

# **Exploring 1 John**

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## PREFACE

1 John teaches believers about our union with Jesus Christ and our salvation assurance in him. Jesus has come to sacrifice himself to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. He is our Lord and Savior. John encourages us to abide in Christ and to love him with all our hearts. John wants us to be careful of the idols of the world that can take our attention away from Christ. He wants us to overcome the world's temptations. John assures us that God is with us, protects us, and keeps us secure in him. John also encourages us to love and build up one another as a covenant community of believers in this sinful world. If we love one another God's love is perfected in us.

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## Lesson 1 – Walking in the Light of Christ

1 John is a letter written by the Apostle John to a specific group of believers, whom he had a close relationship. It was written about A.D. 90. John encouraged believers to live faithfully for Jesus Christ and to walk in his light in this corrupted world. He also encouraged them to love one another as believers in Christ. He warns them not to love the world or the things in the world, and to be careful of false teachings and of the schemes of evil spirits.

### Read 1 John 1:1-4

Who do you think “the word of life” is (v.1)?

What did John say about “the life” (v.2)?

John also wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-5, 14).

Jesus Christ is *the Word of Life, the Word of God, the Life, the Eternal Life, and the Light*. He came down from heaven and was born as a man. He became visible and touchable. The apostles heard, saw, and touched him. *The incarnate Word* was what the apostles proclaimed. Jesus is the incarnate Son of God who has come to save his people through his redeeming work on the cross.

What was the apostles’ purpose of testifying and proclaiming Jesus (v.3)?

Once we believe and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we enter into a covenant relationship and union with him. In our union with Jesus, we have fellowship with the Triune God. It is a heavenly communion that produces a holy joy in our hearts—an internal joy that does not depend on our circumstances, but on our union with Jesus and communion with the Triune God (v.4).

God the Father “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3). In our union with Jesus, everything he has is ours.

### Read 1 John 1:5-10

What was the message that the apostles heard from Jesus and proclaimed to the believers (v.5)?

Light is the divine nature of God. This is the first and the most important nature of God that John conveys. The second one is that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). “God is light” describes more than just his holiness and glory. He is the absolute perfection. He has no darkness and no imperfection at all, not

even a tiny bit. He does not change. He is always the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He has no beginning and no end.

What does having fellowship with God mean (v.6)?

What does walking in darkness mean (v.6)?

Why can we not have fellowship with God and walk in darkness at the same time (v.6)?

Why does walking in the light of God bring believers' fellowship with one another (v.7)?

The blood of Jesus is necessary for the atonement and cleansing of our sins. As we believe and put our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, our sins are forgiven. His sacrifice and death is imputed or credited to us, as well as his righteousness.

What do "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" and "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" mean (v.8, 10)?

True believers are those who have repented—turning away from their sins and turning their hearts to God—and put their faith in Jesus alone. They acknowledge their sinfulness and seek God's forgiveness. They want God to cleanse their filthiness by the atoning blood of Jesus. On the contrary, people who do not acknowledge their sins will not repent. They do not consider that they need God's forgiveness and the atoning and sacrificial death of Jesus for them. Therefore, they reject the gospel and the truth of God is not in them. They dishonor God and "make him a liar" because they do not believe the word of God—the scripture—that says that no men are without sin (Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3).

What will God do to us if we confess and repent from our sins (v.9)?

God is faithful and just. These are two important attributes of God. God is faithful to his people and will never abandon them. God is just and must punish our sins. He sent his Son on a mission to save us by sacrificing himself to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. Jesus bore the judgment and wrath of God on the cross on our behalf. God remains faithful and just for those who believe and put their faith in the redeeming work of his Son on the cross.

How would you discuss the truth that all people were born with sinful nature with those who do not believe this truth?

How should ongoing repentance look like in the lives of believers?

## Lesson 2 – Christ Our Advocate

Read 1 John 1:1-10 for review.

### Read 1 John 2:1-6

John addressed the believers he wrote to as “my little children.” John had a close relationship with them and wrote with a heartfelt tone.

What was John’s purpose of writing and admonishing them (v.1)?

Who guarantee the believers’ prayers are heard by God the Father (v.1)?

John admonishes believers to be obedient and faithful to God. God the Father has given us his grace by saving us from the consequence of our sins, sending his own Son to die on the cross as our substitute. God the Father has imputed or credited the righteousness of Jesus to us. That is how we are justified. Jesus Christ is the righteous one. We are the sinners who receive grace and become legally righteous because Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to us. Christians are justified sinners—sinners saved by grace.

“Jesus is the propitiation for our sins” means that he satisfied the wrath and justice of God for our sins. Jesus sacrificed himself to bear the punishment of our sins as our substitute on the cross. God poured out his wrath and judgment on Jesus, so that he could give his grace to us (v.2). Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father as our Advocate and Mediator. He helps us to bring our prayers to God the Father.

How do you feel knowing that your prayers are always heard at any time?

What is one mark of a true believer (v.3)?

The biblical meaning of “knowing someone” indicates a personal, close, and intimate relationship—a covenant relationship. To *know* Jesus means to have a personal, close, and intimate relationship—a covenant relationship—with him.

What is one mark of someone who is not a true believer (v.4)?

What is the impact of “keeping Jesus word” to us (v.5)?

What does “walking in the same way in which Jesus walked” mean (v.6)?

## Read 1 John 2:7-14

In the time of Moses, God gave a commandment to the people of Israel, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). When Jesus was spending time with his disciples before he was arrested, he said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). The commandment to love one another is not a new one. God has given it to his covenant people—the people of Israel—through Moses. However, Jesus has called it a new commandment because it has a new significance and implications. It is centered on Jesus’ love for us. Jesus commands us to love one another just as he has loved us (v.8-9).

How does loving one another just as Jesus has loved us look like?

How is that different than loving others as we love ourselves?

How has Jesus defeated the darkness for us (v.8)?

How does *living in the darkness* and *living in the light of Jesus* differ (v.9-10)?

How does spiritual darkness blind our spiritual eyes (v.11)?

Apostle Paul explains how God has rescued us from darkness. “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5).

“Little children” in verse 12 is more likely referring to all believers just as in verse 1. While “fathers, young men, and little children” in verses 13-14 might be age distinction or spiritual maturity distinction of John’s readers.

How are our sins forgiven by God? What does “your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake” mean (v.12)?

How do we overcome the evil one (v.13-14)?

How do we keep abiding in the word of God (v.14)?

### Lesson 3 – Do Not Love the World

Read 1 John 2:1-14 for review.

#### Read 1 John 2:15-17

What are “the things in the world” (v.15)?

Why can we not love both God and the world (v.15)?

What are “the desires of the flesh,” “the desires of the eyes,” and “pride in possessions—pride of life” (v.16)?

What does “the world is passing away with its desires” mean (v.17)?

“Whoever does the will of God” refers to believers’ love for God. True believers are those who have been spiritually born again and are united with Christ. Because we are in union with Christ, we are sanctified. God is making us to be more and more holy and righteous in the image of Christ. Obedience to the will of God proves that we are true believers. Our obedience does not merit eternal life. Eternal life is the result of our union with Christ. We obey because we love him, who loves us very much (v.17).

#### Read 1 John 2:18-27

“The last hour” or “the last days” refer to the period of time since Jesus came, born as a man, until he returns again to this world (v.18).

What should we be careful of while waiting for Jesus to return (v.18)?

There were already many false teachers in the first century. John called them *antichrists* because they opposed Christ and the message of his gospel.

Where did they go out from (v.19)?

Not all people who go to church are true believers or *born-again* Christians. In fact, a church can be a good breeding ground for false teachers. They come out from the fellowship of believers but they are not born-again Christians. All born-again Christians are in union with Jesus, who is the head of the church. False teachers and false prophets will not hide or stay silent forever. They will come out and speak out. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus has warned us, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

What does “you (born-again Christians) have been anointed by the Holy One” mean (v.20)?

Born-again Christians are those who have the Holy Spirit dwells in their lives. The Holy Spirit has enlightened their minds to see the beauty of Christ and his redeeming work on the cross. They understand the gospel—the saving grace of Christ. They understand the truth of God. John was convinced that the believers could understand the truth of his writing because the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them (v.21).

What does the antichrist deny (v.22)?

How do you explain the unity of God the Father and God the Son (v.23)?

John wanted the believers to hold on to the truth of the gospel that they had heard. We need to continuously teach, remind, and encourage one another of the gospel, so that our faith will not be shaken. There are many false teachings in this world. There is a powerful demonic power at work leading many people astray from the truth of God (v.24).

How do we protect one another against contemporary false teachings?

What is the promise that God has made to us (v.25)?

How is the biblical concept of eternal life different than other religions' concept of eternal life?

What are the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives (v.27)?

What does “abiding in him” mean (v.27)?

Jesus has said to his disciples, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:16-17, 26).

The Holy Spirit dwells in the lives of believers permanently. He is not in and out of our lives. His work is to sanctify us, renewing us completely after the image of Christ and enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness. As he sanctifies us, we need to abide in him (v.27).

“And I am sure of this, that he [God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

## Lesson 4 – Characteristics of God’s Children

Read 1 John 2:15-27 for review.

### Read 1 John 2:28—3:3

What should we do in order to have confidence to meet Jesus at his coming (v.28)?

As God sanctifies us, making us more and more holy and righteous in his image, our duty is to obey him and to abide in him. All God’s people will be rejoicing at Jesus’ coming. They will be glorified in complete holiness. On the contrary, those who reject Jesus and refuse to believe in him will be in much shame. They will be terrified of his judgment on them.

What is one mark of a born-again Christian (v.29)?

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? Where can we learn this from?

All born-again Christians produce spiritual fruit of righteousness in their lives.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us by his word. The word of God (the Bible) is our spiritual food. It nourishes and sanctifies us. It is our guide to know what the will of God is and what is right and wrong. It is the only rule of faith and practice for our lives.

Why is the world hostile to us as God’s children (v.1)?

What will we be when Jesus appears at his coming? Why (v.2)?

Our anticipation of the coming of our Lord and Savior should encourage us to live in holiness and purity and to practice and produce the fruit of righteousness. In essence, we are to abide in Jesus (v.3).

### Read 1 John 3:4-10

What is sin (v.4)?

Sin is failing to do what God’s law requires us to do. It is rebellion against God’s law. Sin of commission is doing what we are not supposed to do. Sin of omission is not doing what we are supposed to do. Sin is basically a lack of conformity or transgression to God’s law. We sin against God in our thoughts, words, and actions.

What was the purpose of Jesus' coming to sacrifice himself as our substitute (v.5)?

Jesus had no sin, but he was treated as a sinner on the cross as our substitute, bearing the punishment of our sins. When we repent and put our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives our sins, imputes the righteousness of Jesus to us, and justifies us.

“For our sake he [God the Father] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why can born-again Christians not keep on sinning (v.6, 9)?

Why do those who keep on sinning not know Jesus—do not have a personal, close, and intimate relationship with him (v.6)?

Children of God are righteous people because they have been justified in their union with Christ. Our justification makes us legally righteous before God. Our daily sanctification makes us actually more and more righteous children of God. God is working in us from the inside out (v.7).

What is the relationship between those who keep on sinning and the devil (v.8)?

How did Jesus destroy the works of the devil (v.8)?

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

What does “God’s seed abides in him” mean (v.9)?

Why is someone “who does not love his brother” not of God—he does not have God’s seed in him; he is not born-again of God (v.10)?

There are only two categories of people in this world: those of God and those of the devil. Those of God are his children, and they practice righteousness. Those of the devil do not practice righteousness because there is no righteousness in them. They were born in sin and remain in their sinful condition. They have never experienced being spiritually born again of God. They do not have God’s seed in them. They cannot practice righteousness and cannot love their brothers. Hatred and sinfulness remain in them.

How should we shine the light of God as his children in this broken world?

## Lesson 5 – Loving One Another as a Covenant Community of Believers

Read 1 John 2:28—3:10 for review.

### Read 1 John 3:11-24

What are the reasons that we should love one another (v.11)?

Why did Cain murder his brother (v.12)?

Why should we not be surprised that the world hates us (v.13)?

We have three enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh—our sinful nature and its sinful desire. This world is full of sinners who hate Jesus and his people. Jesus has told us, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).

What does “we have passed out of death into life” mean (v.14)?

What does “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer” mean (v.15)?

Jesus has taught us, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:21-22). In the Ten Commandments, God commands us “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). The Pharisees interpreted this law and taught the Jews that actual murder of another person’s life was forbidden; otherwise they would be liable of God’s judgment. However, Jesus explains the full meaning of this law that anger and murder are equally liable to God’s judgment. Anger is the root of murder. God judges both the external action and the internal motive of our hearts. We sin against God not only in our external actions, but also in our thoughts and words.

How do we learn about love (v.16)?

The Greek word used for love here is *agape*. Other Greek words for love are *phileo* (friendship love), *storge* (family and community love), and *eros* (romantic and sexual love). *Agape* is unconditional love. It is love that puts others more important than self. It is sacrificial love. It is love that Jesus demonstrates to us by laying down his life for us. He wants us to demonstrate *agape* love to him and one another as well. *Agape* love is the center of the Christian life. *Agape* love is the essence of Christians’ covenant relationship with God and with one another. *Agape* love is the fuel of our covenant relationship, and without it we will be consumed with self-centeredness.

How do we demonstrate our *agape* love to one another (v.16)?

What is one practical act we can do to demonstrate our *agape* love to one another (v.17)?

What does “let us love in deed and in truth” mean (v.18)?

God is the truth and his word is also the truth. Jesus says, “I am the truth” (John 14:6). All born-again Christians are in union with Jesus and are “of the truth.” There are times that Christians do not have assurance that they are God’s children. However, our acts of *agape* love prove that we are God’s children and “reassure our heart before him” (v.19).

What should we remember when our hearts condemn us (v.20)?

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). We should rely only on the word of God and not on the voices of our corrupted hearts. Our feeling can mislead us. If we are in union with Christ, we are God’s children and there is no more condemnation for us. We should not listen to the devil’s deceptive words either. We need to abide in God’s word and truth. If our conscience is well-informed and aligned with God’s word and truth, we will have confidence about our standing before God (v.21).

Will God grant our prayers if our conscience is aligned with God’s word and truth? Why (v.22)?

“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

What has God commanded us to do (v.23)?

Believing or having faith in Christ and loving one another with *agape* love are not two commandments but one commandment. They are inseparable.

Why can we not believe in Christ without loving one another and vice versa?

How do we know that God abides in us and we are in him (v.24)?

What are the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives (see also John 14:26, Acts 4:31, Romans 8:26)?

## **Lesson 6 – Agape Love**

Read 1 John 3:11-24 for review.

### **Read 1 John 4:1-6**

Why do we have to test the spirits? How do we do that (v.1)?

The devil and his demons (evil spirits) deceive and lead people away from God and his truth. They work through false teachers and false prophets to spread false teachings contrary to the truth of God. They are antichrists.

How do we test if a spirit is the Spirit of God (v.2)?

At that time, there was a false teaching called Docetism that taught Jesus was not a man but only appeared to be a man. Docetism denied Jesus' humanity and his physical human body.

Why is Jesus' humanity essential to our salvation?

How do we test if a spirit is the spirit of the antichrist (v.3)?

Generally speaking, every person who denies Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is an antichrist. The spirit of the antichrist has been at work in this world deceiving people with various false teachings through false teachers. However, born-again Christians "have overcome them," because they are protected by the Holy Spirit of God who is greater than the devil—"he who is in the world" (v.4).

What can we know about false teachers? Why does the world listen to them (v.5)?

Who does listen to the gospel message (v.6)?

Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Only those "from God" listen to the gospel. These are the elect or the chosen ones, whom the Father draws to Christ.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

## Read 1 John 4:7-12

The Greek word used for love here is *agape*. We have learned previously that Greek words for love are *agape* (unconditional love), *phileo* (friendship love), *storge* (family and community love), and *eros* (romantic and sexual love). *Agape* is love that puts others more important than self. It is sacrificial love. It is love that Jesus demonstrates to us by laying down his life for us. He wants us to demonstrate *agape* love to him and one another as well.

Who is the source of *agape* love (v.7)?

Who has *agape* love and can demonstrate it to others (v.7)?

Why does anyone who does not demonstrate *agape* love not know God—does not have a covenant, personal, and close relationship with God (v.8)?

God is *agape* love. *Agape* love is a characteristic and nature of God. From eternity past, the Triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God in three persons) demonstrates *agape* love to one another—giving and receiving. The Triune God is the source of *agape* love and does not depend on created beings to demonstrate it. *Agape* love did not occur until God created a being to demonstrate it—to give and to receive. It exists in eternity because it is a characteristic and nature of the eternal Triune God. The Triune God created the universe and us in order to expand his *agape* love, so that we can experience and be part of his magnificent *agape* love that produces joy in us.

If there are many gods with different hierarchy, *agape* love cannot be a characteristic and nature of those gods. Similarly, if there is only one God in one person, *agape* love cannot be a characteristic and nature of that God.

How did God manifest his *agape* love for us (v.9-10)?

We are saved and justified because of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross for us. Jesus took the justice of God for our sins and died on our behalf. He sacrificed himself to be the propitiation (satisfying the wrath and justice of God) for our sins as our substitute.

What is the basis for why we ought to love one another (v.11)?

How is God's love perfected in us (v.12)?

How do people know that we are Christians? What makes us different than others?

## Lesson 7 – Covenant Union with God

Read 1 John 4:1-12 for review.

### Read 1 John 4:13-21

Born-again Christians are those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. They are in covenant union with God—they abide in God and he in them. The Holy Spirit sanctifies them from the inside out, enabling them to demonstrate *agape* love to one another. By loving one another with *agape* love we know that we abide in God and he in us through the Holy Spirit (v.13).

What is the purpose of God the Father sending his Son (v.14)?

What is one mark of a born-again Christian (v.15)?

How is *confessing* different than having only head knowledge without conviction?

One who is in covenant union with God is one who confesses—has confessed and continuously confesses that faith—that Jesus is the Son of God who has died for the punishment of his sins as his substitute. He has put his faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering his life to him. His belief and faith in Christ grows continuously as he is being sanctified.

What does “whoever abides in love (*agape* love) abides in God, and God abides in him” mean (v.16)?

What is our confidence for the day of judgment—the day Christ will return to judge all people (v.17)?

Christians are Christ-like people in character and life. We resemble Christ in our lives. We are the lights of the world just as Christ, who is *the Light of the World*. Though our obedience is not perfect, we can have confidence for the day of judgment based on our union with Christ. We are his. When he returns, he will bring us to his home—his kingdom, our home.

Why is there no fear in *agape* love? Why does perfect *agape* love cast out fear (v.18)?

What enables us to love God (v.19)?

Why can someone who hates his brother not love God (v.20)?

What is God’s commandment for all his children? Why is this very important (v.21)?

## Read 1 John 5:1-5

What is one mark of a born-again believer (v.1)?

How does loving other believers relate to loving God and obeying his commandments (v.2-3)?

Why are God's commandments not burdensome (v.3)? Consider also the words of Jesus and Paul, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30) and "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Those who love God will be empowered to obey his commandments. Our love for him makes us want to obey him, because obedience is part of love. Obeying out of love brings joy and not burden. Love motivates us to obey, which results in joy. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to obey when we struggle.

What are some of the struggles we face from this sinful and broken world (v.4)?

How do we overcome the temptations of the world (v.4)?

Who can overcome the world (v.5)?

Jesus was tempted by the devil with three major temptations: the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eye. Jesus defeated the devil and overcame his temptations. Three times Jesus was tempted, and three times he used the word of God to defeat the devil. Jesus' ultimate battle with the devil is at the cross. Jesus' mission was to sacrifice himself and to die as our substitute for the punishment of our sins. The devil tempted him to abandon his mission to save us, but Jesus did not abandon it. He died for us, bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be saved from the penalty of our sins and the enslaving power of sin and have a new life in him. Jesus has also conquered death by his resurrection.

Those who have put their faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering their lives to him, are in union with him and receive all the spiritual blessings from him. Because we are in union with Jesus, we also overcome the devil and death. Jesus is our federal head. His victory is our victory.

What is the impact to us and to the community of believers if we give in to temptations?

What can we learn from Jesus to defeat temptations?

## Lesson 8 – The Believers’ Confidence

Read 1 John 4:13—5:5 for review.

### Read 1 John 5:6-12

There are several interpretations about “water and blood” (v.6).

(1) Water refers to Jesus’ baptism and blood refers to his atoning death. This view argues against false teaching that believes that Jesus and the Christ are separate entities and that the Christ was with the man Jesus at his baptism, but departed before his death.

(2) They refer to the two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This view argues that both sacraments testify the gospel of Christ.

(3) They refer to the water and blood that came out of Jesus’ side. This view attempts to prove the actual death of Jesus on the cross.

The Old Testament law requires two or three witnesses to validate a case. John uses the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit to argue the case of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God who became a man and died on the cross for his people (v.7-8).

Which one is greater: the testimony of God or the testimony of men? Why (v.9)?

We can be sure that we are saved in Christ and are God’s children through the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (v.10).

What does “whoever does not believe God made him a liar” mean (v.10)?

What has God given to all his children (v.11)?

What does “this [eternal] life is in his Son” mean (v.11)?

What is the implication of that (v.12)?

“Having Jesus” means having union with him—a personal, close, and covenant relationship with him. Faith in Jesus is necessary for our salvation. Jesus is the source of eternal life for all his people—those who put their faith in him, trusting and surrendering their lives to him.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4).

### Read 1 John 5:13-21

What does a true believer in Christ have for certain (v.13)?

Why should we be confident that our prayers are heard by God (v.14-15)?

How do we learn about God's will for our lives?

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

What should we do if we see a Christian brother commit a sin (v.16)?

As God's children, we have three enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh—our sinful nature and its sinful desire. We daily face our enemies. We sin against God when we disobey him and give in to our enemies. As a covenant community of believers, we are to pray for and strengthen one another. When we sin, we should repent and ask God for forgiveness. We can be certain that God sanctifies us because the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts when we grieve and sin against him.

"There is sin that leads to death." There are several interpretations of this statement.

1. It refers to the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is unforgivable. "... but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark 3:29). This sin can only be committed by non-believers.
2. It refers to sin that leads to physical death as God's punishment. God's people can commit this kind of sin, such as in the case of Corinthian Christians dishonoring the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died ... when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).
3. It refers to a persistent rejection of the Gospel, refusing to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

All wrongdoing is ultimately sin against God. Sin is basically disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way (v.17).

What is one mark of a born-again Christian (v.18)?

In our union with Christ, we have conquered the evil one. The Devil cannot separate us from our union with Christ and from his love for us. Our salvation in Christ is secured.

What does "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" mean (v.19)?

How do we remain faithful to the true God and keep ourselves from idols (v.20-21)?

## Resources

*Acts to Revelation*. Matthew Henry's Commentary, vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 2000.

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