

“The Last Eyewitness” Strong Messages to the Church from the “disciple Jesus loved”

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Text: 1 John 1: 1 – 2: 2. This week in my praying and studying God’s Word, I was led to this short, powerful letter John, the last apostle, wrote to those he was shepherding in churches in Asia Minor or the church, in general,—people who were or thought themselves Christians.

Before we get into these verses, it is important to have some historical background information. John was the oldest and last surviving disciple, now called apostles. All the others had been martyred in various ways (based on extra-biblical history) except, of course, Judas who committed suicide. John was in his nineties when he wrote his gospel account, these three short epistles (letters), and the most intriguing book of all, The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

If you have elderly parents or grandparents who have outlived their friends and close family, you know that is often a mixed blessing to them. So it also must have been for John to be the last eyewitness to all that went on throughout his life. Here are the seminal points:

- Being part of the full ministry of Jesus on earth (one of the first four disciples chosen.)
- His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven
- The only disciple present during the crucifixion standing with Jesus’ mother
- The overpowering descent of the Holy Spirit on them at Pentecost

- Seeing Peter changed from denier of Jesus to one of the leaders of His church
- The death of his brother by sword at the hands of King Herod- the first disciple martyred
- The persecution and salvation of Saul-Paul
- The deaths of his fellow apostles
- The birth of the Christian church and its struggles to survive of which he was a great leader
- Exiled, with “criminals”, on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea, for preaching the Gospel. This is where he received The Revelation.
- Moved to Ephesus to spend the rest of his life preaching and exhorting the church.

Gnosticism. One more point of reference to help us understand the context. The strong influence of the Greek empire (established by Alexander the Great) remained even during the Roman empire that followed. Plato, the famous Greek philosopher, and his followers began much of this kind of thinking referred to as *gnosticism* (knowledge). It was considered a higher plane or enlightened thinking. It was adopted by some Jews—called *Hellenistic* Jews. These were Jews, from the Diaspora, who spoke Greek and were strongly influenced by its culture. In Paul’s day, it began creeping into the church, trying to influence its teachings—even those about Christ. So just as Paul had to confront them, we find John doing so decades later.

So with that, let us dive into this epistle. In the introductory paragraph (vs 1-4), we read,

“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 (Jesus)—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life (Jesus), which was with the Father and was manifested to us—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. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete."

Two Themes that produce One Outcome: Testimony and Fellowship è Joy

♦ **Testimony:** When we testify to something in court under oath, we tell the truth about what we have seen, heard, or know about the person. This is exactly what John did as he began this letter to his readers—people who were born-again, some who thought they were but were not, and those who were just plain lost. He shared how they had seen, heard, and even touched Jesus Whom the Father sent in the flesh (manifested). This was his testimony.

As Christians, we are commanded to give our testimonies—bear witness to the truth.

"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1: 8

We must also share our personal testimony of what Christ has done for and in us.

"but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." 1 Peter 3: 15

♦ **Fellowship:** The Greek words *koinoneo* and *koinonia*.

The words mean fellowship but not surface acquaintance or an occasional dinner or small group meeting. The real definition goes much deeper. It means *sharing with others; being a partaker; sharing resources with others (like the Antioch and early churches did – see Acts 2: 44; Acts 4: 32), partnership,*

benefaction, and, even, social intercourse-depth of relationship.

John shared these words of testimony to invite the hearers into their fellowship and, more importantly, fellowship with Jesus and God Himself. The sad thing today is that these words are given too much lip service and too little application. They need to be much better understood and applied in the church. One of the main reasons many seekers get fed up and leave the church or visit with the intent to break into the holy huddles then leave is that genuine ***fellowship is missing***. There are all kinds of challenges to practicing our faith in such a way given our perverse and sin-filled culture today, but that is no excuse for not trying to make this pillar of the early Christian church a pillar again today.

Now that John shared his testimony about Jesus and invited the hearers into true fellowship, he gave us a reason that seems hard to believe, much less understand.

♦ **Outcome:** OUR ***joy*** made complete. John's joy came from testifying about Who Jesus is and what He does for all who believe and receive Him. John invited them into *fellowship* with himself, other believers, and, more importantly, with Jesus and God the Father.

Could it be this old saint, the last eyewitness, was still that much in love with His Savior? Lord, help us to grasp this in ways that produce this kind of love for Jesus and others in our hearts and lives. Amen.

Next, John dives right into how to clearly understand if someone is in Christ or not. He uses two very clear contrasts in verses 5-7.

Light and darkness ♦ Truth and Lies

"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. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet **walk in the darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth; 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**.*

The first issue is those who are without Christ still *walk in darkness*. What does it mean to *walk in darkness*? Darkness has been associated with evil or lost throughout history. To walk or live in darkness means we remain lost and subjects of the ruler of this present darkness (Satan; Eph. 6: 12). We are blind to the Truth. He also uses *truth and lies* to further make his point.

From this point, John becomes very direct dealing with man's roadblock between him and God—**sin**. In John 1: 8 – 2:2, he expounds upon that in very clear language.

*If we say that we have no sin, **we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us**. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, **we make Him a liar and His word is not in us**.” My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

Jesus is the **propitiation** for our sins. What does that mean? That explanation is a great way to close this message and provide an invitation.

Propitiation (Greek word *hilasmos*) means the atonement for, or easier understood, the one who appeases and brings reconciliation with someone who has a right to be angry with us. In this case the One Who must be appeased is God because

His anger is raised by our sin. Sin breaks our relationship with Him. But God, in His gracious love sent Jesus to die because His blood alone was the satisfactory propitiation (appeasement) for our sins. When we receive Christ as Savior, since He appeased the wrath of God, we then find favor with Him and our fellowship is restored.

I hope that helps you better understand your relationship with our Father and the amazing sacrifice He and Jesus made to make and keep us part of the family of God—enjoy true **fellowship** .

If you are watching, listening, or reading this and you have not received Christ as your Savior, then you remain on the outside looking in and at odds with your Creator God. But that is easily and immediately changed forever if you will confess your sins and ask Christ to save you. He has never nor will He ever turn away any sincere request.

I close with His kind words found in another book John wrote.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3: 20

I pray you are even now knocking on His door for soon you will be saved and in the fellowship of His love forever and ever. Amen!

For Christ's sake,

Walter