

# CHURCH HISTORY LITERACY

## *Chapter 22*

### Gregory the Great

By Mark Lanier

As we have studied the first 500 years of the church, we have seen the Roman Empire reach its peak as the greatest and most powerful civilization then known to man. We have also seen the Roman Empire split into two, a Western and Eastern section, with the Western section eventually disintegrating completely. While the massive Roman Empire crumbled, the church grew from a rag-tag band of followers in an outlying country of the Empire through the pains of persecution and martyrdom into the religion and faith of both the Eastern division of the Empire and the remnants of the Western division.

Also, we have seen the controversies that arose as the church sought to establish the boundaries of scriptural doctrines that define orthodox faith and expose heresy. As the church grew, it took on a structure much like the Roman Empire itself. The church had Bishops who oversaw the major metropolitan areas much as a Roman Governor would have during the Empire. The stronger Bishops, who governed greater areas, greater numbers, and greater budgets, grew in their power over lesser Bishops. In addition, the Bishop of Rome became a central power force using certain scriptures and Roman inheritance laws to explain a primacy of the Roman Bishop over the church.

As we unfolded this history, we considered a number of distinguished men in the church who have borne the title of “Church Fathers.” These were men who were considered the formative figures in the development of the church. Of these Western church fathers, four are also called “Doctors” of the church.<sup>1</sup> Of the four doctors, we have studied three: Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. Today, we study Gregory the Great, the fourth doctor of the early Latin Church. Gregory is also considered the last of the Latin Church Fathers. With Gregory, we clearly leave the Roman Empire and enter the medieval ages.

Why was Gregory considered so important to the church? Why did he get the addition of “the Great” to his name? These are questions we will answer in two ways. First, we will look at basic biographical information on Gregory. Then, we will consider the thought of Gregory, reading from some of his writings we still have today.

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<sup>1</sup> “Doctor,” from the Latin *docere*, means “to teach.” These were not doctors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century sense of a medic who brings treatment and health. Rather, they were considered the supreme teachers. We still use the word slightly in this manner when we speak of one having a “doctoral degree” like a PhD.

## BIOGRAPHY

Gregory was born around 540 in a well to do Christian family in Rome. His ancestors were Roman nobility as well as Church nobility. He had at least one Pope that was a blood relative.<sup>2</sup> He also had relatives that served Rome in civil service capacities.

Gregory's family had a number of estates and properties, including property in Rome as well as Sicily, in southern Italy. The wealth enabled Gregory's family to get him an excellent education with an emphasis on law. Despite the wealth, the pedigree, and the education, Gregory's youth was difficult. He grew up at a time when Germanic tribes constantly targeted Rome. Within a period of 20 years, Rome was taken and retaken six different times. Each time, there was more devastation on property and people. In the midst of these troubles, Gregory took his education and provided leadership for the city of Rome, serving as "Prefecture" of Rome (this was the highest civil post at the time in the city).

Later in life, Gregory's parents changed from their secular callings and went into full time ministry. Gregory would soon follow the same path. After much prayer, Gregory decided that rather than walk the city in his comfortable riches, he should more directly serve God. So, Gregory sold his possessions, turned his properties into monasteries, and began living the life of a monk at the monastery of Saint Andrew in Rome.<sup>3</sup> It was in the monastic life that Gregory became familiar with the Rule of Benedict. In what is typical of human history, God took an apparent tragedy and used it for the good of his kingdom. The invading Lombards ransacked Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino, sending the monks fleeing. Those monks fled to Rome where they brought the Rule of Benedict to Gregory's monastery. Not only did the monks bring the actual Rule of Benedict, but they also brought their personal reminiscences about Benedict as well. Gregory would come to write the biography of Benedict that we used and discussed last week.

Gregory spent three years in Saint Andrew before the Pope sent him as an ambassador to the Emperor in Constantinople. While in Constantinople (a six year stint), Gregory spent a great deal of time teaching and preaching. Gregory also entered into fierce debate with the Patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius (not the Eutychus we studied from the 400's) over the nature of the resurrected body. Eutychius taught that the resurrected body was only spiritual. Gregory taught that it was physical. Gregory won that dispute before returning home to Rome in 586.

When Gregory returned to Rome, he found things dismal. There were floods, wars,

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory was the great great grandson of Pope Felix III (483-492).

<sup>3</sup> Gregory actually started this monastery. This monastery was on the site of Gregory's home in Rome.

rumors of wars, earthquakes, inflated prices, and most every sign that Jesus gives about the age before his return. The plague stalked the City killing large numbers. Gregory, along with many others, believed that the signs pointed to an imminent return of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> In 590, Pope Pelagius II died from the plague, and on September 3, 590, Gregory was made Pope.

Gregory wrote about this experience at the time. He did not want the job of Pope. In fact, he actively sought against the position. At the time, Gregory considered his quiet monastic life one he would term “leisurely freedom” (*otium*). The negative of that life (which Latin would form by adding *neg-* to *otium* - *negotium*) was “business” (hence, the English word “negotiate”). Gregory did not long for the business of the church!

As Pope, Gregory found himself in a better position to address the many problems around him. The invading Germanic tribes that were devastating the Italian peninsula were called Lombards. The Lombards did not invade like the Goths had previously. The Lombards would burn, pillage, and destroy most everything in their path. Gregory’s skill set came into great use. More so than any of the secular powers, Gregory was able to negotiate with the Lombards and bring some measure of peace back to much of Italy.

Gregory’s administrative skills also served the church and society well. He reorganized the church’s properties into what would later become the Papal States. In the process, Gregory made the church more responsive to the affliction and hunger of the devastated cities and countryside.

In addition to the physical and administrative responsibilities of the church, Gregory worked hard to increase the spiritual acumen of its leaders. Too many Bishops were not of the godly caliber that Gregory thought necessary. Gregory took great pains to try and appoint new Bishops that put God and His work first in their priorities rather than somewhere further down the list!

As mentioned earlier, the influence of Benedict and the Benedictine Rule on Gregory was profound. Gregory was the first Pope who had ever been a monk. Not surprisingly, Gregory chose 40 Benedictine monks, headed by Augustine of Canterbury (a title he got *after* his mission work), to go into England to evangelize the island. As mentioned earlier, Gregory wrote the life of Benedict, ascribing a measure of fame to the man and his monastic Rule. Gregory also saw that the Rule itself was used in countless monasteries of the period. In fact, Gregory is often termed the “co-founder” of Benedictine monasticism, along with Benedict himself.

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<sup>4</sup> In one of his sermons, Gregory went over the list of signs for the end of time. He noted that of the list Jesus gave, most everything was fulfilled: nation was rising against nation, the distress in the world was greater than ever before, earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters were constant, and of course, the plague was killing great numbers of people. Gregory did note that the signs in the sun, moon, and stars had not yet occurred; yet most felt that those changes were well on the way. Gregory used this sermon to motivate the people to live lives ready to meet the Judge of the whole earth.

Gregory paid great attention to the worship of the church. Scholars differ on the degree to which Gregory reformed the liturgy and worship of the church; however, all scholars agree that his reforms were quite significant. Scholars similarly disagree over whether Gregory actually created the chanting form that bears his name ("Gregorian Chants") or whether that name was applied to chants that devolved in the succeeding two centuries from those of Gregory's Church.

While Pope, Gregory not only dealt with international problems of the world and spiritual problems of the Church, but he also dealt with the health problems of Rome. The plague that was running rampant in Rome when Gregory first assumed the papacy was one of his first crises to handle. Gregory declared that the church populace should organize around the seven hills and seven main churches in Rome and all march at once together toward St. Peter's, praying and worshipping the whole time. Through this unity, the church was seeking divine intervention on behalf of the City. History does record that the plague did, in fact, abruptly stop in 590 in Rome. Another interesting historical aspect to this is Gregory insisted that whenever anyone sneezed, which was frequently a symptom of the plague, that the sign of the cross be made over that person with the declaration/prayer that God would bless that person. Many historians recognize Gregory as the reason so many in Western Civilization still say, "God bless you" when someone sneezes.

In this same vein, Gregory was a pragmatist. When reports came to Gregory that a certain man had a gift of miraculous healings, Gregory found the man and sent him to a hospital and told him to use his gift! Gregory felt if the man in fact had the power to heal people, "it would be proved there."<sup>5</sup>

One of Gregory's greatest contributions to the church came from his writings. Gregory wrote more than most any pope preceding him or following him in the next 500 years. We still have a huge body of his work available today. We have a good number of the sermons Gregory delivered (including 40 sermons Gregory preached on the gospels while pope between 590 and 592 along with other sermons on Ezekiel and the Song of Songs). Additionally, Gregory wrote hundreds of letters (we have about 850 still today preserved in 14 books at the Vatican) along with what might have been the longest book ever produced by Christianity up to that time, a commentary on Job.

We miss something of Gregory if we fail to note that, in the midst of the incredible international and internal pressures and problems he confronted, Gregory's correspondence reveals that he tenderly dealt with individuals and individual problems for which most men in his position would never find time. For example, one ex-monk named Venantius received some pretty stern letters from Gregory over leaving the vows of his monastic calling and settling into a married life of business. The post-monastic life was not one that brought great glory to God. Instead, continued complaints made their way to Gregory about both Venantius's treatment of people (including a Bishop of the church) as abuse by Venantius's wife meted out to certain peasants. Gregory tried, to little avail, to get Venantius to turn his life back around. Years later, when Venantius was

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<sup>5</sup> *Dialogues* 3.35.

in poor health, Gregory wrote him a letter, not only encouraging him and praying for his best recovery, but extending warm and personal thoughts for the two young daughters of Venantius as well. After Venantius died, the daughters wrote Gregory, sending him a gift they had made along with their thanks. Gregory responded to this letter, in a warm and gentle manner, urging the girls to live good lives for God.

Gregory lived most of his adult life in poor health; most days as an adult he would take some type of rest to get through the day. He frequently taught and preached, with a somewhat weak voice, from a chair rather than standing.<sup>6</sup> Gregory died on March 12, 604 at the age of about 64. He would join Leo I (see earlier class on Leo) as the only two Popes to get the appellation of “the Great” to their names.

## **GREGORY’S WRITINGS**

Much of what we know about Gregory’s views on the Bible, faith, the Church, and life, we find in his writings. Mentioned earlier, his Commentary on Job (termed by its Latin title, *Moralia in Iob*) was a major work without comparison in the church, at least coming from the Pope. The book was started from lessons he taught other clergy while serving as the papal ambassador in Constantinople. The book was finished and assumed its final form later during his papacy.

Rather than try to condense each of Gregory’s significant writings into some sense for this lesson, we will look at various topics that Gregory addresses throughout his work in an effort to understand some teaching of this great doctor! Much of this condensation of teaching, along with actual excerpts from Gregory, can be found in English in the excellent book, *Gregory the Great* by John Moorhead (Routledge 2005).

## **GREGORY ON THE BIBLE**

The word “Bible” was not yet in common parlance for God’s word. Gregory would refer to our Bible as “holy writings” or “scripture.” He would also use the words “divine utterances.” For Gregory, the Bible was like a letter from God to man. We should see it as the very words of God written by the Holy Spirit using humans merely as the pens for the writings. As such, the Bible should be a source of daily meditation and reflection. For those unable to read the Bible, Gregory thought pictures of Biblical stories should be placed in churches so that people might at least dwell on the stories of the Bible, even when unable to read the actual words.

Gregory found it silly when people raised questions of authorship about certain parts of the Bible. In his commentary on Job, for instance, he does not spend a lot of time discussing who might have written the book. The question of authorship, for Gregory,

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<sup>6</sup> The chair of Gregory is still around today in the church of *San Gregorio Magno* (“Saint Gregory the Great Church) in Rome.

was “utterly redundant.” The author was the Holy Spirit (although Gregory does believe that Job himself was the pen used by the Holy Spirit to record the text).<sup>7</sup>

Gregory believed in the Bible as a progressive revelation of God. Gregory would assert that over time, God would reveal more and more of himself and the Biblical account would become more and more thorough and complete. Hence, in the older parts of the Bible, God would speak to Abraham. When speaking with Moses, God declared himself the God of Abraham, yet told Moses that God never told Abraham his name! (Ex. 3:6, 6:3) That is not to say that the Bible ever taught one thing in the Old Testament and then something different in the New Testament. For Gregory, the teaching was always the same, what varied was the approach and clarity of the message taught.

Gregory used allegory to understand and teach much of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. For New Testament accounts of the life of Jesus, Gregory did not see beyond the historical literal interpretation of the actual events. Still, even in the words and historical deeds of Christ, Gregory frequently could find a spiritual or allegorical lesson. This is interesting to read today, especially in light of Gregory’s penchant for writing and teaching on the more obscure passages in the Bible. For him, the obscurity was itself an indication that some deeper allegorical meaning must be found somewhere. In this vein, Ezekiel was handed a scroll written on the inside and out. This was, for Gregory, a scriptural insight that the Bible itself was written on two sides – a simple, easy-to-read outside that pointed the simple man to God’s rule and direction in life, and a hidden inside of deeper allegorical understanding and insight that offered great treasures to those who diligently sought its lessons.

A good example of Gregory’s approach in this sense is found in his teachings on Ezekiel 1. In the Ezekiel passage, there is a vision of a wheel within a wheel that is beside creatures that have four faces. On this passage, Gregory writes:

What is this thing, spoken of as one wheel, to which is added a little later “like a wheel in the middle of a wheel.” Unless the New Testament, which lay hidden allegorically in the letter of the Old Testament? So it is that the same wheel which appeared beside the living creatures is described as having four faces, because over the two testaments holy scripture is divided into four parts, the Old Testament into the law and the prophets and the New into the gospels and the acts and the sayings of the apostles.<sup>8</sup>

While Gregory could almost be said to luxuriate in the obscurities of scripture, he was never doubtful about the overreaching arch of the Bible. In his own words, “throughout Holy Scripture, God speaks to us with one purpose only, to draw us to love himself and our neighbor.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Moralia in Iob*, praef. 1f.

<sup>8</sup> *Sermons in the Prophet Ezekiel*, 1.6.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 1.10.14

## GREGORY ON THE CHURCH

Frequently, Gregory had cause to teach and write in the church. Much like Augustine, Gregory believed that the visible church was full of both the saved and the damned. Gregory was astute enough a historian as well as observant enough in his day to note that the success of the church in the world lent itself to a huge inflow of hypocrites. There were many in the church that were not in the Kingdom of Heaven! These people were readily identifiable by a close examination of their sins and works. But, the ultimate winnowing of the wheat from the chaff would come from God the Judge himself.

That is not to say that Gregory had false perceptions of the powers of sin. Gregory also taught that those who were not able to live lives as sinless as they wished, yet still tried to do so, were still embraced by the church and Jesus himself.<sup>10</sup>

Gregory's preaching to the church was never too doctrinal. For Gregory, most of the doctrinal fights had already been waged and decisions on orthodoxy established. Gregory felt his role was more to call the church to repentance and holiness. So, many of his sermons come across emphatic on works and deeds. Like Augustine, however, Gregory also insisted on the supremacy of God's grace in salvation. Gregory would write that people could never be saved by the cleanness of their own hands. It is God who must act first within us. We follow of our own free will after God's independent work.<sup>11</sup>

Gregory had great zeal for evangelism in the church. As we already discussed, in 596 he sent 40 Benedictine Monks to England to evangelize the island. By Christmas of 597, Gregory was able to write that over 10,000 people "placed in a corner of the world" had been baptized by Christmas 597.<sup>12</sup> The "corner" comment was a nice pun in the Latin (Gregory had a penchant for puns). The English people (the "Angles" of "Anglo-Saxon fame) in Latin were called *Anglorum* while the word for "corner" Gregory used was *angulo* (from which we derive "angle" in English – or Angleish).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Moralia in Iob*, 35.18.45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 16.25.30.

<sup>12</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum*, 8.29.

<sup>13</sup> Bede the Venerable wrote the Christian history of the English people a little over a hundred years later. Bede studied Gregory extensively in writing his history, calling Gregory the "Apostle" for the English nation. Bede recounts a story of Gregory before he became Pope at his punning best. Gregory was walking through a slave market and notice some fair haired boys offered for sale. After Gregory twice asked the name of the boys' race, "He was told that they were called *Angli*. 'Good', he said, 'they have the face of angels (a pun the Latin for "angel" is *angeli*), and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven'. 'What is the name', he asked, 'of the kingdom from which they have been brought?' He was told that the men were called *Deiri* (An area in Northeast England). 'Deiri', he replied, 'De ira! (Another pun. Gregory takes the name of the

We do find in the works of Gregory, the concepts of penance for sins as well as purgatory. We have failed to note the developments of these doctrines in the church thus far, but will hopefully cover them as part of future lessons that recap certain doctrinal issues.

### **GREGORY ON THE DEVIL**

Gregory writes much about Satan, frequently calling him, “the old enemy.” Repeatedly, Gregory refers to Satan’s ultimate downfall as stemming from his arrogance and pride. Satan is seen as already defeated by God, and to Gregory, Satan was diminishing in power day by day as the centuries passed. At his best, Satan wrecked havoc, but always in ways that God could salvage for the good of his will and plan.

We fail to do Gregory justice if we do not note the pithy phraseology in which he wrote. Gregory’s words could be quite thoughtful. For example, “All the earthly things we lose by keeping can be kept by giving them away.”<sup>14</sup> Or, “There is a difference between an earthly and a heavenly building: an earthly building is constructed by gathering together what you have; a heavenly building by scattering what you have.”<sup>15</sup> Gregory would also contrast those who used the things of this world as a steward for God so they could enjoy God, with those who used God in such a manner as to try and enjoy the world.<sup>16</sup>

### **GREGORY ON PASTORAL CARE**

In his efforts to better the pastoral care of the clergy for the church, Gregory wrote four books in the early part of his papacy dealing specifically with pastoral care. In these books, Gregory first set out the type of person that should be a pastor and the motives for that person. Gregory follows that with a discussion of the virtues that should be found in pastors. Then, Gregory discusses 40 different personality types and how to preach to each. Finally, Gregory considers how Pastors should keep their own consciences clean to aid them in ministering to others.

### **POINTS FOR HOME**

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English province and breaks it into two Latin words that mean the wrath of God.) Good! Snatched from the wrath of Christ and called to his mercy. And what is the name of the king of the land?’ He was told that it was Aelle; and playing on the name, he said, ‘Alleluia! The praise of God must be sung in those parts.’” (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1) Bede notes this was the tradition handed down through the English peoples as the impetus behind Gregory sending the evangelists to England after he made Pope.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 18.18.28

<sup>15</sup> *Sermons in the Prophet Ezekiel*, 37.6

<sup>16</sup> *Moralia in Iob*, 2.9.15.

By Brent Johnson

**1. Plan for the future; prepare for the worst...best!**

<sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.<sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—<sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” (Mark 13:34-37)

**2. “Love God and our neighbor” ~Gregory...and Jesus**

The overreaching arch of the Bible.

<sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

**3. The church—call people to repentance and holiness amongst God’s grace**

<sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

## HOMEWORK

To recap, we are memorizing 1 John this year in the English Standard Version. That amounts to two verses a week. To be current, we need to have memorized 1 John 1:1-3:12. This week we add 1 John 3:14-15. We provide all verses below for your help!

**1John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

**1:5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**1John 2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4** Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of

God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **7** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

**12** I am writing to you, little children,  
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

**13** I am writing to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children,  
because you know the Father.

**14** I write to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,  
because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.

**15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of

life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**18** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. **20** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **21** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **24** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

**26** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **27** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. **28** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **29** you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

**1John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. **6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. **10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

**11**For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. **12** We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. **13** Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** Everyone who hates his

brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

**16** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

**19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;