

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

¹ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

This is God's Word for God's People.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Did you know that witnesses in a court of law can only testify to what they have actually seen or heard. If they try and base their testimony on rumors or what they heard from someone else it is called “hearsay,” because it comes second hand and could be inaccurate or misleading. To be credible you must have firsthand knowledge – you had to be there.

That's why John begins his letter the way he does, **“¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard,”** He wants to establish his credentials for the testimony he is about to give. He was there. His testimony in this letter is about the things he actually heard and saw. His testimony is about **“Three absolute truths:” “Jesus Christ has Paid for the Sins of the World,” “Only Faith can bring Me Forgiveness,”** and **“Christians Walk with Christ.”**

I. Have you ever wanted to start your meal with dessert ^{1st}? Start with the really good stuff and then move on to the main course? As we consider John's testimony that's what we are going to do – start at the end – take in the really good stuff – first. **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”** This is the center of John's testimony. It's quite simple. God does not want us to sin. In the Old Testament God commanded, **“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”** (Leviticus 19:2) Jesus echoed this

command in the New Testament when he said, **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** (Matthew 5:48). Anyone can understand it, but no one can do it.

It is impossible for us to be holy and perfect like God. It is impossible for us to be without sin. Not a cheerful thought. Probably not what you came here this morning to hear and you might be wondering, “You said we were going to start with the good stuff. This doesn’t seem so good to me.” People don’t want to talk about sin, but ignoring our sin doesn’t get rid of our problem. Our sins don’t just go away, but here’s the good stuff. God wants to restore that perfect relationship with us and that is where God’s grace comes into play. He can’t ignore our sin but he does provide us with a solution to our problem.

He doesn’t want us to sin but if we do – and we all do sin – then we can find the solution to our problem in Jesus Christ. John calls him **“the Righteous One.”** Right with God because he lived a perfect life – he never sinned – he did what we can’t so that he could make us “right” with God. John also calls him the **“atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** He has made us “at-one” with God by being the perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is the first great absolute truth in John’s testimony.

We don’t always consider the seriousness of our sins. Sometimes we think they don’t matter or because we’re not as bad as the next guy we’re okay but our sins do matter to God – each and every one of them. They destroy our relationship with God but the good news is that he [God] makes that relationship “right” through his Son, Jesus Christ along with the gift of the Holy Spirit. That takes us to the second great truth that brings us the blessings of a right relationship with God – **“Only faith can bring me this forgiveness.”**

II. That’s the point John was trying to make when he wrote, **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”** It is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking we are pretty good all by ourselves – there are so many people in the world that are evil and are pretty bad compared to me. Even Christians tend to let their pride puff themselves up so that they think I’m a pretty good person.

If we think like that, we are really denying our sins and making God out to be a liar. The Bible is very clear in stating that, **“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23) Solomon wrote, **“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”** (Ec. 7:20). That takes us back to the first great truth John expressed, **“Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world,”** and the second great truth is that faith brings us the benefit of what Christ has done for us. John points to the need for repentance – confessing our sins – in order to bring us forgiveness.

Repentance is a sign of faith – a recognition of our sins and our need for a Savior. The Holy Spirit uses the Law to move us to repent of our sins and ask God for forgiveness. John assures us then that if we confess, God is faithful to his promise to forgive us our sins. As a Child of God we want to remember that repentance is not only acknowledging our sin and asking for forgiveness but repentance also includes a turning away from sin.

When you repent of that sin, don't keep going back to it and committing it again and again – flee from the temptation that leads you to sin. Turn away from it. Head in the other direction. It's like the alcoholic who finally admits he has a problem and resolves to turn his life around. He doesn't hang out in bars and in some cases he even has to get new friends. He avoids the things that would tempt him to fall off the wagon and drink again. So it is with our sins. When we repent we want to avoid the situations that would cause us to commit those same sins again. That sometimes is a hard thing to do but God promises to help us as we move forward and that takes us to the third great truth in this section of scripture, **“Christians Walk with Christ.”**

III. John put it this way, **“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”** If we are a Christian, we want to walk in the light of the Gospel. We want to follow Jesus who is the light of the world. God's Word is our guide. That's what it means to be a Christian – to walk in the light with Christ at the center of your life. If you let the world influence and guide your life then you are not walking in the light, you are walking in darkness. You can't have it both ways.

So often I hear, “Pastor, that's just the way it is these days. Everyone is doing it – you fall in the sin. Or Pastor, it's okay to skip church all summer because it's vacation time. Everyone needs a break. Or Pastor, you need to be more tolerant of different viewpoints (even when those viewpoints are sinful).” The influence of the world in our lives is great – greater than we even imagine. It's an influence in my life too. It would be a lot easier to just go along with the world – not to speak up, not to make waves – just try to blend in. Sort of like when the sun is going down. Your eyes adjust and you can still see clearly and before you know it, it's pretty dark outside.

That's how the influence of the world can overtake our lives. It sort of sneaks up on us and before we know it we are walking in the darkness of sin rather than the light of our Savior. The blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior cleanses our sins from those times when we wander from the path our Savior illuminates for us through his Word. God's Word is the key to remain children of the light – Christians – Followers of Christ. The Holy Spirit works through the Word to keep us on the right path and to show us God's will for our lives.

John wants us to remember that we are a Child of God and because of that we have Jesus in our Lives. That's why he assures us that, **“Jesus Christ has Paid for the Sins of the World,”** and to help keep that at the center of our lives he reminds us that, **“Only Faith can bring Me Forgiveness,”** and to keep that faith strong, **“We as Children of God Try to Walk with Christ.”** Amen.