιστεύω, and am persuaded πειθώ that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Girdlestone: “The man who believes God is he who, having received a revelation from Him, realises it, and acts up on it as true. The man who trusts God is he who casts all his hopes for the present and future on God. It is the former quality, not the latter, that God regards as a condition of justification. Faith must precede hope, because a hope for the future which is not grounded up on a present acceptance with God is no hope; and a sense of acceptance which is not accompanied with a living, working faith is an unreality.”

	אמ any	בט any	סה	קו	Total
ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ	44	0	0	0	81
ΠΕΙΘΩ	1	76	10	2	175
ΓΕΝΟΙΤΟ	25	0			55
ΕΛΠΙΖΩ	0	45	19	2	114
Total	140	161	37	47	

Table 11: Verbs for Believing

Revelation → Faith → Hope → Deliverance

The Implication of 4:2 “come in the flesh”

1 John uses the word “flesh” in two places.

It is the heart of the confession he requires to test a teacher:

1 John 4:2 Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the **flesh** is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the **flesh** is not of God:

But it is also one of the main characteristics of this present evil world:

1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the **flesh**, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

This negative reputation of the flesh is a constant theme throughout the NT:

Mat 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the **flesh is weak**.

Rom 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the **infirmity of your flesh**:

Rom 7:25 So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the **flesh** the law of sin.

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the **flesh**, but after the Spirit.

Rom 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the **flesh**, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Gal 5:17 For **the flesh lusteth against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

This tension between God’s spirit and our sinful flesh makes 4:2 remarkable. When he says that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is not simply saying that he became incarnate. He is characterizing the Lord’s incredible condescension in becoming our kinsman. For four millennia, the human flesh had given evidence of its weakness, its opposition to the Spirit of God, its inclination to sin. Now God himself puts on flesh. He who is mighty in holiness, dons the strait-jacket of flesh. He who is spotless and pure, immerses himself in the cesspool of flesh. He does not just come among us. He assumes our weakness, the greatest threat to our godliness, and triumphs over it.

Paul brings all these ideas together concisely.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- “the law ... was weak through the flesh”: He begins, as John does in 2:16, reminding us of the pollution associated with our flesh.
- “God ... condemned sin in the flesh”: God judges and condemns this polluted flesh. He does this by “sending his own Son,” an action is characterized in two ways:
 - “in the likeness of sinful flesh”: he is identified with us in our weakness. Compare Paul’s use of “likeness” in Rom 6:5, “planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” He comes as our representative.

The Second Panel, 2:29-4:6

- “for sin,” the standard LXX phrase describing a sin offering. He sent him to die, and by this sacrifice, he condemned the flesh.
- “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us”: the purpose and result of his work is that we, led by the Spirit, might live righteous lives, even while we are in the flesh, just as he did.