

LIFE, LOVE and LIGHT

The Gospel of John and First Epistle of John

By

Norman B. Harrison, D.D.
Pastor, Bible Teacher and Evangelist

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PART TWO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE, LOVE AND LIGHT

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ABIDING LIFE

"And now, little children, abide in Him" (I John 2:28)

Between the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John there is the closest possible relationship. The latter supplements the former. Of this intent we are made at once aware as we turn from the opening words of the one to those of the other:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . In Him was life; and the life was the light of men . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace, and truth" (John 1:1,4,14).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)" (I John 1:1, 2).

Moreover, as we peruse the pages of the Epistle, so brief in extent, so majestic in thought, yet so strangely simple in the language that conveys it, we meet with the same three dominant and recurrent words that characterize the Gospel: Life, Light, Love.

Evidently here also we are dealing with the three simple, primal, irreducible elements by which Deity has manifested Himself to men.

But more, interwoven with the above is another set of words that stand out upon these pages

signifying an advance upon the Gospel view of Light, Love and Life.*

* The sequence of these words is somewhat inconsequential. However, there is reason for the order most natural to the Gospel not holding for the Epistle. In the Gospel, Life is first manifested; then the Love that prompted its giving; then the Light that results from its coming. In the Epistle, however, the possession of the Life is presupposed. All Christian experience is dependent upon the possession of Life: its development leads into the Light of Life; then the Love of Life; resulting in the fullness of Life itself.

They are: Fellowship, Know, Witness. These are expressions of experience. When Light, Love and Life are permitted to do their work; when they are appropriated and assimilated; when they really register in the heart and are given their wonted response in the life, they bring about a fellowship with GOD and with all others of like experience; they produce an assurance, a certainty that rests upon proven reality; they beget a witness within and without that spells victory for this life and the life that is to be.

Still more; there is one other word pervading all the pages of this Epistle, serving as the binder between these two sets of words. It is the little word "**abide**." (Its presence is found in the various words used by our Authorized Version, "**dw**ell," "**contin**ue," "**remain**"). It occurs some twenty-three times. It is this word that marks and makes possible the advance of the Epistle over the Gospel. It is the key to Christian experience, by which the divine attributes are transplanted into human soil to the transforming of character and conduct.

What, may we ask, has intervened since the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord that imparts to the Apostle's Epistle a viewpoint so definitely in advance over that taken in his Gospel, yet so closely related to it?

The answer is, Pentecost. On that day the prophetic feast of centuries was fulfilled. The promised gift of the HOLY SPIRIT was given, sent from the presence of the Father by the glorified CHRIST (Acts 2:33). By His coming the Body of CHRIST was formed and believers were baptized into it. Since then, through the centuries, the Father's immediate response to the believer's faith in His Son is the bestowment of His HOLY SPIRIT, thereby building him into this already formed, mystical Body.

This is the Abiding Life, the bringing to realization in experience of the blessed truths taught by our Lord JESUS CHRIST in the upper room, as recorded by John in his Gospel, chapters 14-17. Nor is it the privileged experience of the few. It is the life into which, however undeveloped or unworthily lived, He has brought all believers by a common bestowment.

That all may enter into its blessedness, as a possession whose wealth is priceless, such is the purpose of this post-Pentecost supplement of the Gospel. As JESUS taught, so has Pentecost wrought.

1. **THE POSITION OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.** Grafted into the Vine we are henceforth identified with Him in a union of nature and a communion of life. As we "**abide**" in Him, He abides in us; the knitting of natures becomes actual, the flow of life continual and effectual. As the branch is nothing and therefore can "**do nothing**" apart from, severed from the vine, so is the believer in CHRIST.

2. **THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT.** Given to us to "**abide**," He is the secret of the Abiding Life. By Him it is made possible. By His incoming the union with CHRIST was effected. By His indwelling the communion of life is carried on. He is the "sap," and by its life-flow the branch takes on a likeness to the Vine, an inward, unobtrusive, transforming process.

3. **THE PRACTICAL OUTPUT IN FRUIT-BEARING.** "**Herein**," says JESUS, "**is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.**" Thus the entire Trinity is involved in the Abiding Life, just what we would expect from the fact that it is a triune experience, both in appropriation and expression, of Light, Love and Life. Nor must we fail to note some of the specified forms of fruit-bearing: love for one another; joy to the full; an emboldened prayer-life; a conformity to His commandment (John 15:7-14).

As the tree is known to us by the flavor of the fruit we gather from its branches, so is CHRIST made manifest to the world today; it is by the ministration of His own life and nature through us, so abiding in Him that He flavors all we are and do. How utterly the world needs it! How utterly He depends upon us for it!

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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