

# 1<sup>st</sup> JOHN BIBLE STUDY

1 John 5:6-13

Lesson #20

## Introduction

This is our 1<sup>st</sup> John Bible study. It's lesson number 20, and it's covering chapter 5, verses 6-13. John knows that he's wrapping up this letter, and he begins to sum up the high points that he wants the churches to understand and remember. He's already exposed the heresy that Jesus wasn't really a flesh and blood man, and he's exposed the heresy that professing believers can continue to practice unrepentant sin and really be Christians. He's left no doubt whatsoever as to these matters. He's made it clear that overcoming the world is about the power of faith to overcome the desires of the flesh, and regenerate and transform the heart's and mind's of mankind. He's reminded us that our kingdom is not of this age, but the next, at the glorious return of our Lord and Savior. Therefore we are to expect tribulations in this age, but the true believers will persevere to the end, because our faith is protected by the power of God, and our reward is held securely in heaven. (1Pet 1:4-5) The title of this lesson is:

### He who has the Son has the Life

*6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

*13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

1 John 5:6-13 (NASB)

### Verses 6-8:

*6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.*

It's easy to get carried off into debates over the intended significance of the water and the blood as they're used in this verse. But these verses aren't about that. These verses are about the testimony of God concerning His Son. And the water baptism, and the shed blood are two of the major elements of that godly testimony. We remember that Jesus was publically baptized by John the Baptist. (Mat 3:13-17) And at that occasion: *behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."* (Mat 3:17) God the Father verbally pronounced an audible testimony as to the authenticity of Jesus as His beloved Son. So, the water, as it's used here, is the first of the three elements of corroborating testimony of God as to the authenticity of His beloved Son, Jesus.

Of course Jesus needed no repentance, and John the Baptist said to Him that it should be the other way around, that Jesus should be baptizing him. But Jesus said that it was proper for this to take place at that time, because He understood that it was part of the necessary testimony as to His authority as the Son of God to forgive sins. And, it was, as this preacher perceives, kind of like His official ordination ceremony into ministry, as attested by the Spirit's descending and resting upon Him. And it was immediately after this, and not before, that Jesus began to speak with the authority of God, and perform miraculous signs and wonders.

But, as far as man is concerned, the water does carry the significance of repentance, and this was what John the Baptist was preaching. He was calling his fellow Israelites to repent of their sins and make themselves ready to receive their most holy Messiah, their Lord and their Savior. Everyone who went out to John the Baptist knew what they were doing, they were confessing their sins and seeking repentance in an effort to receive God's blessings. This is how the Old Testament covenant worked, and they understood that they were publically confessing that they had not been living in obedience to God's commandments, and were asking for forgiveness and repentance from that way of living.

But, getting back to the three fold testimony of God concerning His Son, The second element of this three part testimony is the blood. Jesus publically suffered the pain and humiliation of death, which is the meaning of the blood. The life is in the blood, declares the scriptures:

*11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood, by reason of the life, that makes atonement.'* Lev 17:11 (NASB)

I have taught in the past that it isn't the red liquid itself, but the life which that blood contains, that makes atonement. Since then I've heard another well known preacher say the same thing, and he was criticized for that statement, because some people think the blood itself is the key element. But this verse makes it clear from the outset, that it is the blood, **by reason of the life that is in it**, that makes atonement. The wages of sin is not blood, the wages of sin is death. (Eze 18:4; Rom 6:23)

We're so accustomed to hearing and speaking of the shed blood of Jesus that we often lose sight of the fact that it is *the shedding of blood unto death* that made atonement for our sins. So, when we say "the shed blood of Jesus" let us not for one second forget that it is "the shedding of blood unto death" that purchased our redemption. And this is the second of the three part testimony of God as to the authenticity of His Son, Jesus Christ. Both of these first two were done openly and publically, in the sight of all who were present, but the third, and last is not something so publically observable.

This last part of the trio of testimony is the Spirit. The first two were observable acts, the third is a testimony that's as clear as day to the believers, but completely invisible to the unbelievers. Faith is that gift of believing that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God who died in our place to pay our debt of death for breaking the commandments of God. That belief (faith) is attested to by the Spirit of God, and when combined with the observable acts of baptism, (ordination), and crucifixion, shedding of life blood, forms a complete three part agreement as to the validity of Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God, and the one and only authorized and recognized mediator on our behalf. John says that all three are in agreement, and as such, forms a legal and binding testimony on behalf of Jesus Christ. God's testimony on this issue, regarding his Son, forms a legally binding obligation upon all mankind to recognize His Son Jesus as God's only source of forgiveness and eternal life, and the only means of entry into the kingdom of heaven. Now, having made his case as to the validity of God's testimony regarding His Son Jesus, John continues with these next verses:

#### **Verses 9-10:**

*9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.*

Remember, John is speaking in these verses of the testimony that God has given about His Son, Jesus. John says that if we receive, in a court of law, the testimony of mere men, and on that human testimony decide matters of law and justice, crime and punishment, then any testimony that is given by God is infinitely greater, and more reliable, and more sure and binding than any human testimony could ever be. And then John says straight out that God has in fact provided such testimony, and that testimony is directly concerning His Son. God has not been silent on this issue. He has not left it up to man to decide for himself if Jesus really is the Son of God. He has not left it up to man to individually decide how he himself wants to relate to God.

The true God is not something, or someone, that we each fashion out of our own maudlin sentimentality, as Arthur Pink once wrote. There are not multiple roads to God, as is the popular secular thinking. God has personally testified to the contrary, and all who ignore that testimony do so at their own sure and certain peril. It's common to hear someone say that they do believe in God, but they don't believe that He is so narrow minded as to exclude anyone's individual beliefs and feelings, so long as they're sincere in those beliefs. Many people believe that they can honor God, and yet not accept Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God, as the way the truth and the life, and no one comes to God except by Him. (Jn 14:6) But John dispels that silly notion by examining the facts behind such a claim.

In the last part of verse 10, John says *the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.*

You see what John means? He asks how is it possible to believe in a God, and then not believe the sworn testimony that He has provided about His own Son? Not to believe His testimony is to implicitly label Him as a liar, there's no possible way to escape that. So, do you have a lying god that you worship? You might not be bold enough to say this outright, but if you reject Jesus as the Son of God, and the only way of salvation, is that not the inescapable conclusion? John says that God has given sworn testimony regarding His Son, and any, and all, who don't accept this testimony are making God out as a liar. We see trials on television, and maybe even in person, and we hear witnesses give testimony, and we either believe that testimony or we don't. If we do then we conclude the witness is telling the truth, but if we don't believe that testimony, then we must conclude they are lying and committing perjury.

In the first part of verse 10 John says *The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself*. That's exactly what he meant in verse 6 when he said that it is the Spirit that testifies along with the water and the blood. The testimony that we have within ourselves is that faith that Jesus is the Son of God, and this is the belief that's called saving faith. It isn't just external evidence, but also real and genuine belief in the conclusions of that evidence. The indwelling Spirit provides this irrefutable believing faith that the testimony of God, concerning His beloved Son, is indeed true and reliable. But this isn't just blind faith, and it isn't faith in faith itself, but rather it's faith that the observable evidence, both external and internal, supports the veracity of God's testimony concerning His only begotten Son. It's patently ridiculous to claim to believe in the God of the bible, and at the same time not believe His own sworn testimony regarding His only Son.

I can understand if someone doesn't accept the bible as the holy scriptures of God, how they can reject the truth of the teachings in those scriptures. But what I can't understand is how anyone who claims to accept the holy scriptures as the word of God, and even call themselves Christians, can then reject the teachings therein. Particularly concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. Pardon my candor, but it seems to me that anyone who claims to be a Christian, and then holds heretical views on the person and work of Jesus Christ is a fool. Is it not downright idiotic to worship a god that you think is a liar? If he'll lie about his son, then how can you trust anything that he says? How do you even begin to worship such a god, and moreover, why would you even want to? The trustworthiness of the word of God, and His perfect and holy and righteous character, are at the very foundation of our perception of almighty God, and He will not, yea even cannot, violate these essential characteristics of His own divine nature. Now, moving to the next verses:

### **Verses 11-12:**

*11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

Now that John has established that God has in fact given us clear and undeniable personal testimony concerning His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, he turns his focus on the significant content of that testimony. John says *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*. The object of the testimony is Jesus Christ, the subject of this testimony is that gift of life, and not just life, but eternal life. A life that has no end, no deterioration, no degradation, not subject to the frailties and ailments and shortcomings of this temporary fleshly life we now have. The precious gift of eternal life, promised by God to all His elect, is resident and available only in His Son, Jesus.

For this reason *He who has the Son has the life*. Again, the life being described here has already been defined as that everlasting life afforded to the residents of the eternal kingdom of God. After all, it would hardly benefit God if all His redeemed children eventually died off from old age would it? The kingdom **of** God is first and foremost a kingdom **for** God, created for His own benefit, to fulfill His desire not to be alone but to have a family of acceptable worshipers, (Jn 4:23) all of whom are eventually transformed into the likeness of His beloved Son. (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13; Phi 3:21; 1Jn 3:2) And who are those who have this gift of eternal life, and how did they come to have it? They are those who believe that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, and it's through Jesus alone that they obtain this precious gift of God. He who has the Son, meaning he who believes, and possesses the indwelling Spirit, and visibly demonstrates the appropriate fruits of that Spirit, has this eternal life.

But; *he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life*. Do we really understand the scope of what we're reading here? John says, in no uncertain terms, that there is no eternal life, therefore no heaven, for anyone who does not have the Son of God.

And by **having** he has already defined what having means. And it does **not** mean just saying that we believe in Jesus, but that we show corroborating evidence of that belief by consistent and persistent obedience to His commandments. There is no believing, and therefore no **having the Son**, that is void of obeying.

In chapter 2, verse 3 he wrote:

*3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

And immediately following that in verse 4 he wrote:

*4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*

And again in chapter 3, verse 24 he wrote:

*24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in them. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.* (1Jn 2:3-4, 3:24)

Any claims to having the Son of God, by those who are practicing disobedience are a lie, and the truth is not in them. Don't even try to claim that you have Jesus if you're living in unrepentant disobedience to His commandments. Save yourself the embarrassment of rejection at His Great White Throne of Judgement, where He will tell you to depart from Him, you practicers of lawlessness, because He never knew you, and obviously you never knew Him either. (Mat 7:21-23; 1Jn 2:4)

We've all heard claims of people who don't know anything about the God of the bible, but feel that they're okay with Him, because they perceive Him as some imaginary entity, or force that only knows love, and wouldn't ever put nice people into hell. Well, maybe they're partially right on some of the aspects, God certainly is loving, but God's love never trumps His righteousness, He doesn't work like that, and anyone who knows what He put His Son Jesus through to secure salvation for His chosen, should see that God doesn't just wink at sin, He unrelentingly demands death as the only form of punishment. Ask Jesus if this is true or not.

And furthermore, concerning nice people, there's a huge cavern of difference between how man defines nice people and how God defines nice people. Has God ever given us an accounting as to His own assessment of mankind, and how we appear from His viewpoint? Well, yes He has, and the scriptures give us that accounting. Here's His assessment of what we perceive to be basically nice people:

*10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 And the path of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Romans 3:10-18 (NASB)

Now it's by no means my desire to paint God as a terrifying ogre, just waiting to pounce on innocent people, at the first opportunity. But, the scriptures do present a balanced picture of the God of the Bible, as both loving and forgiving to those who repent and believe, and at the same time, as a consuming fire of wrath and punishment to those who persist in flagrant disobedience to His commandments. He is both of these, in perfect balance and harmony, not just one or the other. Failure to know the true God, and recognize His totality of virtues and character, will be the destruction of many a poor soul who take Him lightly. He will never, ever overlook sin, not even a single tiny sin. Unless your sins have been paid for in full by the death of Jesus Christ, then you are still liable to God for them yourself. And His only judgement is death in the everlasting lake of fire.

God does not see mankind as we see mankind, He sees mankind weighed in comparison to His own virtues, and those of His beloved Son, who is perfect and sinless in every way. Unless you honestly think that you can meet this standard of measurement yourself, then you best find a substitute who can, or, you'll suffer the sure and certain consequences. And this is what is meant by **having** Jesus, the Son of God. You have Him as your substitute payee of the debt you rightly owe to God for disobeying His commandments. If you don't, then you're liable yourself, and the debt will be paid, God will see to it that it is. None will escape paying the price, none will be overlooked or ignored. He who has the Son of God has the forgiveness, and with that forgiveness the eternal life that it provides. He who does not have the Son of God does not have forgiveness, and eternal life becomes eternal banishment into a lake of burning fire, called the second death.

All of this hinges on Jesus, the Son of God; not on Buddha, not on Allah, not on Mary, not on the plethora of man made gods, and deities, and spirits, and humanism, and new age spiritualism. Our eternal disposition, every man, woman and child, is entirely based on our knowledge of, and response to, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is the only mediator between God and man, (1Tim 2:5-6) and in whom is forgiveness of sins and eternal life for those who believe in Him.

If you are ever criticized for your narrow exclusivity as a Christian, then by all means don't deny it, but affirm it with full confidence. Christianity is absolutely exclusive, it recognizes none but Jesus Christ alone as God's designated mediator, and as mankind's only propitiation for sin. Be proud of that, not defensive, because God is proud of His beloved Son, who did what no other creature in the universe could do, and by His own life's blood saved mankind from their sins. Exclusive, you bet it is. God made it exclusive by full intention, to the glory of His beloved Son. Narrow, yes extremely narrow, even agonizingly so. (Mat 7:13-14; Lk 13:24) I doubt that the complaining unbelievers even know the half of it.

We're under constant pressure by secular society, and liberal churches, to ease the restrictions of scriptures, and recognize other ways for man to get right with God, and inherit the kingdom of heaven. And Christians are, by nature tender hearted, and we don't want to see anyone perish, so we might be tempted to compromise just a tiny little bit. But this supposedly well intended gesture is actually an assault on the work and great price that Jesus paid on that cross. We cannot open another door to redemption without, at the same time, diminishing the value of Christ's sacrifice.

If Jesus's sacrifice provided only one way among many ways, then what does that do to His glory and His rightful position as head of the church. If there's another way to become a member of the body of Christ then who provided it and what did they do to make it effectual? You see what happens, consequentially, when we recognize any other means of redemption? Anything that equals His work equals Him, and infringes on His glory. God has made His Son first born over all creation (meaning ruler) and will allow nothing whatsoever to steal His glory and His place of honor. (Col 1:17-18)

There's a lot more happening in the creation plan of God than just mankind's redemption. But sadly, much of evangelical Christianity chooses to ignore it. After all, evangelism is easy. You don't have to be living a sanctified life, you don't need to know anything about the scriptures, and theology, and truth versus error, and the overall plan of God for the sanctification and transformation of His redeemed; you just need to present a little preplanned presentation and hope for the best. And this brings us now to the last verse in our study.

### **Verse 13:**

*13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

This verse is probably among the top three or four of the most misused verses in the bible. It's routinely used entirely out of its context. When John says that **these things** he has written, what are those things he's referring to? Is it not everything that he's just told them in this letter? Isn't that the only true contextual use of this verse? To tack this verse onto the back of one or two other verses from another section of scriptures, and then use it as proof of something else that's completely out of context, is tantamount to outright fraud.

What is the real heart of those things that John has said in this epistle, and which might rightly be viewed by the saints as credible evidence that they have eternal life? John isn't speaking simply of the things that he's just said in the preceding one or two sentences, but what he's said in this whole letter. It is the teaching of this whole epistle that affords the confidence that we have eternal life, and nothing less than that may be rightly implied, without doing severe injustice to the word of God.

John began with his exhortations and warnings not to accept any teachings about Jesus that suggest that He might have only been some kind of spirit manifestation and not a real flesh and blood man. Then he warned that any and all claims of faith are by necessity, authenticated by real life behaviors, and obedience to God is the true indicator of genuine belief. That any claims of faith that were absent of obedience in daily life practice were absolutely bogus, and proved the insincerity of those claims.

He taught that love is an indispensable element, a byproduct, of regeneration, because God is love, and all who are indwelt by His Spirit will have, and display, love for God, and love for the brethren. An absence of such love is an absence of the indwelling Spirit of God, but, the presence of this self-sacrificing love is a powerful authenticator.

He taught that a continued love for the world, and the things of this world are not consistent with a regenerated spirit. If we still love the world, and still seek after those former things with the same fervor that we did before our profession of faith, then the Spirit of God has not taken up residence in our hearts, and we're self-deceived. But if our love of the world has been replaced with a love and anticipation of the glorious return of Jesus Christ, and our treasure is perceived as residing in heaven, not here on this earth, and in this age, then this is powerful evidence of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit to change our priorities and our affections. We have to live in this world until we pass away, or we're snatched up out of it, but we don't have to have our hearts and minds set on the things of it. Our kingdom is not of this age, and our lives either demonstrate or refute the reality of that thinking.

Furthermore, we're diligent to listen to, and consider, the things we're taught, and both able to recognize errors and heresies when we hear them, and, ready to confront them head on with scripture rightly interpreted when we do encounter them. To the unconverted, nothing is important enough to argue about, and truth will be readily sacrificed for the sake of peace and harmony. But not so for the true child of God, who loves the truth and values it too highly to ever compromise on it.

There's more, but these are the high points of John's teachings in this epistle, and when understood and applied to our lives, over a long enough period of time to be truly representative of our beliefs and feelings, can then be a most powerful and persuasive evidence that we either do, or we don't, show the characteristics of saving faith in our lives. When we recognize that we do in fact demonstrate all these godly characteristics, then we may know, by evidence, not just by feelings, that we truly have eternal life, and the Spirit of God is resident in our spirit. By these we may know that we believe in the name of the Son of God, and that we surely have eternal life. It takes some time, and some real life experiences, for any of us to be able to really apply John's teaching in this specific verse. And this brings me to the most common of misuses.

This verse is almost unanimously quoted to every respondent to an altar call in every kind of church. The respondent is asked if they believe in Jesus, and if they answer yes, then this verse is immediately quoted as proof positive of their conversion and eternal life in heaven. My own denomination teaches this in their evangelism course. But I had a serious problem with using this verse in this situation from the beginning. In this context the **"these things"** that John was referring to in his epistle are entirely absent, and have been replaced with a simple profession of belief in Jesus.

There's been no time to analyze the evidence and arrive at such a conclusion. Furthermore, the scriptures tell us that it's the Spirit that testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom 8:16) That's not the evangelist's job, that's the Spirit's job, and we can't do that for Him. In fact, It's rather presumptuous on our part to think we can. And it seriously misleads those dear folks who came down the isle and now think they're saved, when in fact, only time and the Spirit of God will really tell that for sure. And a premature conclusion hampers an honest assessment based on the evidence.

How many people are attending our churches who have been convinced that they're saved, but show no evidence of it, and much of this is the fault of preachers making assurances that they have no authority to make. Let the Spirit do His job, and let the evidence speak for itself, and then every believer can truly know for sure that they really believe in the name of the Son of God, based on an objective examination of the evidence, as the apostle John is telling us in this verse. Let's stop misusing it, and apply it within its proper context, and when we do, it is a powerful tool of confidence and assurance to the discerning children of God. It is by the proper application of these teachings of John, that we may implement the apostle Paul's exhortation to examine ourselves to see if we truly are in the faith, lest we fail that test. (2Cor 13:5)

It might be very aptly argued that the epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> John is perhaps a perfect operations manual for performing Paul's exhortation to self-examination. To examine anything we must first have a standard against which we make a comparison. Otherwise what are we examining? How do we know if something is functioning properly unless we're thoroughly familiar

with how it's supposed to function when its working correctly? Why can't you and I simply open the hood of our car and inspect all the parts for defects? Because most of us don't know even know what most of the parts are, let alone how they're supposed to be working. We could be staring right at the problem and not recognize it. But a trained master mechanic would spot that problem in an instant, because he knows what he's looking at, and how its all supposed to work. Furthermore he has all the right diagnostic tools, and knows how and when to use them as well.

Being a Christian is very similar to being a master mechanic or other skilled tradesman. It takes a thorough knowledge of how things are supposed to work, and the ability to recognize when they're broken or malfunctioning. It requires a good familiarity with the diagnostic tools, and, access to the operations manual for detailed reference, along with the ability to rightly understand that manual. You understand of course that I'm speaking metaphorically don't you?

Paul tells us to examine ourselves, and John says that he has written these things (in this epistle) so that we may know how to interpret the signs and indicators of authentic saving faith. And how it's supposed to be working when its authentic, and healthy, and strong. We are never told by the holy scriptures that our faith is a "blind leap" as is so commonly said. Faith is real, and effectual, and it always produces visible evidences that can be objectively examined, just like the parts under the hood of our cars, but we must be sufficiently trained and skilled to know what we're looking at, and how it's supposed to work, to be able to recognize when it's broken or malfunctioning.

Like the master mechanic had to spend much time in school learning his trade, so every Christian must spend much time in the school of scriptures, and in the classrooms of gifted teachers, to gain the skill and proficiency to rightly diagnose the condition of the human spirit. It isn't something we learn in a few hours or a few days. And it isn't just intuitive like many suggest. The master mechanic would never mistakenly replace an A/C compressor with an alternator, he recognizes the difference by sight, and knows it can't possibly work. Likewise, a trained Christian will recognize when substitutions are suggested that are wrong and can't possibly work, and will never accept them. But he'll only do this if he's sufficiently trained to recognize the difference.

Because of a lack of emphasis on serious scriptural training, the proficiency level of Christianity at large isn't very impressive. Because feelings and emotions have almost universally replaced sound theology, the average professing Christian can't tell the difference between an A/C compressor and an alternator, if you'll allow me to use my earlier metaphor. The historic debates over total depravity, freedom of the will, predestination, the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man, and several more, have been labeled divisive, and put off limits in most of the pulpits. We now make decisions based almost entirely on feelings, and emotions, and secular cultural trends. And, if that's what people want to do then fine, if they reject the holy scriptures, the eternal word of God, in favor of secular humanism wearing a Christian disguise, then let them go, they've made their choice.

This first epistle of John may just offer the most definitive training and instruction in authentic Christian faith that can be found in such a short and concise document. To understand it, is to both objectively and subjectively understand the very essence of saving faith in Jesus Christ. Along with the rest of the scriptures, it is the perfect and completely sufficient source of information for Christian life and practice, and the most concise diagnostic tool I know of for assessing the authenticity, and the proper function of the regenerated spirit that defines those who believe in the name of the Son of God.

Use it beloved, apply these things that John has written in this epistle, to yourself, make an unbiased and objective assessment based solely on the facts, and it is my sincerest hope that you will meet the apostle Paul's expectations in the next verse after he calls us to self-examination, where he says:

*6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.* (2Cor 13:6)

Now, I was about to end this lesson right here, but how can I do that? I've called all of you to conduct a self-examination, and then ended without one word to those who are honest enough to admit that they fail. How can someone be a pastor and leave his flock in grave peril and without remedy? Shame on such a pastor, he would hardly be worthy of that title.

So, to any of you who've listened to all these lessons, and you feel like you reasonably understand what they teach, but you know, and are ready to confess, that you don't meet these criteria. You don't know, with any real certainty, what's true about Jesus and what's not. Your affections and priorities are unchanged, and your love of the world, and its ways, is the same as always. The only thing that might have changed is your acute awareness of the possibility that you might be bound for hell if you were to die as you are now. If this is the case then don't be discouraged but rejoice, Jesus spoke much more of hell than of heaven, and the purpose is to start us thinking seriously about those inevitable things after this life has run its course. This is a good and health sign that the Father is calling you to pay more attention to eternal things of life and less to the temporary things of this world.

At this point you've probably come to realize that you don't really have any control (any choice) over what you believe in your heart and mind. You may feel absolutely helpless because what God requires is something that you can't control, something you can't just decide on your own by a simple choice. Our mind believes what it believes, and it doesn't answer to us, we answer to it. What our mind believes, thus we do. We can present various data to our minds, but what conclusion our mind comes to from that data is not under our control. Our mind weighs the data, and then tells us what it has concluded, and we are powerless to change that conclusion. We can hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, ponder it in our minds, but in the final analysis our mind makes the decision to believe it or not believe it. It is not within our capability to reverse the conclusions of our mind's, simply by a conscious decision to do so.

So what am I saying? I'm saying that you must come to the realization that faith is something more than just an arbitrary human decision that we can make or not make at our own discretion. This is undeniably the contemporary thinking, but it is wrong. The scriptures everywhere refute such a shallow and arbitrary man-centered salvation. If you've come to realize that you need to believe in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God to be forgiven of your sins, and be delivered from the wrath of God, then you know that you need outside help for that to happen. So, here we are, we've just described your condition and you know it, so now, what's the answer? The answer is, to understand that God is sovereign in the salvation of all mankind, and the ability to really believe in His Son is a free gift from God, that He bestows by His grace alone. Every single human being who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, does so for the one and same reason, because God has granted that belief (that faith) to them by His free grace.

From this I hope you understand what you must do, and what you can't do. Don't continue to struggle with your own mind to try to believe in Jesus, you can't do that. Accept that the only way you will ever believe in Jesus, is if God the Father grants you that gift of belief, called saving faith. So, confess your sins to Him, confess your inability to believe by your own efforts, tell Him you're willing to repent of your old ways, but you know you don't have that ability to do that as yet, and then ask Him, plead with Him, to grant you that gift of belief, that gift of saving faith. And then beloved, don't necessarily expect an instantaneous response, I didn't get one instantly, He kept me hanging for quite some time before He considered that I was ready. But If it's worth having, if it's really your heart's desire, then it's worth pursuing with longsuffering patience, and you won't quit asking until you get that gift you've come for. He who has the Son has the life, so, ask for Him beloved.

To Him be the glory forever. Amen

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami  
Robert Andrews, Pastor  
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