

Introduction to 1 John

In our journeys through the Bible, I am sure we begin to see things connect as they happen. Things like we saw this morning in Sunday School: Sin breeds enemies. When Abraham slept with Hagar and Lot with his two daughters a world of trouble comes: the Ishmaelites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites all enemies of Israel. Things like what Daniel saw. He was able to serve God with great strength and power because he knew his God and was intimately acquainted with Him. We see why Job was able to say, "Though He slay me, still will I trust Him," for he knew his God loved him. Today, as an introduction to 1 John, I would like to survey the Scriptures to get an understanding of the city that John was writing to, why he wrote this letter and some implications for today.

We see the city of Ephesus introduced to the Gospel by Paul in Acts 19. Verse 8 has Paul entering the city and preaching in the synagogue for three months. The Jews didn't like it, so he went next door and preached in the hall of Tyrannus (9-10). He preached Jesus and Him crucified here for over two years. With this a church was established. Something happened in verse 23 and following, Paul went against Diana of the Ephesians. He stepped up and turned their goddess on her head. He sought to destroy such speculations and godless myths, as he was to write to their pastor Timothy a little later on in 1 Timothy 4.7-9.

What a grand beginning for a church. It would be as if we were to go to Hacienda Heights and speak the Gospel and overthrow the Buddhist temple there. What excitement, what bravado. The love of the people for Paul and for God was extreme. Later Paul would commend them for their fervent love for God and for all the saints (Ephesians 1.15). Think back to the time when you first heard the Gospel, when God entered into your life. Think about how things changed. For some it was sudden and noticeable; for others, like myself, it was noticeable after a look back many years later. I realized how God exchanged hatred and bitterness and anger and envy for love and peace and kindness. He still is doing these things today. Praise Him! Things change when we are brand new in Christ because we finally come to understand life-not merely eternal life but real life- as Paul wrote the Ephesians (2.1-10) and as Jesus told the people in John 10.

On Paul's way back to Jerusalem in Acts 20, believing that he would never see the Ephesians again (20.25), Paul called the elders of the church (20.17) to come to him. He recalled to them his years with them in 17-21. I like Paul because he can say much in five verses. He then tells them of God's plan for him in verses 22-25 (short, four verses). He then warns them of something that will happen if they are not careful. In 28-31 he warns of savage wolves from outside and men from the inside that would tear the church up by distorting or "improving" the truth. Then he declared a blessing and left after prayer.

Wow. Such a clear cut warning could never be missed or ignored. But verse 38 tells us they never got that far for they were too grieved over verse 25 to hear it. Possibly they never took that warning to heart. Paul was merely echoing what Jesus had said years before in Matthew 24.12.

Time passes and faith wanes as does love that is not freshly kindled by fellowship with God

and His family. Over time, an easy familiarity with Christianity entered the church. What was bold and glorious became habitual and half-hearted. These believers weren't the ones who saw Paul in Acts 19, who participated in the overthrow of Diana. These were the children and grandchildren who never had a cause of their own (sounds too much like today). The thrill was gone and the flame became a flicker. John would write the words that Christ spoke to this church in Revelation 2.4. The Christians in Ephesus left the love for God and for all the saints Paul commended them for. By this time Paul was dead, we don't know what happened to Timothy, and John-their pastor-had been exiled to Patmos. What a history and what a fall.

What seems to have happened was their desire to maintain the standards of Christ was lacking. They were in a spiritual battle that Paul warned them about (Ephesians 6) that demanded them to be different, a peculiar people, holy; set apart for God's total usage (that's what Paul wrote to Timothy when he pastored this church). However, the Ephesians did not want that. They were satisfied with cloning people into their image of Christ. They were satisfied with the status quo, and Christ condemned them for it. One writer tells us:
All this involved an ethical demand. It demanded a new standard of moral purity, a new kindness, a new service, a new forgiveness-and it was difficult. And once the first thrill and enthusiasm were gone it became harder and harder to stand out against the world and to refuse to conform to the generally accepted standards and practices of the age (Barclay, p 4).

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: David R Williamson.

©Teach for God Ministries.

Website: www.teach4god.com.

Email: sermons@teach4god.com.

Contact Teach for God

admin@teach4god.com

©2005 Teach for God Ministries (See our [usage guidelines](#).)