

1 John 1:1-2:2

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

In Old Testament theology, remembering was appropriating. For example, what God had done for His exodus generation was to be received by subsequent generations as having been done for them. They were to count themselves as having participated in

that great redemptive act of God. That way, generations that “missed out” on participating in this major milestone in their history would feel as if they’d actually been among their ancestors as they trekked from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. The promises that the LORD gave to ancient Israel applied equally to each successive generation of those who were led by His Spirit to put their hope and trust in Him. In believing that Word, a person became a member of the community of the redeemed—a full-fledged member of God’s family.

In today’s Epistle, the Apostle John knew that his faithful transmission of the **“Word of life”** carried the promise that wherever it was received and believed on, the fellowship of the redeemed was being enlarged. Not only do the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents, but the Church itself experiences the fullness of joy whenever the seed of the gospel springs up and bears abundant fruit in the heart of another sinner, adding one more blood-bought soul to God’s family. So, today,

TELLING OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS EXPANDS THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS AND INCREASES OUR JOY!

The Apostle John, along with his fellow apostles, personally experienced the manifestation of the **“Word of life”** during the 3+ years they spent as Jesus’ disciples. And they were eager to **“proclaim”** the good news about Jesus to as many people as possible in the years that remained for them. John begins his first letter by assuring his readers: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”** The expressions John uses here to describe Jesus are very similar to the more familiar words he employed in the prologue to his Gospel. In **John 1:1-4**, we read:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

As the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, Jesus was just as active as God the Father in creating **“all that is seen and unseen”** in the six days of Creation. And John adds of Him, **“The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.”** John and the other apostles were “eyewitnesses” of the Messiah’s powerful preaching, mighty miracles, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension. And they were 100% convinced that Jesus was the one and only source of **“eternal life.”** So he adds, **“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to you to make our joy complete.”**

Nothing—and I mean *nothing*—made John and his fellow apostles happier than when the Spirit worked thru them to rescue another soul from Satan’s clutches! They lived—and, for the most part, died as martyrs—to fulfill that mission.

The **“joy”** John speaks of comes because the **“message”** of the **“Word of life”** is radically different from any other message the world proclaims. Here it is, folks: **“This**

is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. That's not the world's perspective on God, apart from faith in Christ. Unbelievers view God as dark and foreboding; as a cruel Taskmaster who demands undying devotion; a God who won't tolerate any slip-ups; a vengeful God who delights in condemning to hell those who disobey Him. There's no **"joy"** in a God like that! Would you want to **"fellowship"** with such a deity? I wouldn't. But Jesus—**"the Word of life"**—reveals another aspect of God's nature. He's not chiefly a God of justice, but a God of mercy and grace! Even in the O.T. He revealed Himself that way. He described Himself to Moses as a **"compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness"** (Ex. 34:6). Ah, there's **"joy"**; there's the **"fellowship"** we long for!

John further explains the positive outcomes for those who **"walk in the light"** with the beacon of the **"Word of life"** illuminating their path through this sin-darkened world. We do not walk the path alone. We walk it in **"fellowship"** with Jesus and in **"fellowship with one another."** But if, and only if, we **"walk in the light"** of repentance and faith. If we continue to **"walk in the darkness"** of sin and unbelief; if we're driving down the highway of hypocrisy or cruising the mean streets and back alleys of unrepentant sin; we may fool others with our outward piety, but we won't be fooling God. Not one iota. If we behave like that, John says, **"we lie and do not live out the truth. But,"** he adds, **"if we walk in the light, as [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."** Now that's livin', my friends!

Today's confession of sins was based on verses 8 and 9 of this text. It's a prime example of what it means to repent: first, we admit our guilt to God; next, we rejoice in the pardon He speaks over us because of the **"finished"** (John 19:30) work of His Son. St. Paul wrote of Him: **"He was delivered over to death for our sins, and raised to life for our justification"** (Rom. 4:25). And so John writes in our text: **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us."** I'm pretty sure God won't be made the fool by anyone. In fact, the Bible explicitly says: **"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life"** (Gal. 6:7-9). That's crystal clear.

So, what happens when we do sin? When we disobey God's commandments; when we lash out in anger at our loved ones or hold a grudge against a coworker; or sow the seeds of malicious gossip; or covet the new car that's parked in our neighbor's driveway; or envy a sibling who seems to have the "Midas touch"; or lust after the checkout girl at the local grocery store; or ignore the needs of a fellow Christian; or cave in to the same temptation that's troubled us for years; or succumb to the addiction we've sworn so many times that we're going to quit and get our act together? What then? John has the solution for that as well, for those "who walk in the light" by Spirit-worked faith. He concludes our text with these uplifting words of hope and peace: **"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we**

have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

And that, **“dear children”** of the Heavenly Father, is truly amazing grace! We **“have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One”**! Every time we come to Him in prayer, confessing our sins, our weaknesses, our failures and our shortcomings, Jesus goes to bat for us with the Father. He pleads our case and shows His Father the very same glorified wounds He showed His disciples on Easter evening—the very same holes in hands and feet and side that He invited doubting Thomas to touch—and the Father relents from punishing us like we deserve. He pardons us completely, for Jesus’ sake. Jesus, who kept every one of God’s commandments perfectly in our place. Jesus, who died the death we had coming on Calvary’s cross so that He could render the full payment for our rebellion. Jesus, who rose from the dead on Easter morning, assuring us that **“because [He] lives, [we] also will live”** (Jn. 14:19) forever with God in heaven. Jesus, **“is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”**! That Jesus! That **“Word of life”** ! That Redeemer!

We have received the most extraordinary good news: that the word of eternal life has come into the world! His name is Jesus—“Jehovah saves.” He came, to show us that **“God is light”** and to be the **“advocate”** before **“the Father”** for all who believe in Him. Who can *you*—who can *I*—share that good news with this week? Amen.