

## **Preface To The Three Epistles Of Saint John (1546 and 1522)**

The First Epistle of John is a genuine apostolic epistle and ought properly to follow right after his Gospel. For as, in the Gospel, he deals with faith, so here he opposes those who boast of faith without works, and teaches in many ways that works cannot be absent, where faith is; if they are not present, then faith is not genuine, but is lies and darkness. This he does, not by insisting upon the law, as James' Epistle does, but by inciting us to love as God has loved us.

He also writes vigorously against the Cerinthians, and against the spirit of Antichrist, which was beginning even then to deny that Christ was come in the flesh, and which is now for the first time really in full sway. For although men do not now publicly deny with the lips that Christ is come in the flesh, they do deny it with their hearts, by their doctrine and life. For he who would be righteous and be saved by his own works and deeds does the same as he who denies Christ, since Christ is come in the flesh in order to make us righteous and save us without our works, by His blood alone.

Thus this Epistle fights against both parties, — against those who would be in faith without any works, and against those who would be righteous and be saved with works. So it keeps us in the true middle way, that we may become righteous and free from sin through faith, and afterwards, when we are righteous, practice good works and love for God's sake, freely and without seeking anything.

The other two Epistles are not epistles of doctrine, but examples of love and faith, and have, besides, a true apostolic spirit.