

# “Born of God”

1 John 5:1-13

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at Jesus Fellowship of Believers  
in Menomonie Wisconsin  
on June 14, 2026

(1) *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. (2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (4) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (6) This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. (7) For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. (9) If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. (10) He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. (11) And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (12) He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (13) These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal*



Have you ever received mail that wasn't yours? In 1790, a piece of mail dispatched by government officials in Paris, refusing to grant municipal capital status to the town of Seix, arrived 545 miles off course in the village of Saix. An archivist discovered the error in 1999, and the mayor of Saix eventually "corrected" the delivery to the intended town of Seix in 2010—220 years late.

The apostle John was very clear who the recipients were to be when it came to this letter. He reiterated that fact in our text today, telling us in verse 13 that *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God...”* He wrote all of this letter so that the reader would *“know that (he or she has) eternal life...”*

The reason for such was to serve more than just to comfort and provide security, but moreover so *“that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* His letter is therefore directed toward authentic believers and was to serve to keep all of us on a straight trajectory toward eternity. While the letter may have had some modicum of evangelistic effect, for the most part it was addressed to, and received by, those who believed themselves to be “born of God.”

Such an attempt is surprisingly harder than one would think. The fact is, the older we get, the less likely we are to change, and the spiritual world is no different. A recent journal review stated that as adults grow older, they decreasingly see the world through others' eyes. (Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied -Vol. 11, No. 1, pages 53-60). In particular, as we age, we find it increasingly difficult to take another view or position into account when making a decision, even if it is John the apostle who holds that view.

This letter has been challenging. By any account, it should have caused many of us to take pause when the text seemed to paint a vivid picture of us personally. At times, all that was lacking was for John to use our specific name! And yet, by Monday most of us we have set our concerns aside and carried on as usual. Such only

supports what I have concluded after 35 years in ministry: that as one ages, one becomes less likely to be open to challenge and change.

John stated that if we say we know God but fail to keep His commandments, when it comes to our Christian confession, we're a "liar." (2:4) If we say we love God but don't love our brothers, then again... "*we're a liar.*" (4:20) If we "love the world" God is not in us, (2:15) and if we continue in sin, we "have not seen Him nor known Him." (3:6). Again, that's some harsh stuff, John. But are we truly willing to consider that he is talking about us? Are we willing to stop and ask just what "loving the world" really looks like? I sincerely hope so, for the stakes here are eternally high.

I, as a pastor, see such scripture and such suggestions move most to a few regular positions: ONE, *I don't care what John says, I'm a Christian and no one can tell me any different, despite any and all evidence to the contrary.* TWO, *I got this thing in hand and now I don't sin anymore and I love everyone. I'm a regular 'Christian Gandhi.'* THREE, *I thought I was saved but I guess I lost it somewhere along the way. I started out ok, but now I'm apparently no longer part of the club.* And FOUR...ever so rare is, "*Clearly I am not a Christian at all, despite years of church attendance. I live for this world, and I am still in bondage to sin. I thought I loved Jesus and was a part of His church body, but according to John, I'm not.*"

Paul sees the danger and the need, saying in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*" Peter also warned us in 2 Peter 1:10 to be "*diligent to confirm your calling and election...*" David warned in Ps 26:2 "*Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.*" Jeremiah wrote "*Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD.*" (La 3:40) The scriptures are actually full of such warnings! Clearly, there IS a danger here that we are blind to the reality of who and what we are.

I do not believe that John was writing this letter to thump these people on the head. He wasn't taking the position that they all were rotten sinners and needed to get their act together like He did! And I certainly am not trying to slap people around either. However, as we have learned here in this letter, real authentic agape love is intertwined with truth. John clearly has some concern about the reader, just as I do today. Have some of us crossed over that bridge wherein we can no longer entertain the possibility that we are no longer hearing the voice of God pleading as He did in Haggai 1:5, "Consider your ways!"

John was not looking for sinless perfection. He clearly covered the idea that we are **not** sinless and never will be. He tells us that we have an "attorney in heaven" for such times, to intervene on our behalf. If we never sin, then such a defense attorney would not be needed. But is grace your get-out-of-jail-free card?

He also never implies that we could ever have "once been a part of the family of God," and then "un-adopted" once it was found out that we weren't 'Mayberry kids.' No, in fact, he stressed that if you are indeed out of the club, you really were never a member to begin with. Because in this club, membership is for life. In fact, *eternal life*. The problem with this line of thinking stems from a lack of understanding of just how long and how well a person can continue mimicking redemptive traits by one's own strength. Eventually, and most assuredly, the bottom will fall out of such a construction, but the fact remains that we can do Christian stuff for a long time and never actually be one.

The stark reality is that many of us are flat out endangering our eternal soul by refusing to hear John in this matter. We simply write off his warnings, refusing to believe that we could have possibly sat in a church pew as long as we have without authentically surrendering our "lives and living" to a radical king. That's interesting because John has the street cred and the anointing of the boss to speak on His behalf, and we are never going to get beyond such warnings. Not **ever** on this side of eternity! So it is nothing short of suicide to write him off as being extreme or 'fringe,' or speaking in hyperboles.

**1st John** is not a letter about being a better disciple, or a more committed servant. It is not about degrees of holiness, or level of faithfulness. It is about whether you are *really* a child of God, redeemed for eternity, or *not*. That is the thrust of this letter and the point of John writing it.

In the movies, we often hear that term “proof of life.” The idea is that when a person has been kidnapped... and/or in emanate danger of death...before effort is given to rescue them, it is common practice to ask for "proof of life." Proof that the person is actually alive. Because if he or she is not, then what's the point of going further in the process of rescue?

It doesn't mean we are free from danger or without issues moving forward, but it is an evidence...a "proof," that we are indeed “alive” in Christ, because without such it would mean that all the further negotiations and efforts on our part to help, rescue, and come along side, is without merit and frankly without a point because the individual is dead. If we are not, *in fact*, spiritually alive, then church and classes and service and discipleship, **all of it, are meaningless**. For many of you, every Sunday is nothing more than Pastor Tim “greasing up the paddles” and shouting “CLEAR” before I hit you once more in an attempt to bring you back from the dead. And I may be on the paddles, but the miracle is in the hands of God...and with **you**, on just how bad you want to live. Many of us feel bad when so confronted, but the truth is, we really don't want to be a Christian as scripture. (NOTE)

Let's see if we can get our hands around this thing then. Back in chapter 1, verses 5-7 we are told: *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie (...there's that word again) and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Let's break this down: “**If we walk...**” meaning our very living and motion of life...and do so “**in the light,**” which means “**IN**” Him because **HE IS LIGHT**. If so, we are good horizontally (fellowship with one another), and “*the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin,*” so we're good vertically. He therefore “**cleanses us**”...*present tense continually*, meaning even for the sins we have yet to commit. For it says “**all sins,**” so how could we ever therefore sin our way out of the family of God? How many sins does “**all sins**” include? That's right...*all of them!*

But in that same passage lay these words: “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*” Thus, if we claim to be on board with Jesus, but our living and motions of life are done in the **absence of the light**, we are lying to Jesus, ourselves and everyone around us. That would make us the most pitied of individuals, and perhaps the greatest of fools. So the bottom line in our salvation status is not whether we still fall down, but whether we are living out in the light or in the darkness. But the next question certainly arises here...*How do we know if we are walking in the light or in the dark?* According to this passage, all of us sin...both the “light walker” and the “dark walker,” so how do we cut it? Where is the line?

John openly acknowledges that even the one who walks in the light will sometimes stumble...however it is genuinely safe to say “far less” than the guy moving around out there in the darkness! But, ...*let's stay the course...*we need something definitive here! The difference is what happens next. Here is the ‘smoking gun,’ the conclusive ‘tell.’

We all have fallen down at some point...perhaps even inexplicably in the light of day. But have you ever fallen in the dark? It seems the damage is always greater because all depth and surroundings are lost in the darkness. The getting up can be just as dangerous as the falling, and one can easily take a second or third ‘smack’ just trying to regain our footing...running into everything and/or *everyone*, trying to get back up. (assuming one gets back up at *all*.)

We can lose our bearings in the darkness, as well as do some serious damage to ourselves and anyone standing near us. But when we walk in the light, we are better able to get up without destroying everything around us.

The answer isn't "do we fall" but "do we get back up" and how well does that go? In the light we are more sure of our footing, our direction, and our pathway...*with all of its dangers and traps*. We are able to 'dodge that lamp' and 'not step on the cat,' *spiritually speaking*. But if we **do** stumble, the 'light' is there to help us return to our feet. Without Christ, **our light**, we are on our own and frankly, *it shows!*

John tells us herein that if we are a truly reborn individual, we will indeed "overcome the world." It will never be in an instant, and none of us will ever find any level of righteous perfection in this life. But we will *get up* and we will...*in the light of Jesus*, brush ourselves off, crack our neck, regain our bearings, *and go on* in this race of life. And the fact is that without the presence of light, doing that will be impossible or certainly highly implausible. THAT is how we know we are or are not one of the kings kids! Because if not...when they stumble, they "will depart from us, confirming that they *were never one of us*."

In the light, when I get back up, I can see clearly what I tripped over and how the whole thing happened. I know then how to avoid doing so again, and can therefore negotiate the traps with far more clarity and success in the future. In the dark however, that just isn't so. In fact, in the dark, things can easily go from bad to worse. I stumble...lose my bearings, fall, try to get up, fall again not knowing where I am. It can be a domino effect, and the last piece is me falling out the door of the church and out of any facsimile of faith.

**John goes on** to warn us about the "testimony of men" here. It is a fact that many of us rely on those around us to give comfort and confirmation on this matter. I'm not talking about familial church family accountability...that is a different issue and is meaningless if you are not indeed part of the family of God. I'm talking about a scenario wherein as long as people around us think we are a-ok, we tend to relax and put our faith in them and their opinion of us. Not *God*, but **men**. And that will be our fatal mistake. Man cannot condemn you, they cannot redeem you, and they cannot do for you what you are unwilling to do yourself. THEIR opinion does not matter in judgment, only God's. Remember, the passage says "Depart from me, *I never knew you...*" not "*my church mates never knew me!*"

Verses 11-12 tells us this: "*And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.*"

Knowing that chapter 1 verse 5 tells us that "*God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all,*" we can read this passage in verse 11 and 12 as follows: "*And this is what the Light testifies: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the light. Whoever has the Light has life, and whoever does not have God's Light does not have life.*"

Verse 10 tells us that "*He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.*" Some points of clarity: remember that to "believe"...**really believe**, has profound reflection in our actions and our living. They are innately connected. If we have this, then the "witness of God" is in us. You ever see those headlamps that people wear sometimes? They are for free flow movement while negotiating in the dark. And let's face it...*it's dark out there in the world*. Jesus in us operates like that headlamp. That's where the light is emanating from. It doesn't necessarily help make the whole world a brighter place, (that's why many of us have such problems with anxiety) but that light...shining from within us, is illuminating the path before us, and can even help the people around us see the way to the door also. That's why Christians have that "thing" that people inexplicably are drawn to. It's the light in the darkness.

Verse 12 says *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*. What John is looking for...what *we are being called to look for herein*, is that "proof of life." How does it look for you out there today? Do you know where you are going? Do you clearly see the path ahead and the spiritual goals and callings that God has placed on your personal life, and are you answering that call? Can you see how to get back up when you fall? Do you find your feet, fix the danger in the road, and move on? Or do you rather find yourself so often lying on the floor, wondering what just happened and how to get back up? Or worse, denying to everyone around you that you did indeed fall down?

John already said in chapter 2, verse 8, that this "*thing is true **in Him** and **in you**, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.*" He said in verse 10 of that chapter, that it is '*in the light*' that we love our brethren, and therefore, "*there is no cause for stumbling in him.*" Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 that "*You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.*"

The "proof of our salvation" lies in the presence of, and the genuine walking in, that light. This says I am "born of God..."