

Explanatory Translation of First John

A letter from the Apostle John to the first century Church written originally in Koine Greek and translated into English for the American Church in the early 21st century, Revised March 2023

NOTE: The translation philosophy being employed here is NOT a closest English word for Greek word translation (because very often the closest English word does not capture the full meaning of the original Greek word, which is common in most translations), but an explanatory translation that is true to the original Greek but is focused more on communicating to a 21st century American audience what the first century Greek speaking audience was experiencing and feeling as they read and thought about John's letter.

Chapter 1

¹**THAT** which was from the first and most important preeminent authority, **THAT** which we have heard with our own ears, **THAT** which we have seen with our own eyes, **THAT** which we have experienced close-up, and our own hands have touched, which is really the communication from God as to what TRUE LIFE is, ²and this TRUE LIFE took on physical (fleshly) form, and we have SEEN (HIM), and we have become very familiar with (HIM), and we are charged to proclaim to you this ETERNAL LIFE who was *with* the Father and who stood right in front of us—³**THAT** which we saw and which we heard, we announce it so you may have fellowship with us—this same fellowship we have with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴So we write these things so that you would be filled up with the joy of knowing about the favor God has for you.

⁵So, are you ready? This is the message—don't miss it! This is what we have heard from Him and we proclaim to you: that **GOD IS LIGHT**, and in Him is no darkness at all—not even a hint of darkness. ⁶If we should say that we are sharing our life with Him, but we walk around participating in darkness (meaning that we are not living in the truth of His light) we deceive ourselves and we're living a lie. ⁷On the other hand, if we all conduct our lives so that we are continually exposing ourselves to the light of God, then we share the experience with one another of living in His light, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all the times when we fail to walk in the light.

⁸If we say that we do not fall short in this, we lead ourselves astray and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we agree with God about our failures, He is faithful and just to dismiss our failures and cleanse us from anything that He disapproves of. ¹⁰If we say that we have not failed, we are calling God a liar and our thinking is not lined up with His thinking.

Chapter 2

¹My dear children, I write these things to you so that you might not miss out on walking in the light. But when we fail in this, we have Jesus Christ the righteous one who covers for our failure before the Father. ²For He turns away the wrath of God, which would be on us because of our failures, and He causes the favor of God to shine upon us instead, because of

His blood sacrifice, and this applies to you no matter where you are from—we are no more special than you in this matter.

³So this is how we can be assured that we have really come to know Him: when we preserve and take seriously those things He has charged (enjoined) us with. ⁴The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” but does not preserve and take seriously those things He has charged us with—that person is a liar, and the truth of God is not in Him. ⁵However, if someone preserves and takes seriously the things He has said, then it really is true that the love of God has genuinely taken hold in their life, and that’s how we will know that we are actually in Christ. ⁶When a person claims to dwell in Christ, this means that person spends their life involved in the kinds of things Jesus would be involved in.

⁷Beloved, the charge from Christ that I am writing to you about is not new, but ancient, for it comes from the very word of God that you have heard from ancient times. ⁸To repeat myself, I am writing to you about this “new” charge from Christ, which is actually the revealed truth of God displayed in the life of Christ, and also in all of you, because the darkness is in the process of passing away as the true light of God shines to dispel it.

⁹The person who claims to be in the light but disregards his brother or sister in Christ, that person is still in darkness. ¹⁰The Christian who is sacrificially loving and caring for their brother or sister in Christ—that Christian dwells in the light, and is not likely to be tripped up by the darkness. ¹¹But the Christian who disregards and dismisses their Christian brother or sister is in the darkness and is becoming increasingly acquainted with the darkness and isn’t paying attention to the fact that they are sinking away from the light because the darkness is blinding them.

¹²I am writing to you, dear children, to remind you that for the sake of Christ’s reputation your failure to walk in the light has been forgiven. ¹³I write to you, fathers in the faith, because you have experienced and known Him who was from the beginning in the position of preeminent authority. I write to you who are still young but strong soldiers of the faith because you have overcome the evil one.

I have written this to you, dear children, because you have experienced and known the Father. ¹⁴I have written this to you, fathers in the faith, because you have experienced and known Him who was from the beginning in the position of preeminent authority. I have written this to you who are still young but strong soldiers of the faith because the Word of God dwells in you and so you have overcome the evil one.

¹⁵Do **NOT** sacrifice yourselves in devotion to this fallen world, nor to the things that are in this fallen world. When anyone does give themselves devotedly to this fallen world they are not at that time giving themselves devotedly to the Father, ¹⁶because everything that is of this fallen world, specifically, the lust of the flesh (which is when you give in to the lustful cravings of your body), and the lust of the eyes (which is when you give in to the lustful

desire to look at things you should not be looking at), and the boastful pride of life (which is when you give in to the tendency to live an ostentatious lifestyle), these are not of the Father, but of this fallen world. ¹⁷Besides, this world is passing away along with its lusts, but, on the other hand, whoever does the will of God continually dwells with God forever.

¹⁸My dear children, the time is late, and just as you have heard the antichrist is coming, even so already many antichrists have come, which is how we know the time is late. ¹⁹These antichrists came out of our churches, but they were never really of us. For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But they have gone out from us to prove they are not of us.

²⁰And collectively you have the anointing from the Holy One by which you have clearly seen all this. ²¹It's not that I have written to you because you haven't clearly seen the truth, but because you have clearly seen it, knowing that the truth doesn't breed lies.

²²Who is the liar? Obviously, it is the one denying that Jesus is the anointed One (the Christ). This is the antichrist: The one denying the Father and the Son (in other words, the antichrist does not recognize that you can't have one without the other). ²³Anyone denying the Son, doesn't have the Father either. Anyone who agrees with everything the Son said about Himself also has the Father.

²⁴ & ²⁵As for you, let that continually dwell in you which you have heard from the ancient source of all truth [that is the word of God given to us in the Scriptures]. If you do let it continually dwell in you, then you will also continually dwell in the Son and in the Father. This is exactly what Jesus promised when He said that eternal life IS this continual dwelling in the Son and in the Father. [See John 15 and 17:3]

²⁶I have written these things to you to warn you about those who are leading you astray.

²⁷So what does this mean for you? Simply this: You really have no need for someone else to teach you, because the anointing [of the Holy Spirit] that you received from Jesus continually dwells in you. For this anointing teaches you everything you need to know; it is always the truth, and it is never a lie. So, continually dwell in Him in this same way the Holy Spirit has taught you.

²⁸And so, dear children, from now on continue to dwell in Him so that when He appears we might have freedom and confidence instead of shame in His presence when He comes. ²⁹If you know what being approved by God looks like, you will also know that everyone living in that approval from God is one of His children.

Chapter 3

¹Open your eyes! You've got to realize what kind of love the Father has given to us for each other—a love that is self-sacrificing and devotedly caring for each other. And because we have this kind of love for each other we will be known as children of God, because that's

what we really are! And because of this kind of love, the non-Christian people of the world will not really understand us because they never really understood Jesus (who was the embodiment of this kind of love for us--a self-sacrificing and devotedly caring love).

²Beloved, even though you are already fully children of God, there is more to being a child of God that has not yet been revealed. Know this: when we see Jesus more clearly for who He really is, this will cause us to become more like Him. ³And everyone who is excited about having this promise fulfilled in them will gladly live a more holy life because that is the kind of life Jesus lives (mimicry is the highest form of adoration).

⁴Anyone who lives their life not walking in the Light of God, not loving their Christian brother and sister the way Jesus loves them, is living a life independent (apart) from God. Because when you live your life apart from dependency on God and His ways, that's what causes you to walk in darkness and you will fall way short of loving others in the way Jesus loves you. ⁵Don't you see that the reason Jesus made Himself (the Light) visible to us was to steer us away from walking in darkness, and He never fails to accomplish what He sets out to do! ⁶Anyone who is dwelling in Him will not walk in darkness. Anyone who constantly continues to walk in darkness has never really seen Jesus, nor have they ever really had a meaningful relationship with Him.

⁷Dear children, don't let yourselves wander away (from walking with Jesus in the light of God). Those who walk in the approval of God, have the same approval in God's sight that Jesus has. ⁸The person who makes it a habit to stay away from the light and instead adopts a lifestyle of walking in the darkness, that person is allied with the devil. Because since the beginning of all things the devil has always failed to walk in the Light and has identified himself as the one who mocks those who do walk in the Light. This is why the Son of God appeared to us—so that He would free us from the trap of this thinking that we are being enlightened when we buy into this deception of mocking those who walk in the Light.

⁹Anyone who is born of God does not have a lifestyle of practicing those things that are foreign to God. The reason this can't happen is because the very essence and identity of God abides in anyone who is born of God. ¹⁰Do you want to know how you can tell the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil? Anyone whose lifestyle is not characterized by doing the things God wants (which is to say that person is not self-sacrificing and deeply caring for their Christian brothers and sisters)—then that person is not of God.

¹¹For this is what God has always been proclaiming by His word and His deeds, that we should be self-sacrificing and devotedly caring for one another. ¹²Don't be like Cain who was evil and violently killed his brother. He actually took pleasure in doing this. And why was that? Because Cain strove to walk in the pain of darkness, and he was opposed to his brother who only wanted what God approved of. ¹³My brothers and sisters, don't be surprised if those who are of this fallen world disregard and dismiss you. ¹⁴Here's how we know that we have passed out of the death of darkness into the light of life: when we are self-sacrificing and devotedly caring for our Christian brothers and sisters, because the one

who does not live like this is living in death. ¹⁵Everyone who disregards his Christian brother and sister is a murderer. And it is obvious that murdering and eternal life don't go together.

¹⁶And where does this radical idea of sacrificially loving and devotedly caring for each other come from? It comes from Jesus who sacrificed His very soul for us. That is why it makes sense for us to do the same for our Christian brothers and sisters. ¹⁷So, if you ever have the means to help your Christian brother or sister who you see to be in genuine need, but instead, you close your heart to them, how can you say that the love of God dwells in you?

¹⁸Dear children, don't just say that you are sacrificially and devotedly caring for each other, but actually do it. ¹⁹Which is how we can be reassured in our hearts, when we go into His presence, that we are really living in His truth. ²⁰Then, even if we are unsure and feeling guilty, we will be reassured by God—and after all, the testimony of God is the reality, not our feelings.

²¹ & ²²Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we can come freely to God to take possession of whatever we might ask God for, so that we can do the things He has charged us to preserve and treasure—those things that are pleasing to Him. ²³And so you don't lose focus on what pleases God—that which He has charged us with preserving and treasuring and doing—here it is clearly stated: that we should trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, and all He has done for us, which is inseparable from His charge to us to love one another with a self-sacrificing love of devotion and caring.

²⁴Furthermore, the Spirit He has given us is the proof that God deeply dwells in us, and we deeply dwell in God as we preserve and treasure the charge He has given us (to trust in His Son and sacrificially love and devotedly care for our Christian brothers and sisters).

Chapter 4

¹Every new idea that blows through your mind originated from some spirit in the unseen world. Beloved, not every spirit is to be trusted. Before you believe some spirit's new idea, you must first put it to the test to see whether it agrees with God or it opposes the truth of God. The reason I am telling you this is because there are a lot of spirits who are loose out in the world who want to mislead you.

² & ³Here is the test you should use to tell whether or not a spirit with its new idea is really from God: Every new idea that supports the fact that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But any new idea that does not support the fact that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God, but from the antichrist which you have heard is coming and in fact is already here in this world.

⁴Dear children, you are from God! And as such, you have already been overcoming these spiritual antichrists with their ideas that say it's not important that Jesus actually came in the flesh. You have overcome these false messengers because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵These spiritual false messengers are of this fallen world and because they are from the fallen world, the things they say resonate with the fallenness of

this world. Those who are from the darkness of this fallen world listen to and accept their ideas. ⁶In contrast, we are from God. Everyone who has a genuine relationship with God listens to and accepts what we have been saying. But everyone who is not from God does not accept what we have been saying. From this simple test you can discern the difference between the Spirit of truth that comes from God, versus the spirit of lostness that causes people to wander in the darkness.

⁷Beloved, you all should be self-sacrificing and devotedly caring for one another because that's the kind of love that comes out of the very nature of who God is. And everyone who is committed to the benefit of the other person no matter what the cost to themselves, that person is born of God and really knows God. ⁸The one who does not have this sort of preferential love for their Christian brothers and sisters does not really know God because that kind of love is who God is. ⁹When we see that this kind of love from God shows up in us—this kind of love that sacrifices itself for the benefit of others—this lets us and everyone else see that God has sent His Only Begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰Here is something to keep in mind about this self-sacrificing love that prefers others over itself: it's not about us loving God; but it's about God loving us which He did by sending His own Son to be a sacrifice that completely pays for, and makes up for, those times when we fail to walk in the light of God, when we fail to love others as He loves us, when we fail to trust Him to be more concerned with our benefit than He is with His. ¹¹Beloved, if this is the way God loves us, then this is the way we ought to love one another.

¹²No one has ever really seen God. But if we are self-sacrificing and devotedly caring for one another, then God is very much alive in us, and His love—the kind of love that prefers to benefit others at His own expense—has been growing to maturity in us. ¹³God has given His own Spirit to us which is how we know that God abides in us and we in Him. ¹⁴But what we HAVE seen, and testify to, is that God has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵If anyone truly agrees with our testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then God actually dwells in that person, and that person actually dwells in God.

¹⁶So what all this means, and what we have come to firmly trust in, is that God is committed to bless us even at great expense to Himself because THAT'S who God is. And as we dwell in this love God has for us, God dwells in us and we in God. ¹⁷This kind of God-love has been in the process of maturing in us so that we will have no reservation or hesitation to boldly and openly take our stand when we come before the piercing scrutiny of our Holy God, because our standing in this world is identical to Christ's. ¹⁸The fear of judgment has no place in God's love for us. When you really grab ahold of this truth that God prefers you over Himself then you will finally leave behind the fear of being punished. So, anyone who is fearing that God will punish them (when you fail to walk in the light) is still not really understanding what God's love for them is all about.

¹⁹How can we reasonably expect ourselves to sacrificially love and devotedly care for others? Because this is exactly how God has always loved us.

²⁰If you claim to actually prefer God over yourself, but there is still at least one Christian brother or sister who you still do not prefer more than yourself, then you are kidding yourself. For if you do not have a self-sacrificing preference for your Christian brother or sister who you can actually see, then you certainly can't really prefer God whom you have not seen. ²¹And so we have this charge from Him, that the one who truly loves God should also sacrificially and devotedly care for their Christian brother and sister.

Chapter 5

¹Everyone who trusts in the fact that Jesus **IS** the Christ (THE Anointed One of God) has been born of God. If we really do prefer God more than ourselves—the God who has given life to His children—then we will also have His same self-sacrificing preference for His children. ²This is how you can tell whether or not you really have this God-like self-sacrificing preference for God's children: it's when you find yourself desiring God more than yourself and you find yourself actually doing the things God has charged us with.

³I want you to notice that as you come to fully understand and accept the fact that God prefers your benefit over His own, that it will become easier and easier to want to preserve and treasure those things He has charged us with. ⁴Because everyone having been born of God trusts God. And this trust in God is what overcomes the worldly perspectives and worldly values by which this world tries to take hold of you.

⁵So then doesn't it just make sense that the person who trusts their life to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, that this very trust **IS** the victory over what the world wants you to trust in?

⁶This same Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the One who testified that He was one of us when He was baptized in water, and then also when He died by shedding his blood on the cross. He came not only just in the water of baptism, but He also sacrificed Himself for us by being crucified, shedding His blood for us. This is what God's Spirit in you keeps testifying to because it is the absolute truth, and the Spirit always can **ONLY** tell the truth because the Spirit **IS** the Truth. ⁷So, these three bear witness of the reality of Christ—⁸the three being the Spirit and the water and the blood—and these three are all saying the same thing.

⁹If we're willing to accept human testimony, then don't we even more so accept the testimony of God, which is greater? Now this is the testimony of God that He has testified about His Son. ¹⁰The person trusting in the Son of God has this testimony in himself. But the person not trusting in Jesus as the Son of God is calling God a liar, because they are not trusting in God's testimony concerning His Son. ¹¹So, here it is. Here is God's testimony about His Son: Eternal life has been given to us, and this life is in His Son; ¹²so, anyone who has the Son has this eternal life. But, anyone who does not have the Son of God, does not have this eternal life.

¹³I have written these things to you all so that you would clearly see and be convinced of the fact that you already have eternal life—for those trusting in the power and purpose of the Son of God. ¹⁴ & ¹⁵Which is why we can go to God and boldly request those things we need, to be able to do what He charges us to do. We can be certain that when we ask Him for the things we need to carry out what He wants us to do, He hears us and responds by giving us what we need.

¹⁶For example, if you see a Christian brother or sister stumbling into some area of darkness that is not a full-on complete rejection of Christ (which only leads to death), then you should ask God on their behalf and God will give them life (that comes from more clearly knowing who God and His Son really are). But don't bother to pray for those who are committed to a complete rejection of Christ, because that always ends in death.

¹⁷Everything that is not what God approves of is a failure to walk in the light of knowing God. And to find yourself stumbling into this sort of darkness is not the same thing as a complete rejection of Christ (which leads only to death).

¹⁸It is obvious to us that everyone who has been born of God does not make it their goal to walk in darkness. Instead, what we see is that the begotten One who comes from God protects that person so that the evil one is not allowed to get a firm hold on them.

¹⁹We see plenty of evidence that we are of God, and in contrast, we see plenty of evidence that those of the world are laid at the feet of the evil one. ²⁰And it is obvious to us that the Son of God is present with us and has given us a right-thinking mind so that we can know Him who is the Truth. Yes, we are in Him who is the truth, that is we are in the Son of God who is Jesus Christ—who is really the True God and who is Himself eternal life.

²¹Dear Children, guard yourselves from seeking hope from anything other than God.