

## From Sin to Spirit – Part 4

We started a journey through a list of passages presented by L.S. Chafer that illuminated the transition from sin to spirituality.

- First Christ Alone Can Cleanse From Sin (John 13:1-11) We learned that there are two words for washing in that context. One is for bathing which represents salvation. The second word is for washing hands and feet. It represents cleansing from sins of the believer in time. In time, the Holy Spirit is involved using the work of Jesus on the cross applied to our lives because of faith.
- Second Confession is the one Condition of Fellowship, Forgiveness and Cleansing (1 John 1:1 To 2:2)**
- Third Self-Judgment Saves from Chastisement (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)
- Fourth Chastisement is the Father's Correction and Training of his Sinning Child (Hebrews 12:3-15)
- Fifth An Example of Christian Repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)
- Sixth The Repentance, Confession and Restoration of an Old Testament Saint (Psalm 51:1-19)
- Seventh, The Three-Fold Illustrative Parable in the Gospels (Luke 15:1-32)

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Here is a rough outline of 1 John 1. As we go through our lessons, I will update this outline based upon what we learn.

1. **Topic – Concerning the Word of Life + John’s (we) bona fides**
2. Authentic Authority
3. Purpose #1 Fellowship
4. Purpose #2 Fellowship to Joy
5. God is Absolute
6. IF: First “If” Dark Walk
7. IF: Second “If” Light Walk
8. IF: Third “If” Say No Sin
9. IF: Fourth “If” Confess Sin
10. IF: Fifth “If” Say Have Not Sinned

### **Authentic Credentials**

**1 John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—**

Let us review the first verse briefly. It is interesting that L.S. Chafer in his book does not go into the first two verses in any depth.

**What** was from the beginning

**What** we have heard

**What** we have seen with our eyes

**What** we have looked at and touched with our hands

Concerning the Word of Life

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This is a list of “what” clauses introducing a sentence which extends into verse 3. Verse 2 is considered a parenthesis.

The parallelism forced on us by the repeated “what” requires us to ask at least two questions: What is “what?” and Who is “we?” The first question is answered by “concerning” the Word of Life. We know from the gospel of John that the Word is the second person of the Trinity having taken on sinless flesh. (John 1:1-4, 14). Right in the first verse John links Jesus with “the life.”

There is a grammar problem with this, though. The “what” in Greek is neuter. “Word” is masculine. So grammatically, they can’t refer to each other. And there are those who say the “word” shouldn’t refer to the second person of the Trinity but should be translated as “message.” I think Robby Dean and others have come up with a solution. Essentially it is to say that the word is both the Word, the person of Jesus, and His message. He says that the “that which” or “what” in verse 1 is what is being proclaimed in verse 3. If I understood correctly, that leaves the “what” as being understood to be Jesus Christ.

The parallelism helps us identify who the “we” is in part. They are those who have witnessed the Word. These sensory inputs are phrased such that a Jew would accept the witness of John and the “we.” In today’s crowd, you might liken this to an intel organization. They have collected information and are now reporting on what they have identified. Indeed, in the next verse the word for “to report” is hidden in the translation “proclaim.” Instead of being a spy in Jesus’ inner circle, John was a disciple, the disciple that Jesus loved.

The first verse identifies the topic of this great epistle: the Word of Life. He has linked “the Word” which we know is Jesus Christ to “the Life.” This life is what drives the epistle. It is eternal life that started at faith in Jesus and now runs through our temporal spiritual lives.

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There are two intertwined aspects to this. The Word (logos)/message which we associate with the person of Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God and the person of Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,**

**Hebrews 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.**

**Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.**

But as Robby Dean points out, you cannot talk about Jesus Christ apart from His life and His life work. His life carries the message of salvation. It starts with justification including eternal life and divine righteousness at the point of salvation. But the message of 1 John is the continuation of life in time. Spirituality. The Man Jesus Christ is the message. And the message is Jesus Christ. If you talk about one, you inevitably bring in the second: Man and message of Life.

Don't forget the definite article. THE Life. This epistle is going to take us from our salvation to the foundations of the Christian LIFE. In introducing the Word of the Life, John has also provided his bona fides. He is qualified to report on this life because he was an intimate witness.

As I write this, it strikes me that where Paul would say that he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” here John appeals to the Jewish crowd's need for certified qualifications. This is John's parallel to Paul saying “I am an

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apostle.” John is saying, “we” can write this to you because I was/we were there.

**1 John 5:13 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.**

While verse 1 is about the topic and the bona fides of “we,” the second verse takes that to the next step. The second verse is considered a parenthesis relating to the “life.” What is John doing here in this second verse? He has a line of reasoning that starts with the manifestation of that life which “we” have witnessed and now not just we testify but we proclaim/report to you.

**1 John 1:2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—**

**The life.** The definite article identifies something. So here it could be translated as “this” life referring back to the Word of Life in verse 1. Life is something important to John. In the first two verses, he has used the word three times. Word of Life. That life was manifested. Eternal life. These are profound concepts. Yet, a seven year old child can understand the gospel and believe.

**Manifested.** This word is used twice in this single verse. John is emphasizing the reality of the manifestation. He has two things he is emphasizing: The fact of the manifestation and the fact that “we” witnessed this manifestation.

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Notice the constant repetition. That is one way to emphasize something. In verse 1 he uses “what” or “that which” to point to the manifest person of the Trinity.

**The life.** The definite article says this is pointing to something definite. This is referring back to the Word of Life.

**Was manifested.** *Aorist passive indicative.* In a point in history, Jesus Christ was manifested. God took on flesh. (John 1:1-4, 1:14). Passive voice. It was caused to be manifested. God did this.

**And.** This simple word is used three times in this verse to connect the verbs. There is a list of actions. But let us note the progression of the tenses. This is not just a list but a series of events that are going somewhere.

**(We) have seen.** The “we” is implicit in the verb. There is no pronoun. *Perfect tense* means it happened in the past with the present result that we have it clearly in our minds eye. We will never forget what we have seen.

**(We) testify.** *Present active indicative.* A continuous action in the present time. This is from the verb to witness. Witness in English can simply mean I saw. But it can also mean to tell of what I saw. That is what John is doing here. He is telling us what he saw.

**(We) proclaim.** *Present active indicative.* A continuous action in present time. This verb can mean report, declare and proclaim. This is not just sitting in the witness box and telling what we saw. This is going out in the streets and shouting to those who will listen.

All four verbs are in the indicative mood. They really happened.

The progression of verb tenses starts with an event in the past (aorist) to an experience of that event which remains in our minds which motivates

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us in time now to continuously testify and not only that but to continuously proclaim out loud.

**Manifested (aorist) → Seen (perfect)→ Testify(present)→ Proclaim( present)**

In verse 1, John provided specific ways in which the Word of Life was manifested. Now he states that “we” did not just witness passively, “we” saw, testify and actively proclaim this eternal life.

**1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we  
proclaim to you also, so that you too may  
have fellowship with us; and indeed our  
fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son  
Jesus Christ.**

Now in the third verse John takes the topic plus his bona fides which he is reporting to the reader one step further. He is giving his purpose and expected outcome of his epistle. Fellowship.

Fellowship is a profound word. In my studies, it was repeatedly stated to be both “sharing” and “participation.” It can also mean partnership. John reiterates his seeing and hearing, repeating his bona fides to emphasize his previous intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. Let me repeat a paragraph from the last lesson.

John was considered to be a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-39<sup>1</sup>). Jesus personally called John to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22). He had been appointed an apostle of Jesus. He was present at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-2). He was present at the crucifixion (John 19:25-27). Jesus Himself had asked John to care for His mother (John 19:25-27). John saw the resurrected Jesus (John 20:19-20; 21:1-2). He was present at the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). He worked with Peter in

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<sup>1</sup> This passage does not specifically identify the second of the two disciples of John the Baptist. However, it is commonly agreed that the second disciple was the apostle John.

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Jerusalem (Acts 4). He spent time at Ephesus<sup>2</sup>. Undoubtedly he was familiar with Paul<sup>3</sup>. I could add many other events in Jesus life that John not only saw but participated in. John writes

**John 20:30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;**

**John 20:31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.**

**John 21:24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.**

**John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they \*were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself \*would not contain the books that \*would be written.**

While the gospel of John was written with the gospel of salvation in mind, this first epistle is written for the purpose that believers will have fellowship with God in time.

The purpose is for fellowship. Just like Jesus told the disciples, “follow me,” so too here John is saying to us “follow me!”

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<sup>2</sup> This is only known from extra-Biblical sources like Iraneus.

<sup>3</sup> Adolf Deissmann said “John is the oldest and the greatest interpreter of Paul (Paul A Study in Social and Religious History, translated by William E. Wilson, Peter Smith, 1972). Deissmann emphasizes this statement in a footnote “In these lines is indicated the result of a great and important piece of research, which has busied me for decades. Critics who think they can set aside my thesis with a superior wave of the hand, would be better advised to test it by carefully working over the material themselves.”

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Robby Dean summarizes the salient points of this introduction to the epistle.

“He is making three points in this introduction. The first is that the man is the message and the message is the man, they are intrinsically and inseparably connected. The second is that the empirical evidence of the apostles' witness during the life of Christ, and specifically John's own personal contact, substantiates the message. Third, it is the message, content of the gospel, that is the object of belief necessary for salvation and ongoing fellowship with God, and it is also necessary to have right doctrine to maintain fellowship with God.<sup>4</sup>”

Here is his translation of these verses.

“Translation: "We proclaim to you concerning the message of life [the doctrine of the spiritual life], what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, and the light was revealed [phaneroo' φανερωω, which means to reveal, to illuminate], and we have seen and give our testimony and announce to you the eternal life which is with the Father, and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you also that you might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." That is a re-translation and it gives us in English a better understanding of what John is emphasising, what he is saying, in these first three verses.<sup>5</sup>”

Here is the Wuest translation which is easier to understand but differs some in the way it handles the grammar.

“That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard with the present result that it is ringing in our ears, that which we have discerningly seen with our eyes with the present result that it is in our

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4 <https://deanbibleministries.org/new-testament-menuitem/1-john-menuitem/message/2000-1john-004/read>

5 <https://deanbibleministries.org/new-testament-menuitem/1-john-menuitem/message/2000-1john-004/read>

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mind's eye, that which we gazed upon as a spectacle, and our hands handled with a view to investigation, that which is concerning the Word of the life—and this aforementioned life was made visible, and we have seen it with discernment and have it in our mind's eye, and are bearing witness and bringing back to you a message concerning the life, the eternal life, which is of such a nature as to have been in fellowship with the Father and was made visible to us.<sup>6</sup>”

**1 John 1:4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.**

**1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.**

**1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;**

**1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

**1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

**1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1968). The New Testament; an expanded translation,. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans

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**1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned,  
we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.**