

Recovery of Fellowship & Avoidance of Discipline, 1 Cor 11:31-32; Status Quos of Spirituality & Carnality, 1 Cor 3:1; First John 1: Introduction: Gnosticism

16. The question that arises is how is this condition to be accomplished? Since the command is fulfilled by a volitional decision, then the Scripture must give guidance about what that decision entails. We look first to:

1 Corinthians 11:31 - if [εἰ, eī: introduces the protasis of a second class condition: a supposition assumed contrary to fact] we would keep on judging ourselves [διακρίνω, *diakrinō*: to make a just analysis leading to rebound], then [ἄν, an: introduces the apodosis: a potential fact based on fulfillment of the supposition] we should not be judged [κρίνω, *krinō*: punishment of divine discipline].

v. 32 - But when we are judged [κρίνω, *krinō*: disciplined] we are disciplined [παιδεύω, *paideuō*: chastised, chastened] under the authority of the Lord [categories of discipline: (1) warning, (2) intensive, & (3) terminal] that we should not be condemned [κατακρίνω, *katakrinō*: judgment, i.e., the Great White Throne, Revelation 20:11-15] with the world [unbelievers].

17. The self-judgment is the realization of personal sin and recognition of the fact that we are out of fellowship and in status quo carnality due to a free-will decision to activate a wheel-track of wickedness.
18. Paul explained in Romans 7 his involvement in this problem and the difficulty he had bringing the influence of his sin nature under control. He also observed this same situation among believers at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 3:1 - I, fellow believers, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual [status quo of the filling of the Holy Spirit] but as carnal [status quo of the believer out of fellowship], as to mental infants in Christ.

19. From these passages we are able to bring together the following principles:
1. We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
 2. The reason we are not filled is because we are not spiritual but carnal.
 3. The carnal status is prolonged by the presence of facilitated wheel-tracks of wickedness plus a very elementary understanding of Bible doctrine.
 4. Such a lifestyle brings on divine discipline which can be avoided by self-judgment.
 5. Self-judgment is rebound: confession alone to God alone. Failure to acknowledge one's sin to God causes the believer to remain in status quo carnality.
 6. Prolonged periods in carnality result in the facilitation of wheel-tracks of wickedness which are expressed through sin, human good, and evil.
 7. The deeper a person descends into the reversionistic spiral of moral or immoral degeneracy the more difficult it is for him to admit wrongdoing.
 8. Nevertheless, rebound is always available as the escape clause from living on the Dark Side.
 9. This escape clause is available to every believer regardless of how rebellious he has become, how flawed his mental attitude, or how enmeshed he is in chronic sin.
 10. Rebound restores him to the filling of the Holy Spirit and switches on the two power options by which he can begin his spiritual recovery.
20. The details of living on the Dark Side vis-à-vis living in the Light is the subject the Apostle John addresses in 1 John, chapter 1.

V. 1 John, Chapter 1: Introduction:



1. When John wrote this epistle he was the resident pastor of the church at Ephesus but he also circulated his writings including this epistle to other congregations throughout Asia Minor (the Turkish peninsula).
2. The popular challenge to incipient Christianity was Gnosticism, a conglomeration of sects that arose in the first century A.D. that sought to explain the existence of evil in a universe created by a perfect deity.
3. The result was a collection of theologies that borrowed liberally from other religions to craft their views of good and evil. One of the major sects of Gnosticism was Iranian. It provides an example of the kind of thinking John refuted.

Elwell, Walter L. (ed.). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 445:

Types of Gnosticism.

Iranian. This branch of Gnosticism developed in Mesopotamia and reflects a horizontal dualism associated with Zoroastrian \zaw-ra-was'-trē-an\ worship. In this pattern light and darkness, the two principles or deities, are locked in a decisive struggle. Since light transcends itself and shines beyond its own realm, light particles were subjected to capture by its jealous enemy, darkness. In order to launch a counterattack and recapture its lost particles, therefore, light gives birth to a series of subordinate deities that are emanated for the purpose of doing battle. In defense, darkness likewise sets in motion a comparable birthing of subdeities and arranges for the entombment of the light particles in a created world. This cosmic realm becomes the sphere of combat for the protagonists. The object of the struggle is the winning of the human beings who bear the light particles and the effecting of their release from the prison of this world so that they may reenter the sphere of heavenly light.

4. The introduction to the book of 1 John in *The Nelson Study Bible* discusses the problem of Greek dualism's influence on the Gnostic heresy and its comments will provide further information about one of the major underlying themes of John's epistle:

Radmacher, Earl D. "The First Epistle of John." In *The Nelson Study Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 2137-38:

Historical Background. Gnosticism was a problem that threatened the church in Asia Minor during the second century A.D. Gnosticism was a teaching that blended Eastern mysticism with Greek dualism (which claimed that the spirit is completely good, but matter completely evil). This teaching was present in the church in a seminal form during the latter years of the first century. By the middle of the second century it had become a fully developed theological system, which included Gnostic gospels and epistles. John recognized the danger of Gnosticism and wrote to counteract its influence before it could sweep through the churches of Asia Minor. Based on the concept that matter is evil and spirit is good, some Gnostics concluded that if God was truly good He could not have created the material universe. Therefore, some lesser god had to have created it. According to them, the God of the Old Testament was this lesser god.

The dualistic views of Gnosticism were also reflected in the prevalent belief that Jesus did not have a physical body. This teaching, called Docetism \dō-sē'-ti-zem\ [δοκεῖν, *dokein*: to seem], claimed that Jesus only appeared to have a human body and never actually suffered pain and death on the Cross. (pp. 2137-38)

Another heresy that John addressed in this letter and personally confronted at Ephesus was Cerinthianism [Cerinthus \si-rin'-thas\]. This heresy taught that Jesus was just a man upon whom the "Christ" descended at His baptism, that the Christ then departed from Jesus just before His crucifixion.

Purpose and Themes. John most likely wrote this letter with two purposes in mind—one pastoral and one polemical. John's pastoral purpose was to promote fellowship (1:3). But for believers to have true fellowship, they needed to understand the true nature of God (1:5; 2:29; 4:7; 8). Thus the pastoral purpose naturally leads to the polemical purpose (2:26), which was to protect his readers against the deceptive ideas of false teachers. If the believers were deceived by false doctrine, they would eventually lose their unity, which is possible only in the love of Christ. Evidently some deceivers had arisen among the believers (2:18, 19, 26). If Christians could sort out truth from falsehood, they would be able to maintain their unity in the faith and have an opportunity to show love to their fellow believers (3:11). For John, a person's behavior was naturally a result of that person's belief.

In accordance with John's purpose, fellowship dominates the first portion of this letter (1:5-2:27), while assurance of salvation dominates the remainder. In addition, John develops theological ideas in the letter through explicit contrasts, such as walking in the light or in darkness, children of God or of the devil, life or death, love or hate. With these contrasts John was attempting to draw a clear line between true and false teachers.

John was writing to believers who were dealing with a particular type of false teaching, the contagious heresy of early Gnosticism. He wrote this letter to encourage them to abide in what they had heard from the beginning so that they could maintain their fellowship with God and their love for fellow believers. (p. 2738)