

## A Study of 1 John 1

### I. Outline.

- I. Jesus Christ, the Life of Believers (1:1–4)
  - A. **John’s proclamation (1:1–2): The apostle offers a twofold description of this divine giver of life.**
    - 1. *The eternal Christ* (1:1a): He existed before the world began.
    - 2. *The earthly Christ* (1:1b–2): John saw, heard, and touched the physical body of the Savior.
  - B. **John’s purpose (1:3–4): He writes this that we might know the two reasons for Jesus’ incarnation.**
    - 1. *The vertical reason* (1:3): That we might experience fellowship with both the Father and Son.
    - 2. *The horizontal reason* (1:4): That we might share our joy with one another.
- II. Jesus Christ, the Light of Believers (1:5–10)
  - A. **The fact (1:5): “God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.”**
  - B. **The fruits (1:6–10)**
    - 1. *Negative* (1:6, 8, 10): If we walk in darkness with unconfessed sin, we will remain barren.
    - 2. *Positive* (1:7–9): If we walk in the light and confess our sin, we will be cleansed and fruitful.

[Willmington, H. L. (1999). *The Outline Bible* (1 Jn 1). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers].

### II. Summary.

This letter from the “Apostle of Love,” is a rich source of blessing to those who study it carefully. John begins by talking about the fact that he was actually there! He saw the Lord Jesus. He had handled Him. He would have Christians to be full of joy because of a relationship with Jesus. As Christians walk in the light, we can have cleansing from sin.

**Contents:** Fellowship with God made possible through the incarnation. Conditions of perpetual fellowship: walking in the light and confessing sins.

**Characters:** God, Christ, John.

**Conclusion:** Fellowship with the Father, which has been made possible through the incarnation of Christ, the eternal Word, can be maintained only by walking in the light, which signifies the recognizing of our sins with frank confession of them and forsaking of them as they are revealed to us, and belief in Christ crucified as the remedy for sin.

**Key Word:** Fellowship, [1 John 1:6](#).

**Strong Verses:** [1 John 1:6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#).

**Striking Facts:** [1John 1:9](#). Our sins were judicially dealt with at the cross ([1 Peter 2:24](#)) which results in eternal life, but un-confessed and un-forsaken sin in the believer brings the loss of fellowship with God and chastisement. ([1 Corinthians 11:31-33](#)) Confession of sin would not bring fellowship with God, unless the sinner had accepted the finished work of Christ on the cross.

[Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible*].

### III. Chronology.

**BIBLE PERIOD:** The Period of the Church.

*If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:*

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

**The following background remarks come from: *Studies in 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John*, edited by Dub McClish, pp. 27-32, and relate to matters of the particular time in which John wrote...**

“The Johannine Epistles were written during a maelstrom of conflict! The first generation of church leadership (i.e., the apostles) had ‘finished the race and kept the faith.’ Now, only one remained alive; and while some apparently thought that the Lord Himself would return prior to John’s death, history would prove them wrong. To John fell the task of dealing with the conflict which now surrounded the infant church; and deal with it he would! ...

“Who, exactly, were these false teachers that John wrote to expose, and what was their doctrine? The exact identity of these false teachers has been called by some ‘a matter of controversy.’ Others, however, have researched the matter in such a manner as to provide clues as to their identity. From extra-Biblical research, and from Biblical statements, there are certain things that we do know. As John R. W. Stott says, ‘John describes them by three expressions, which draw attention to their diabolical origin, evil influence, and false teaching.’ Stott lists the three expressions as (1) ‘false prophets’ (1 John 4:1); (2) ‘deceivers’ (2 John 1:7); and (3) ‘antichrists’ (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). And, in each case there are ‘many’ – ‘many false prophets,’ ‘many deceivers,’ ‘many antichrists.’ ...

“Gnosticism took on many forms, but can basically be discussed under two categories -- (1) those who denied the Deity of the Lord (Cerinthian Gnostics), and (2) those who denied the humanity of the Lord (Docetic Gnostics). These denials were ultimately brought about by the Gnostics' dualistic belief that matter is inherently evil and only spirit is good. For the Gnostic, the spirit was from God, and therefore good, since the Gnostic held God to be perfect and good; but matter, and especially the body, was not from God and therefore evil. Of course, with this particular view came two problems: (1) how to explain the creation, and (2) how to explain the incarnation, if matter is inherently evil (which the Gnostic believed) and if God is inherently good (which the Gnostic also believed), then God could not have created the world, for God (good) would not (could not) create evil. Thus, the Gnostics eventually ended up with an artificial system of ‘aeons’ or ‘emanations’, (i.e., ‘lesser gods’), one of which created the world. This was their only way around the problem of God’s directly creating that which they believed to be evil. The body likewise, being composed of matter, must also be evil, said the Gnostics, and therefore the incarnation of Christ (Deity’s inhabiting a literal body) could not have occurred. ...

“After all is said and done, of course, the whole system of Gnosticism can be shown to be in error by simply noting that it makes salvation available only to a few select people (those to whom the ‘special knowledge’ had been made available), and thereby makes God a respecter of persons. Acts 10:34-35, however, makes it clear that God may not be charged with that error. Also, Gnosticism makes salvation meritorious, by making one’s mental efforts, not the blood of Christ, the basis of that salvation. Eph. 2:6ff and many other passages are thus violated.

#### IV. Words/Phrases to Study

- 1:1... **THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING**—“Instead of a personal pronoun in the masculine gender which we would ordinarily expect in this instance, the sentence begins with a neuter relative, *that which*. The reference is thus not to Christ contemplated as a person only, but to the attributes and characteristics which he, as the Word, possesses. It was ‘concerning the Word of life’ which John purposed to write, hence the neuter to express a collective or comprehensive whole.” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, p. 210].]
- 1.1... **OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED**—“Compare Matthew 26:49; Luke 24:39; John 20:27. This and the foregoing expressions might be directed against Cerinthus and the Doketists—those that held that

Christ was only a phantom” [W.M. Sinclair, *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, Editor: Charles Ellicott, an e-Sword Module].

- 1.1... **THE WORD OF LIFE**—“Respecting, or pertaining to, the Word of life. ‘That is, whatever there was pertaining to the Word of life, which was manifested from the beginning in his speech and actions, of which the senses could take cognizance, and which would furnish the evidence that he was truly incarnate, that we have declared unto you.’ The phrase ‘the Word of life,’ means the Word in which life resided, or which was the source and fountain of life. See the notes at John 1:1, 3. The reference is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ” [Albert Barnes].
- 1.2... **MANIFESTED**—“Corresponding with *the Word was made flesh* (John 1:14). The two phrases, however, present different aspects of the same truth. *The Word became flesh*, contemplates simply the historic fact of incarnation. *The life was manifested*, sets forth the unfolding of that fact in the various operations of life. The one denotes the objective process of the incarnation as such, the other the result of that process as related to human capacity of receiving and understanding it. “The reality of the incarnation would be undeclared if it were said, ‘The Life became flesh.’ The manifestation of the Life was a consequence of the incarnation of the Word, but it is not coextensive with it” (Westcott)” [Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies*].   ||||  
“The parenthesis reiterates with redoubled force that the whole essence of the relation of God to man lies in the audible, visible, tangible, historical appearance of God in Jesus. After the manner of St. John, the word “life” at the end of the last sentence suggests the form of the phrasing in the new sentence: Jesus was that *Eternal Life* which was at the side of the Father, in communion with Him, in equal intercourse with Him; that Life on which all other existence, physical and spiritual, depend (1) for its license to exist, (2) for its fulfilment of the end for which it was created” [W.M. Sinclair].
- 1.3... **THAT YE ALSO MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US**—“Through the acceptance of the Word of life a unity of faith, practice, and worship is established, and it was for this purpose that the life was being declared. Here, in the most emphatic fashion, the writer points out that only in unity of faith is there communion in religion. It is possible to have fellowship only when there is a common bond established in faith, work, and love” [Woods, p. 213].   ||||   “‘This word introduces us to one of the main thoughts of the Epistle. The true life in man, which comes through the *acceptance* of Jesus as the Son of God, consists in *fellowship* with God and with man. On the word, see on Acts 2:42; see on Luke 5:10. The verb *κοινωνέω* to *come into fellowship, to be made a partner, to be partaker of*, occurs 1 Peter 4:13; 2 John 1:11; Hebrews 2:14, etc. The expression here, (*ἔχειν κοινωνίαν*) is stronger, since it expresses *the enjoyment or realization* of fellowship, as compared with the mere *fact* of fellowship” [Vincent].
- 1.4... **THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL**—“This is almost the same language which the Saviour used when addressing his disciples as he was about to leave them, John 15:11; and there can be little doubt that John had that declaration in remembrance when he uttered this remark. See the notes at that passage. The sense here is, that full and clear views of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship with him and with each other, which would follow from that, would be a source of happiness. Their joy would be complete if they had that; for their real happiness was to be found in their Saviour” [Barnes].
- 1.5... **GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL**—“Though there is much darkness in the world, ‘darkness in him there is none whatsoever.’ This statement, in the Greek text, is an exceedingly emphatic one, the two negatives, *ouk estin oudemia*, signifying ‘no, not even one tiny particle!’ There is no discoloration, no admixture of darkness in the pure light which streams from the character of God. He is, indeed, ‘the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning’ (James 1.17)” [].
- 1.7... **WALK IN THE LIGHT**—“To ‘walk in the light’ is a figure which means to live as a Christian. Notice that ‘walk in the light’ has a qualifying statement—‘as he is in the light.’ In verses five and six, we read ‘that God is light.’ Thus, we walk in the light that God is. The principles behind

our daily walk are the same as God's. Notice also the word 'walk' is continual action. We walk and keep on walking in the light that God is. What does all this mean? It means our life is exemplary of how God would walk in this life. Our every effort and our every breath are as if we are trying to live as perfectly as God lives. We are holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1.15-16)" [Chuck Northrup, *We Can Rest Assured!*, p. 12].

- 1.7... **THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US**—"Another result of walking in the light is the cleansing of our sins by the blood of Jesus. This cleansing is not automatic for it requires confession which entails repentance and renewal. And cleansing does not come as a result of a mere feeling of guilt from the sins we have committed, nor does it come as a result of a mere belief in Jesus as the Christ. It comes from walking 'in the light, as he is in the light.' In 2 Corinthians 7.9-10 Paul wrote, 'Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.' A mere feeling of sorrow from sin (guilt) is 'the sorrow of the world' but when that sorrow leads to repentance it is 'godly sorrow' which leads to salvation" [Northrup, 17-18].
- 1.9... **IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS**—"John will point out throughout this epistle that God's plan did not demand sinless perfection. That is a goal for which we all ought to strive. If that is not in our hearts, there is something drastically wrong with us. Even as Christians we are going to sin. Part of Jesus' death was not just to forgive past sins from before we become Christians, but to forgive us after we have become Christians. That is the beauty of becoming Christians, we have continual forgiveness. This is only as we walk in the light. When we do this, we have fellowship with each other. What makes that possible is that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. When John speaks of the "we" in this verse, he is classing himself with those who receive his epistle. John is saying that even though he is an apostle (the one whom Jesus loved), he is guilty of the same things that all Christians are in regards to occasionally committing sins. He says that the blood cleanses 'us' including himself from our sins. The word 'cleanseth' is a present-tense term meaning that He keeps on cleansing us by His blood as long as we are walking in the light. **Four things accomplished by this:**
  1. It is continuous (the blood keeps on cleansing us).
  2. It is complete (the blood cleanses us from ALL sin/unrighteousness)
  3. It is certain - guaranteed (we can know absolutely that the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin as promised)
  4. It is conditional (we must walk in the light.) You cannot walk in the light for part of your life then walk in darkness and expect to have continuing forgiveness of sins. We must do the best we can in the path God has marked out for us. If we stumble, we get back up and go on the same path. It is also conditional in that we must confess our sins which implies repentance. Also implied in this is the keeping of the commandments (1 John 2:4) [Ted Clarke, Bible Institute of Missouri Notes, Produced by Bradley Cobb, an e-Sword Module].
- 1.10... **WE MAKE HIM A LIAR, AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US**—"Stronger far than 'we lie,' or 'the truth is not in us.' Our foolish presumption is regarded in its worst aspect: an impiety against God, whose word, revelation, appeal to our conscience, and witness by the Spirit, are thus blasphemously contradicted. Parallel to 'we do not the truth' and 'the truth is not in us,' the practical result here is that we cannot be regarded as having in any sense received God's revelation into our hearts" [W.M. Sinclair].      "As sin is evermore about us, and, alas, all too often in us, we must continually seek new pardons through the means hereinbefore set forth. This section of the Epistle, far from teaching that the Lord forgave us of all sins, 'past, present, and future,' as the advocates of the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy allege, establishes the fact of an ever-present need of the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Happily we have the

assurance that 'the blood of Jesus his Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin' (verse 7) as we conform to the conditions on which such depends" [Woods, pp., 220-221].

## V. Lessons & Applications.

- **1 John 1.6-7...** "... destroys the man-made doctrine of 'belief only' for it teaches that we must do more than merely believe. We must live the life of a Christian. Also, it destroys the man-made doctrine of 'once save always saves.' The words 'walk' and 'cleanseth' are continual action verbs. The cleansing is a constant continual process as long as the Christian continues to walk in the light but when the Christian quits walking in the light, the blood of Christ quits cleansing. No person can have fellowship with God while walking in darkness. If he claims such, he is either lying or he is deceived" [Chuck Northrup, p. 18].
- **1 John 1.7... QUESTION: What about confessing every sin specifically in our prayers?** "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Notice again John's use of the conditional term "If". Yes the faithful Christian does enjoy the continual cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. Yes the faithful Christian can have fellowship with God. Yes the Christian can stand in the site of God, sinless, spotless and without blame. But this perfect state is conditional upon our confession of sins to God. Though not mentioned here, the need for asking forgiveness is implied in one's confession of sin to God. Our mode of communication with God the Father is through prayer so it is understood that this confession is accomplished through that medium.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we read Paul's command to "Pray without ceasing" to the Christians in Thessalonica. Here we see the need for confession of sin in order to receive the forgiveness of our sin and stand cleansed of all sin in the sight of God. The need for and importance of habitual, regular prayer of the Christian to God cannot be overstated. The psalmist wrote in 55:17, "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice*". This avenue of communication to God is a wonderful blessing and is available to Christians in a very special way which alien sinners cannot enjoy (John 9:31). Regular, habitual prayer is also commanded in scripture; "*continuing instant in prayer...*" (Romans 12:12), "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication...*" (Ephesians 6:18), "*Continue in prayer...*" (Colossians 4:2), "*in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Philippians 4:6).

One must naturally ask, must we confess every single sin specifically in our prayers? What about the sins we are unaware of, how do we confess those? To answer this, we need look at the words of Jesus concerning the publican tax collector in Luke 18:13, "*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner*". Daniel is his great prayer to God concerning the release of his people from Babylonian captivity did not go into specifics over the sins of his people, rather he acknowledged their sinful state and asked for forgiveness (Daniel 9:19). While there is certainly nothing wrong with specifically addressing one's sins during prayer, we must also acknowledge that there are sins which we commit out of ignorance making such a thing both impractical and impossible to achieve on a consistent basis. Regular prayer, confessing one's sinful state without naming each and every sin will suffice. The importance here is that regular prayer is the medium by which we can communicate with God and keep ourselves cleansed of all unrighteousness, thus standing righteous and perfect in the site of God. A Christian must strive and work toward a healthy, regular and consistent prayer life in his service to God.

In verse 7, John used the term "*cleanseth us from all sin*". Here he uses the words "*cleanse us*

from all unrighteousness". Righteous simply means 'rightful'. An individual is either righteous or unrighteous, there is no middle of the road on this. One cannot be half right and still be righteous, or rightful. The continual cleansing in verse 7 is in the present perfect tense which means it is happening presently on a continual basis. All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17), so it is understood here that when one is cleansed of all unrighteousness, there is no unrighteousness or sin left behind. Walking in the light, following after Jesus, obeying His commands, serving others, worshiping in spirit and in truth, praying regularly to God and living faithfully is the way we, as sinful Christians, present ourselves perfect, blameless and spotless in the site of God” [David Hersey, <http://bit.ly/1hBOp6z> ].

**VI. Questions.**

**True or False**

- 01. \_\_\_\_ Saying we have no sin is a good thing.
- 02. \_\_\_\_ What the Apostle John had HANDLED was Jesus, Himself.
- 03. \_\_\_\_ It is possible for the word of the Lord not to be in us.
- 04. \_\_\_\_ John was interested in the JOY of those who received his letter.
- 05. \_\_\_\_ We cannot walk in darkness and have fellowship with God and Christ.

**I Found it in Verse(s)**

- 06. \_\_\_\_ The blessing from confessing our sin.
- 07. \_\_\_\_ The agent for cleansing of sins.
- 08. \_\_\_\_ Life of Jesus was manifested.
- 09. \_\_\_\_ God is Light.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ Fellowship mentioned two times in one verse.

**Short Answer**

- 11. To say we have not sinned means His \_\_\_\_\_ is not in us.
- 12. A word 1 John 1.1 shares with John 1.1: \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. John’s fellowship was/is with: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. To have cleansing from sin, it is necessary to \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ as He is in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 15. In God is none of this at all: \_\_\_\_\_.

*Each Question is worth 7 Points*

**My Score is:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers will be found on next week’s handout*

**VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.** The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL

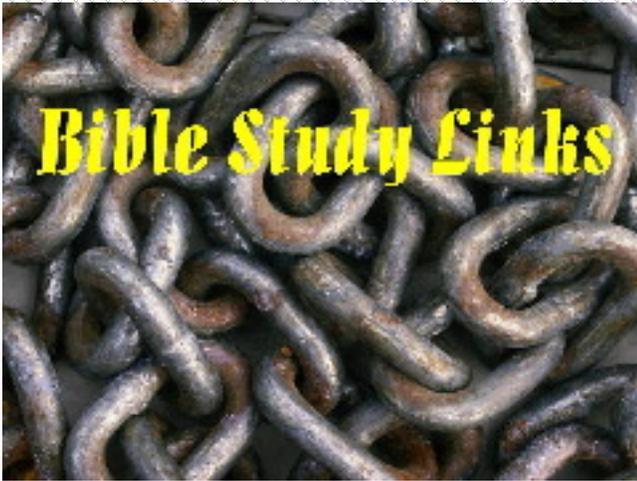
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<b>ALSO</b>	<b>BEAR</b>	<b>BEGINNING</b>	<b>CHRIST</b>	<b>DARKNESS</b>
<b>DECLARE</b>	<b>ETERNAL</b>	<b>EYES</b>	<b>FATHER</b>	<b>FELLOWSHIP</b>
<b>FULL</b>	<b>HANDLED</b>	<b>HANDS</b>	<b>HEARD</b>	<b>JESUS</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>LIGHT</b>	<b>LOOKED</b>	<b>MANIFESTED</b>	<b>MESSAGE</b>
<b>SEEN</b>	<b>SHEW</b>	<b>THEN</b>	<b>THINGS</b>	<b>TRULY</b>
<b>TRUTH</b>	<b>WALK</b>	<b>WITNESS</b>	<b>WORD</b>	<b>WRITE</b>

VIII. Crossword Puzzle.

<b>1 John 1 (KJV)</b>															
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	2														
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<u>ACROSS</u>	<u>DOWN</u>
02) "I have no sin," I ____ myself.	01) Cleansing comes if we ____ our sins.
03) It is possible for this to be IN US.	02) In God there is none of it.
06) Christians can continue to be cleansed from all of it.	04) Upon confession, God is faithful and ____ to forgive us.
09) You can do it in darkness or in the light.	05) Found 4X in these 10 verses.
10) It is His blood that cleanseth us from all sin.	07) John wanted the JOY of the recipients to be...
11) Sixth word.	08) John's ____ had handled the Word of Life.
12) Saying we have not ____, makes God a liar.	09) To give full joy, John did this.



IX. Links.

**for 1 John 1...**

*These links are to the writings of men and not to inspired Scripture, thus care and caution in weighing the conclusions is always wise.*

*Some are not really links, but listing of material commonly available in books and publications.*

- Collection of notes published by Bradley S. Cobb (from notes in his classes at the Bible Institute of Missouri) available, as an e-Sword module, for \$5.00 online at: <http://bit.ly/1l6wncN>
- A study of 1 John 1.7-10 by David Hersey: <http://bit.ly/1hBOp6z>
- Treasury of Scripture Knowledge for 1 John 1:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tsk/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- Burton Coffman on 1 John 1: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- Albert Barnes' Notes on Introduction to 1 John:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=0>
- Albert Barnes' Notes on Chapter 1: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable on 1 John 1:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- Peter Pett's Commentary on the Bible for Introduction to 1 John:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=0>
- Peter Pett's Commentary on the Bible for 1 John 1:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- JFB Commentary Critical and Explanatory on Introduction to 1 John:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfb/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=0>
- JFB Commentary Critical and Explanatory on 1 John 1:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfb/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=1>
- Joseph Benson on Introduction to 1 John:  
<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/rbc/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=0>
- Joseph Benson on 1 John 1: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/rbc/view.cgi?bk=61&ch=0>