

# 1 JOHN – OUTRO-DUCTION

Abiding in Truth, Living in Love, Rooted in Christ

## INTRODUCTION

As we conclude our deep dive into 1 John, it's crucial to remember the overarching purpose and context of this powerful letter. The author, writing as a father to his "little children," composed this epistle as a fatherly plea. His goal was to guide his readers, who were believers, back into conformity with the Apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ.

The recipients faced a significant challenge: antichrists had deceived some, leading to a primary sin of denying Jesus as the Christ—that Jesus was not sent from God. A secondary yet vital sin was a lack of love for the brethren. The author strategically uses rhetoric and repetition to engage the readers, making them think through the problem and understand the solution, rather than simply stating facts.

## I. CHAPTERS 1 & 2: THE APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION AND IDENTITY IN CHRIST

The author begins by establishing the authenticity and authority of the message about Jesus.

The Authentic Witness (1:1-4): The apostles, as eyewitnesses of Jesus, proclaim "what was from the beginning concerning the Word of Life." This "Word of Life" is Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of God's wisdom, truth, and eternal life in bodily form. The apostles literally and personally interacted with Him. The purpose of their proclamation is for the recipients to have fellowship with the apostles. An axiomatic truth is that believers, both apostles and recipients, indeed have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ; this fellowship is a positional reality and is not tenuous.

God is light and truth (1:5-10): "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." In this context, light is the truth of God and Jesus Christ, while darkness is false teaching about God and Jesus Christ.

Walking in darkness (living a life that promotes the antichrists' false teaching that Jesus is not the Christ) means one is "living a lie" and, thus, does not have fellowship with the apostles.

Conversely, walking in the light (living a life that promotes the truth of God) means having fellowship with one another ("the children" and the apostles).

Crucially, the letter clarifies that cleansing from all sin through "the blood of Jesus His Son" and forgiveness are a gnomic present, meaning a status of believers. This is based on God's faithfulness and righteousness, not on human confession.

The term "confess our sins" (*homologeō*) in this context means to "say the same thing, agree, to openly acknowledge that an action, behavior, or doctrine is an offense or error," particularly the sin of permitting antichrists to lead astray. It is not a formula for earning forgiveness; rather, it is a common agreement in light of believers' position.

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Abiding in Christ (2:1-11): The author's purpose in writing is "so that you would not sin," specifically referring to their doctrinal rebellion. He reassures them that "if anyone sins" (hypothetically, meaning this specific error), Jesus Christ is their advocate and the propitiation for their sins.

To "know God" (*ginosko*) means to maintain belief in Jesus the Messiah. "Keeping His commandments" is equated with believing in Jesus and loving the brethren.

Those denying Jesus as the Messiah are "living a lie" and "have not come to know Him."

The "anointing" (*chrisma*) given to believers is understood as a commission accompanied by the apostles' instruction and doctrine, which leads to the knowledge of Jesus, not a mystical empowerment. Believers have all they need to understand foundational truths about Jesus.

Warning Against Worldliness & Antichrists (2:12-28): The author addresses believers at various stages of spiritual maturity.

He exhorts "young men" to "stop loving the world" (Satan's system), resisting "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life."

He warns of "antichrists" who deny "that Jesus is the Christ." They "went out from among us, but they were not of us," meaning they were charlatans who used the clout of being with the apostles as a tool to infiltrate churches.

The command to "abide in Him" (Jesus) means to continually remain believing in Jesus and the simple promise of eternal life. The purpose of abiding is to ensure confidence and prevent shame at His appearing. This confidence stems from understanding God's grace and Christ's faithfulness, not from personal performance.

The "promise" reiterated in the letter is eternal life through Jesus Christ, who *is* Eternal Life. This is a present possession for believers, a qualitative life of knowing God.

## II. CHAPTERS 3 & 4: IDENTITY, RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE, AND TESTING

Children of God vs. Children of the Devil (3:1-10): The author exclaims, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God." Though what we "will be" is not yet revealed, we will be like Jesus when He appears, and we see Him. This hope in Him purifies us, identifying us as pure.

Righteousness by Identity (2:29, 3:7): Those "who practice righteousness" are "born of Him." This means believers are designated by God as having perfect righteousness because they are in Jesus Christ, not by their own efforts. The articular participles throughout this section (e.g., "the doing one the righteousness") denote identity, not ongoing actions.

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Sin is Doctrinal Rebellion (3:4, 8): In this specific context, sin is "rebellion against God, rejecting Jesus and denying that Jesus is the Messiah." This is "lawlessness," synonymous with the devil's work. Those "doing the sin" are identified as being "from the devil."

Cannot Sin (Unbelief) (3:5-6, 9): Jesus was revealed to take away "our sins" (rebellion/unbelief), and in Jesus, there is no sin. The one "born of God does not sin." This means that once born of God, a believer cannot commit the sin of unbelief or denial of Jesus because "His seed" (Jesus Christ in them) abides in him. This is a statement of eternal security, a positional state with God.

The Command to Love (3:11-18): This is a "message which you heard from the beginning" – that we should love one another. The antichrists are identified by their lack of love, even hatred for the brethren, acting as "murderers" like Cain. Believers are obligated to "lay down our lives for the brethren," demonstrating love "in deed and truth" by meeting needs.

Test the Spirits (4:1-6): The author directly instructs, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." This means to evaluate the messages of teachers. The specific test is: "Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is from God." Any message denying this is "of the antichrist." Believers, "little children," have overcome these false teachers because "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

God is Love (4:7-21): The author emphatically states, "Love is from God...God is love." God's love was uniquely revealed through "sending His only begotten Son into the world as propitiation for our sins." Believers are responders to God's love, not initiators. This profound love obligates us to love one another. Loving one another reflects (is correlated with) God abiding in us and His love being completed in us; it does not cause it. This "completed love" brings confidence before God and casts out fear of punishment, based on Christ's sacrifice, not our performance. Our love for God is demonstrated through our love for one another.

## III. CHAPTER 5: VICTORY AND ASSURANCE

Overcoming the World (5:1-5): "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten from God." Being "born of God" means one who overcomes the world (Satan's system and its false doctrines). This overcoming is an accomplished victory, a positional status based on Christ's victory and "the faith of ours" (the specific doctrine of Jesus as the Son of God), not on our behavior or works.

Testimony of God and Knowing Eternal Life (5:6-13): Jesus came by water (baptism) and blood (death). The Spirit is the truth, testifying through the Apostolic message. God's testimony (about His Son) is superior and more reliable than human testimony.

The believer who "has the Son has the life" because they have God's internalized testimony. Not believing in Jesus means one "has made Him a liar."

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God has given eternal life, and this life is exclusively "in His Son."

The explicit purpose of the author's writing is "so that you may know that you have eternal life." This "knowing" (Gk. *oida*) is full, complete, possessed knowledge, a present status for believers, not an ongoing process or based on feelings.

Confidence, Prayer, and Idols (5:14-21): Believers have confidence before God when making requests "according to His will" (aligned with Scripture). The "sin unto death" in this context refers to doctrinal error associated with the antichrist message (denying Jesus is the Christ and a lack of love for brethren). The author ends with three "we know" affirmations of security, understanding, and separation from evil, and a final warning: "Guard yourselves from idols" – encompassing false gods and doctrines rivaling Christ.

## IV. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

In summary, 1 John is a profound, fatherly letter calling believers to conformity with Apostolic truth about Jesus Christ and to love one another in response to God's love. The core message emphasizes:

Identity over Activity: Who you *are* in Christ defines you; God defines who you are, and this is the basis for what we do.

Eternal Security: Once "born of God" through faith, your status as a child of God is permanent; you cannot revert to an unbeliever.

Grace-based Living: Forgiveness and cleansing are a *status* by Christ's sacrifice, motivating righteous living out of gratitude, not fear of divine punishment or loss of fellowship with God.

How do we apply this today?

This letter is not a personal test of salvation or a test of others' salvation. Salvation is by faith in Jesus alone.

It is not an introspection of spirituality based on feelings or performance.

It is a fervent call to test all messages and teachers against God's Word, adhering to Apostolic doctrine as the ultimate truth. This is our primary defense against false teachings that deny the deity, work, or promises of Jesus.

It is a command to abide in Jesus, who He is, what He did, and what He promises.

It is an exhortation to live out of God's love, demonstrating it sacrificially to our brethren "in deed and truth."

We are encouraged to reject self-righteousness and fear, instead embracing confidence in Christ's finished work.

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Our spiritual life is about feeding our spirit with the Word of God, dwelling upon His truth, and actively avoiding sin, not out of fear, but because of God's grace and our secure identity as His children.