

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Eyewitnesses to the Word of Life

1 It's been there from the beginning. We've heard it. We've seen it with our eyes, and our hands have felt it. We're talking about the Word of Life. ²And this Life has been revealed, and we've seen it. And we're testifying and passing on the message of this eternal Life to you. It was with the Father, and it's been revealed to us. ³It's what we've seen and heard that *we* are now^a passing on to *you*. That way, you can have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is also with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we're writing all this^b so our^c happiness will be complete.

Challenge to Live in the Light

⁵And this is the message that we've heard from God, and which we are passing on to you: God is light, and there's no darkness in God at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with God, and we're living^d in darkness, we're lying, and we're not living out^e the truth. ⁷But if we're living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, And the blood of Jesus, God's Son, washes us clean from all sin. ⁸If we say that we don't have sin, we're deceiving ourselves, and the truth isn't in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive^f us our sins and wash us clean from everything we've done wrong^g. ¹⁰If we say that we haven't sinned, we make God a liar, and God's word isn't in us.

Jesus Christ is the Offering That Makes Amends for the Sins of the World

2 My children, I'm writing you all this so that you won't sin. And if somebody does sin, we have somebody that speaks in our defense in front of the Father: Jesus Christ, the Just One.^h ²And he's the offering that makes amends^a for our sins—and not just for our sins, but for the sins of the

^a Lit. "we also". They, in turn, are passing it on.

^b Lit. "these things". Some mss add, "to you".

^c Some mss have "your". But John very probably wrote "our". He's going to be completely happy if he can share the happiness he has with others.

^d Lit. "walking around".

^e Or "practicing".

^f Lit. "faithful and just to forgive".

^g Traditionally: "from all unrighteousness".

^h Traditionally: "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous".

whole world. ³And this is how we recognize that we've come to know God: if we obey Christ's commands. ⁴The person that says, "I know Christ," and isn't obeying Christ's commands, is a liar. And the truth isn't in them. ⁵But if someone^b holds to Christ's teaching,^c God's love has come to completion in that person. That's how we know that we're in Christ. ⁶The person that says they're living in him^d is obligated to conduct their own life just like he lived.

The Command to Love

⁷Dear friends, I'm not writing you a new command, but an old one. You've had it from the beginning. The old command is the message that you've heard. ⁸On the other hand, I *am* writing you a new command. It's true in him, and it's true in you. Because the darkness is going away, and the true light is already shining. ⁹The person that says, "I'm in the light," and hates their fellow human being,^e is still in the dark. ¹⁰The person that loves their fellow human being^f is staying in the light, and there's nothing in them to offend people.^g ¹¹The person that hates their fellow human being^h is in the dark, and they're walking around in the dark. And they don't know where they're going, because the darkness has blinded their eyes.

¹²I'm writing you, little children, because your sins are forgiven because of his name.

¹³I'm writing you, parents, because you've known the One who's been from the beginning.

I'm writing you, young people, because you've won the battle with the evil one.

¹⁴I've written you, children, because you've known the Father.

I've written you, parents, because you've known the One who's been from the beginning.

I've written you, young people, because you're strong, and God's word is still in you, and you've won the battle with the evil one.

Don't Love the World and its Things

¹⁵Don't love the world or the things in the world. If somebody loves the world, they don't have the Father's love in them. ¹⁶Everything in the world—the lustⁱ of the flesh, the lust^j of the eyes, and the arrogance of life—is not from the Father, but from the world. ¹⁷And the world is disappearing, and so are its obsessions.^k But the person that does God's will lasts forever.

^a Traditionally: "he is the propitiation" (see "Bible Words").

^b Lit. "But whoever".

^c Or "word".

^d Lit. "they're remaining in him" or "abiding in him".

^e Lit. "their brother".

^f Lit. "their brother".

^g Lit. "and there is no stumbling block in him".

^h Lit. "their brother".

ⁱ Or "craving," or "obsession".

^j Or "craving," or "obsession".

^k Or "lusts," or "cravings".

Warning against Antichrists

¹⁸Children, this is the final hour. And just as you've heard that antichrist^a is coming, sure enough,^b lots of antichrists have now shown up. Seeing them,^c we recognize that it's the final hour. ¹⁹They went out from us,^d but they didn't belong to us. Because if they had belonged to us, they would have stayed with us. But they left, to show that they didn't belong to us. ²⁰But^e you have an anointing^f from the Holy One, and you all know it.^g ²¹I haven't written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you *do* know it. And you also know that no liar belongs to the truth. ²²Who's a liar, if not the person that denies that Jesus is the Christ? That's the antichrist^h—that denies both the Father and the Son. ²³Nobody that denies the Son has the Father either. The person that publicly acknowledgesⁱ the Son has the Father too.

Stay in the Son of God

²⁴As for you, let what you've heard from the beginning stay in you. If what you've heard from the beginning stays in you, then you'll also stay in^j the Son and in^k the Father. ²⁵And this is the promise that Jesus^l himself gave us: eternal life.^m ²⁶I've written you all this about the people who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷Butⁿ as for you, the anointing that you've received from him is still in you, and you don't need for anybody to teach you.^o Not at all. His anointing teaches you about everything. And it's true, and not a lie. And just like he taught you, you're staying in^p him.

²⁸And now, little children, stay in^q him. That way, if he's revealed, we'll have confidence, and we won't shrink away from him in shame when he comes. ²⁹If you know that he's just,^r then you know that everybody that acts justly is his offspring.^a

^a See "Bible Words".

^b Lit. "indeed".

^c Lit. "Whence".

^d See Jn 13:30.

^e Lit. "And".

^f This is a metaphorical way of saying that they have the Holy Spirit. Jesus is "the Christ," i.e. "the One Anointed" (by the Holy Spirit), and his followers are also anointed with the Spirit (see "Bible Words" under "Messiah" and "anoint").

^g Or "you all have knowledge," or (following different mss), "you know everything".

^h See nt. on v. 18 above.

ⁱ Traditionally: "confesses".

^j Or "and you stay connected to"; see Jn 15:1-10 and notes there.

^k Or "you stay connected to".

^l Lit. "he". It's possible, but less likely, that he means "God". See the following note.

^m E.g. Jn 6:40; 12:50; 17:2, 3.

ⁿ Lit. "And".

^o In other words, from John's point of view, false teachers have come and told them that they don't know everything they need to know about the faith. He's assuring them that they already know all the important things that they need to know.

^p Or "stay connected to".

^q Or "stay connected to".

^r Traditionally: "righteous".

Children of God

3 Look what love the Father has given us—that we should be called children of God! And that’s what we are. That’s why the world doesn’t know us—because it hasn’t known God. **2** Dear friends, we’re children of God *now*, and it hasn’t yet appeared what we’re *going* to be. We do know that when Jesus^b appears, we’re going to be like him, because we’re going to see him just as he is. **3** And everybody that has this hope in him purifies themselves, just as he’s pure.

4 Everybody that practices sin also practices lawlessness. Because^c sin *is* lawlessness. **5** And you know that he appeared to take away all^d sins, and sin isn’t in him. **6** Everybody that stays in^e him doesn’t sin. Nobody that’s sinning has seen him or known him.^f **7** Little children, don’t let anybody deceive you. The person that practices justice is a just person—just like Jesus is. **8** The person that practices sin is from the devil, because the devil’s been^g sinning ever since the beginning. That’s why the Son of God appeared: to do away with the devil’s behavior.^h **9** Nobody that’s born from God practices sin, because God’s offspring stays in God,ⁱ and they can’t sin, because they’re born from God. **10** That’s how the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Everybody that doesn’t do what’s right^j isn’t of God. And neither is the person that doesn’t love their fellow human being.^k **11** Because this is the message that we’ve heard from the beginning: that we should love one another. **12** Not like Cain, who was from the Evil One, and violently murdered^l his brother. And why did he murder^m him? Because his actions were evil, and his brother’s were just.

13 Also, brothers and sisters, don’t be surprised if the world hates you. **14** We know that we’ve been brought out of death and into life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The person that doesn’t love is staying in death. **15** Everybody that hates their fellow human beingⁿ is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life living^o in them. **16** This is how we’ve come to recognize love:^p because Jesus^q laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and

^a Or “If you know that God is just, then you know that everybody that acts justly is born from God”. If that is the correct understanding of v. 29, then it functions as a transitional sentence to the new paragraph that starts in 3:1.

^b Lit. “he”; see v. 5 below.

^c Lit. “And”.

^d Lit. “the sins”; some mss have “our sins”. See 1 Jn 2:2, above.

^e Or “stays connected to”.

^f Lit. “Everybody who’s sinning hasn’t seen him or known him”.

^g Lit. “is”.

^h Traditionally: “works”.

ⁱ Or “because God’s seed stays in them,” or, “because God’s Seed [i.e. Jesus] stays in them”.

^j Traditionally: “does not practice righteousness”.

^k Lit. “their brother”.

^l Lit. “and slaughtered”. Gen. 4:1-16.

^m Lit. “slaughter”.

ⁿ Lit. “their brother”.

^o Lit. “staying”.

^p Or “to recognize the Lord’s love”.

^q Lit. “that one”.

sisters. ¹⁷Suppose somebody has this world's resources, and sees their fellow human being^a in need, and they close their heart towards the person. How is God's love staying in them? ¹⁸Little children, let's not love with words or with our tongues, but with action, and in truth.^b ¹⁹That's how we're going to know that we're with^c the truth, and reassure our hearts in front of God. ²⁰Because^d if our hearts condemn us, we can be assured that God is greater than our heart, and knows everything.

Faith in God's Presence

²¹Dear friends, if our heart doesn't condemn us,^e we have confidence in front of God. ²²And we receive whatever we ask—because we're keeping God's commands and doing what's pleasing to God.^f ²³And this is God's command: for us to believe in the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another, just as Jesus told us to.^g ²⁴And the person that keeps God's commands stays in God, and God in them. And this is how we know that God lives^h in us: from the Spirit that God has given us.

Test the Spirits

4 Dear friends, don't believe every spirit: test the spirits, to see if they're from God. Because lots of false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. ³And every spirit that doesn't acknowledge Jesus isn't from God. And this sort of spirit is the spirit of the antichrist.ⁱ You've heard that it's coming, and now it's already in the world. ⁴You're from God, little children, and you've won the battle with those spirits.^j Because the One in you is greater than the one^k who's in the world. ⁵These spirits are from the world. That's why they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. ⁶We're from God. The person that knows God listens to us; the person that's not from God doesn't listen to us. That's how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.

Love is the Ultimate Proof of Knowing God

⁷Dear friends, let's love one another. Because love is from God, and everybody that loves is born from God and knows God. ⁸The person that doesn't love doesn't know God, because God *is* love.

^a Or "their Christian brother or sister"; lit. "their brother".

^b See Jas 2:14-16.

^c Lit. "from".

^d Or "...in God's presence, that".

^e There are many minor variations in wording among the mss in this verse, but the sense remains the same.

^f Traditionally: "do the things that are well-pleasing before him".

^g Lit. "just as he gave us a command". See Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17.

^h Lit. "is staying".

ⁱ See "Bible Words".

^j Lit. "them".

^k That is, the devil.

God's Love in Action

9 This is how God's love has been shown to^a us: God has sent God's only Son into the world, so that we can live through him. 10 This is what love is about:^b not that we've loved God, but that God personally loved us, and sent God's Son as an offering that makes amends^c for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God has loved us that much, we ought to love one another too. 12 Nobody's ever seen God. If we love one another, God lives^d in us, and God's love has been made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we're living^e in God, and God in us: God has given us a portion of God's Spirit. 14 And we've seen, and we're testifying, that the Father has sent the Son as the savior of the world. 15 If a person acknowledges^f that Jesus is God's Son, God lives^g in them, and they live in God. 16 And we've come to know and trust the love that God has for us. God is love, and when a person lives^h in the love that's in God, God lives in them. 17 That's how love is brought to completion with us, so that we can be confident on judgment day—because as God is, so *we* are in this world. 18 There's no fear in love. Just the opposite: perfect love kicks out fear. Because fear has to do with punishment, and the person that fears hasn't been perfected in love. 19 We loveⁱ because God loved us first. 20 If somebody says, "I love God," but hates their fellow human being,^j they're a liar. Because if you don't love your fellow human being^k that you can see, you can't love God, that you can't see. That's why^l we have this commandment from God: the person that loves God should also love their fellow human being.^m

The Person who Believes in Jesus Wins the Battle

5 Everybody that believes Jesus is the Christ is born from God. And everybody that loves the Parent loves the child they've produced.ⁿ 2 This is how we know that we love God's children: whenever we love God, and practice^o God's commands. 3 After all, that's love for God: our keeping of God's commands. And God's commands aren't hard.^p 4 Because every child born from God

^a Lit. "among".

^b Lit. "In this is love".

^c Traditionally: "as a propitiation" (see "Bible Words").

^d Lit. "stays".

^e Lit. "staying".

^f Lit. "the person that acknowledges".

^g Lit. "stays".

^h Lit. "stays".

ⁱ Some mss have, "We love God," or "We love him". What stands in the text is probably original.

^j Lit. "their brother".

^k Lit. "your brother".

^l "That's why": lit. "And".

^m Lit. "their brother".

ⁿ Not all mss have the word "also".

^o Some mss have "keep".

^p Lit. "heavy".

wins the battle with the world. And this faith of ours is the victory that has won the battle with the world. ⁵Who's the winner of this battle?^a Isn't it^b the person that believes that Jesus is God's Son?

God's Testimony about Jesus

⁶He's the one who came through water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not just in water, but in water and blood.^c And the Spirit is the one that testifies, because the Spirit is Truth. ⁷Because there are three things that testify: ⁸the Spirit, the water, and the blood. And these three agree. ⁹If we accept the testimony of human beings, God's testimony is more weighty. Because this is God's testimony, which God has testified about God's Son. ¹⁰The person that believes in God's Son has that testimony inside.^d The person that doesn't believe God has made God out to be a liar, because they haven't believed the testimony that God has given about God's Son. ¹¹And this is God's^e testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in God's Son. ¹²The person that has the Son has this life! The person that doesn't have the Son of God doesn't have this life.

Final Words of Encouragement and Challenge

¹³I've written these things to you who believe in the name of God's Son, so that you'll know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have in front of God: if we ask something in line with God's will, God listens to us. ¹⁵And if we know that God listens to what we ask, we know that we get^f the things we've asked God for.

¹⁶If somebody sees their brother or sister committing a sin (not a deadly sin), they should pray for the person.^g And God will give the person life—if they're not committing a deadly sin. There is such a thing as a deadly sin. I'm not saying that they should pray for them in that situation.^h ¹⁷All wrong behaviorⁱ is sin, and there's such a thing as a deadly sin.

^a Or "of the battle with the world".

^b Lit. "...battle, if not".

^c John may be saying that Jesus really died, to refute certain teachers who were saying that he only appeared to die.

^d Lit. "in himself".

^e Lit. "the".

^f Or "that we already have"; see Mk 11:24 for this surprising idea.

^g Lit. "they should ask".

^h Lit. "that they should ask concerning that".

ⁱ Traditionally: "unrighteousness".

¹⁸We know that nobody that's born from God sins. No, the Son of God^a protects them,^b and the evil one doesn't touch them. ¹⁹We know that we're from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰We know that God's Son has come, and that he has given us understanding so that we know the True One. And we're in the True One—in God's Son Jesus Christ. He^c is the True God and eternal life.

²¹Little children, keep yourselves away from idols.

^a Lit. "the One born from God".

^b Or, less likely, "No, the person born from God obeys God".

^c Or "This".