**1 John 1:5-2:6**

**June 15 2025**

**First Baptist Church, Nixa, MO**

**INTRO:** It is told that the aged Apostle John, with Polycarp, his student, entered the bath house in Ephesus only to discover that Cerenthius was there! Now Cerenthius was the leading Gnostic--he was John’s chief adversary. The Gnositcs claimed to have special revelation on Jesus--particularly the Docetic Gnostics, who taught that it just “seemed” that Jesus died, he did not actually die on the cross! But John knew better! He was an eyewitness of Jesus’ death and resurrection. He was sent to tell the good news! John suddenly exclaimed to Polycarp: *“Let us FLEE, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.”*

My friends, there have always been enemies of the gospel--there have always been false teachers who would corrupt the simple gospel we hold so dear. False teaching has always been a serious threat to Jesus’ church. So, the church must be vigilant in its duties--of bringing IN to fellowship those who are truly born again, and putting OUT of membership so-called brothers/sisters who refuse to repent of sin. Your office of “Member” is very important here!

Here, John gives guidance for the church in discerning true believers from false ones. What is the standard? The gospel of Jesus Christ!

But first, what is the gospel? That **GOD** created everything, including MAN in his image. Yet **MAN** rebelled, causing separation from God and bringing death to every person! Sin is that serious! But God, in his love, for his glory, promised a Savior--a Child to be born of a woman. The entire OT reveals that Child through his chosen people--Israel. The OT closes with the reader on his tiptoes, straining to see on the horizon--“Who is He?” The NT opens with a thunderclap--Matthew writes: “[**1 This**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/1-1.htm) is the genealogy of **JESUS** the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1). Mark records Jesus’ first sermon--the **RESPONSE** required: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

This is the message of the church--the gospel. We must get the message right! We must have healthy churches filled with sincere believers who believe and teach this gospel. But beware church, the Evil One would corrupt this true gospel through false teaching and false conversions!

**CENT TRUTH: The church must know true theology to expose false teaching and discern genuine conversions.**

**SUB-INTRO:** Likely, John was the youngest of the Twelve disciples. He certainly was the last living Apostle. By this time, late in the 1st century, he is the beloved elder at the church in Ephesus--the church

planted by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey, sometime after 50AD. Now John writes with urgency! The church must know theology! The church must expose false doctrine. The church must discern true and false disciples. Much at stake! He writes as an eyewitness of these things--inviting others to share in the joy of our salvation! He writes as an Apostle--and we benefit even today!

**READ TEXT:**

**Chapter 1**--[**5 And**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-5.htm) this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

[**6**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-6.htm) If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [**7 But**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-7.htm) 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 cleanses us from all sin.

[**8**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-8.htm) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [**9**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-9.htm) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[**10 If**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-10.htm) we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us. **Chapter 2**--[**1**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-1.htm) My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. [**2**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-2.htm) He Himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

[**3 By**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-3.htm) this we can be sure that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. [**4 If**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-4.htm) anyone says, “I know Him,” but does not keep His commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [**5**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-5.htm) But if anyone keeps His word, the love of God has been truly perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him: [**6 Whoever**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-6.htm) claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.”

**EXPO:**

You will notice John’s writing has a pattern to it. This pattern will be our outline. In our text, he uses a “IF WE SAY”/“BUT IF WE” pattern. So, we will look carefully at the four statements.

**But first, an apostolic proclamation:** *“And this is the message we have heard from him…”* (5).

Like waiting for thunder after lightning count…one…two three…BOOM! “God is light!”

Light has been described as *“the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness - as darkness is of the opposite”* [Barnes], and in Him there is no darkness at all [So darkness represents this evil world--hiding men in their evil pursuit of things forbidden--the scheming, the lusting, the conniving. But God has no association with the dark things of this world--HE is light!]” (5).

In the second part of his letter, John will shift from “God is LIGHT” (1:5) to “God is LOVE” (4:16). So, John strengthens the church with theology. Because of Jesus, we can know God! He does not HAVE light, he IS light--he is not somewhat holy, or nearly holy. He is not increasing or decreasing in holiness--he is what he has always been--perfectly holy! God is today--as he has been from eternity past--dwelling in perfect and astoundingly beautiful and glorious LIGHT. And God does not just HAVE love, as if he could somehow deplete his supply, but he IS love! It is his nature! By this point, John has likely already written his beloved Gospel: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (3:16). And this leads us to the rest of our text.

This God of Light [Who is also the God of Love] delivers sinners from the darkness and misery of sin. Is that you? Has he given you faith to believe? And an awareness of sin? Have you repented and believed the gospel? No? My friend, we pray God will open your heart to believe and share with us the joy of our salvation? Yes? My friend, by God’s eternal mercy and grace he has chosen you from before the foundation of the world to dwell with him forever. Jesus deserves your praise, dear church! But praise is more than singing--praise includes your surrender and obedience to him as Lord!

Now, John gives the church four proofs to prove/observe sincere faith--true conversion--in others--in ourselves:

1. One’s pattern of life
2. One’s understanding of sin
3. One’s relationship with Jesus
4. One’s response to God’s Word

1. One’s pattern of life reveals true conversion (6-7)

[**6**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-6.htm) If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness [Now “walking” refers to *“the ordinary course of life”* [Cambridge]; the habit, direction, pattern of one’s life. Here John refers to an ongoing regular pursuit of the dark things that oppose God--not the occasional stumble that brings such pain to the true believer’s heart.], we lie and do not practice the truth [Discernment is the point! And the *“practice of truth”* is the key. True conversion is marked by a general direction towards gospel truth! Since God is light/holy, He would have his children walking in the light of his holiness--as their habit, as the general rule of their lives, as their practice and aim. How does the church discern true conversion and true teaching? Observe! Does this one walk in the light, or the darkness--as the general pattern of his life? Now, the TRUE believer shudders! “I COULD walk in the darkness! I am *“prone to wander, Lord I feel it!”* I am tempted! Sadly, I have actually returned to those things of sin and darkness! Does it mean that I am now lost? Am I in the darkness still?”

My friend! There is something you must understand--You have been given the HOLY Spirit to live in your heart! He simply will not allow you to CONTINUE in darkness! Of course there is temptation, of course there is the occasional stumble. It is an ongoing battle with sin and things of darkness! Yet, there IS a battle! So, let the battle rage! Walking in the light is an ongoing battle with sin--may I say, it is the normal Christian life!]. [**7 But**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-7.htm) 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 cleanses us from all sin [Here is another proof of the pattern of true conversion--ongoing battle with darkness--AND an ongoing fellowship with the saints. There is a love for Jesus’ church--with all of its shortcomings and disappointments. No wonder John opens his letter with his desire: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us” (1:3). True saints long to share the joy of their salvation with other true saints! It is John’s heart for authentic believers to walk toward Jesus with other authentic believers!

APPLY: Two applications at this point:

1) This church will have to be diligent in membership--welcoming true believers, removing false believers. How to discern the difference? Observe the pattern of the person’s life! Does it trend toward the things of God, the light? Or towards the dark things, the evil things of this world! And is the habit of repentance part of his life, or not?

2) This church will face challenges of disagreements and division that would wreck sweet fellowship! What to do? Each member will have the responsibility to walk in the light, to turn from darkness, to protect the prized fellowship of the gospel! Come back to this truth: “We have fellowship with one another” because “His Son cleanses us from all sin”. So let us love and forgive and overlook one another’s faults--allow others to go first--be quick to hear and slow to speak--remember “we walk in light”, in truth and love and peace. We have fellowship with HIM now, by faith, and one day in person!

ILL=Sunbreaks in Seattle. As many of you know, before BKK we served as church planters in downtown SEA. We learned that SEA was voted the “Dreariest” city in America. But we observed something--almost daily “sun breaks”! And the residents would turn to the sun! One barista: “I needed that!” Residents of Seattle loved sunlight and sharing it! **So too, residents of heaven will be drawn to the light of the gospel--we share this love!** There you have it--one’s pattern of life, of walking in the light, reveals true conversion.

2. One’s understanding of sin reveals true conversion (8-9)

[**8**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-8.htm) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [**9**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-9.htm)If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Who could dare say such a thing: *“I have no sin!”* Is it **the fool** who has denied there is a God? Or **the hard-hearted** skeptic? But it also be **the false believer** who seeks to justify his sin--“I have not sinned! I have no sin in this situation! I am not guilty!” Perhaps he has decided that all things are lawful to him, or that he has become so holy that he is not troubled by the struggle with sin any longer. He is deceived! It is self-deception!

On the contrary--the TRUE Christian begins his journey in humility, with a sincere and utter dependence upon the gospel, “for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved!” (Rom 10:13). And he discovers that this new life with Christ involves an ongoing, daily, necessary dependence upon that same gospel for daily cleansing from sin.

Question: Have you ever wondered why God does it this way? We are positionally sanctified, we are being practically sanctified, and one day perfectly sanctified? I mean, why not just move from saved to perfect! Well, it must be that in the difficult “practical” phase of sanctification, God is being glorified! My friend, EVERY time you turn from sin, EVERY time you seek first the kingdom, EVERY step you walk in the light while the world rushes headlong into the darkness--you bring glory to God! Why else would anyone discipline his life--denying himself from the pleasures of sin for an unseen God? Because the gospel must be true! Jesus must be alive! Glory!

APPLY: Perhaps you are a young Christian. What do you think of this struggle with sin? Perhaps it is a *“besetting/persistent sin”*that causes you such grief and shame--here you are again, yet again, confessing and asking God for forgiveness! What do you think? That you are less than a Christian? That you will somehow be cast off by God--that God will somehow tire of your crying out for forgiveness? My friend! Hear this! What you experience is the real, normal, expected pattern of the Christian life!

Summary: The **false believer** claims he has no sin before God--that all is well with him and God! The **true believer** admits his sin--agrees with God about the sin, with its rebellion and wickedness, crying out to God for mercy. And what is God’s response to the humble sinner who repents? God is faithful to forgive and just to restore to right standing with the Creator! Yes! That is the good news! Confess and be forgiven! Confess and be reconciled to God--forever, once-and-for-all, and day-to-day! Confession reconciles us to God! We are drawn to Christ, our lovely and wonderful Savior! In his presence, our sin is repugnant, something to “put off”. This understanding of sin reveals true conversion.

3. One’s relationship with Jesus reveals true conversion (1:10-2:2)

[**10 If**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/1-10.htm) we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us. **Chapter 2**--[**1**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-1.htm) My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. [**2**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-2.htm) He Himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

God makes it plain in his word that “all have sinned”, that there is “none righteous, no, not one!” So, for any person to say otherwise makes God out to be a liar! It is a sure test of whether the teacher is true, or the testimony is true. Now, the next test is: **what does the person think of Jesus!** My friends, when one correctly understands his desperate situation before holy God, that he is a miserable sinner, deserving of God’s wrath and judgment, only to realize that his salvation is found in Jesus the Son, well, Jesus becomes everything! It is the drowning man clinging to the life preserver! It is the sick man placing all hope in the doctor for recovery. It is the man bound for the execution chamber hoping against hope that the judge will stay his punishment. My friends, Jesus is all of these! He is the Savior of our souls, He is the Physician healing our souls, the Judge forgiving our souls!

ILL=The Jehovah Witness suggests that Jesus is only a man. The Mormon teaches that Jesus is one of many gods, that we all become similar gods. The Muslim teaches that Jesus is a revered prophet, but only a man--not divine. But the **true believer** agrees with the Apostles--Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The true believer relates to Jesus in two ways:

**1. He is our Advocate before the Father.** *“But we are already saved,”* you may wonder, so why then do we need this Advocate? *“It is finished, right?”* Everything necessary for our restoration into full relationship with God was finished there on the cross. Yes! Oh praise Him, yes, it was! But the truth is, we are still prone to sin! The new believer may even stumble over this--*”I am surprised at the fierce struggle with sin!”* But the seasoned believer knows! The real battle with sin actually begins AT conversion! As CS Lewis once said: “No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good…Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is” [CS Lewis, Mere Christianity]. Enter the Advocate! Jesus argues on our behalf before the Father! *“Yes, he is guilty, Father! Yes, he has offended Us! He knows it. He admits it. Yet he has trusted in Me! He is now my possession. He must be saved to the uttermost! I will see to it! My Spirit lives in him!”* What an Advocate we have!

APPLY: You may wonder, *“How can he keep loving me so?”* Perhaps you wonder, there will be a time that he says, *“That’s it! No more!”* Perhaps you have heard the accusation of the Evil One, that great Slanderer, and have been tempted to believe that he may just cast off! It is not possible, my friend! Never! He must keep His Word--”For I am sure……[nothing] will be able to separate us from the LOVE of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!” (Rom 8:39). He continues to advocate on your behalf until you arrive safely home in heaven--then the sin battle will be over! Until then--what an Advocate! How we love Him! And worship Him! His love for you fuels your surrender!

**2. He is our propitiation for sin.** It is a good word. It means “covering”/atonement. It means that Jesus’ blood on the cross covered our sin, meaning that his blood actually *“satisfied”* God’s wrath toward our sin. How else my friend, do you think that you could exist in the presence of God! He dwells in unapproachable light--no darkness of sin exists there. He is terribly holy, no sinner can live in his presence. But, Jesus has satisfied every demand God requires to live with him! This is the good news! In Jesus the longing of our hearts is possible--to know God, to live with him!

APPLY: My friends, what you think of Jesus means everything! He is not just a good teacher, he is YOUR savior! Someone may think wrongly about the Christian faith: *“Well, if your sins are forgiven and you are on your way to heaven, then why worry about sin now? Why turn from the pleasures of it? Why worry about it? You Christians are saved, go ahead and sin it up!”* The false believer may say such a thing, but not the true believer, for when the true saints consider Jesus the Advocate and the Propitiation, they can only worship! But God has given us fellow travelers in this journey--the church! We are not alone in this fierce battle. Do you have another believer to share the battle with sin? Two who love Jesus and hate sin together! Keep on!

APPLY: And notice the extent of the atonement: “Not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (2). This church must always have the nations on its heart. It is a marker of true conversion--to be outward focused on the lostness of others--to seek the conversion of those who do not know Jesus. Here we are in Thailand, at 1% Christian. Virtually everyone we meet is lost, with no hope of salvation through Buddah’s teachings. Question: Do you have a friendship with any of them? Do you know the name of a lost person here in BKK? Does anyone in this city know that YOU are a Christian? What are you doing to make a difference in the eternity of anyone in this city?

ILL=I walk past two parking attendants each morning: Abdulla and Marawan. They know my name. They do not yet know that I am a Christian. I pray to change that. Pray with me as I seek to befriend them. My aim: “You guys must know that I am a Christian. I want you to know the hope that I have in Jesus. Here is a little booklet that explains what I am talking about. Maybe we can talk about it as I pass back and forth.”

So, who is on your heart? This church will be the light of the gospel to a very dark city!

4. One’s response to God’s Word reveals true conversion (3-6)

[**3 By**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-3.htm) this we can be sure that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. [**4 If**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-4.htm) anyone says, “I know Him,” but does not keep His commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [**5**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-5.htm) But if anyone keeps His word, the love of God has been truly perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him: [**6 Whoever**](https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-6.htm) claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.”

To “keep” is to keep something safe, to treasure and to guard a precious thing! To think much of something--to value it highly! That is the heart of the true believer--to “keep” the Word! It does not mean faultlessness--that is just not possible in this life! But one day! One day there will be no more struggle with temptation! No more the guilt of sin! But in this life? Well, the true saint will “keep” or treasure Jesus’ commandments. He will gladly submit to the lordship of Jesus. He will not find Jesus’ commands to be something to escape, or to avoid, or to make light of. No! The commands Jesus gives are a delight to the sincere believer. He treasures the Word of God and its commands! Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30).

His commands are not burdens to avoid. No! It is our joy to surrender to him--the true believer is not the rebellious child, demanding his own way, or the proud one demanding to be served. Rather, humility is the attitude of Jesus’ kingdom--and the true ones gladly humble themselves before the Lord! The discerning church will observe this heart of humility in any who claim to know Him!

APPLY: Parents, you have children who are beginning to profess faith. Encourage them, teach them, point them to Christ--then quietly observe their lives. Do you see an increasing desire to please GOD their heavenly Father--not only a desire to please you? Ask the church to observe with you, does your child treasure the gospel as his only hope of salvation. Church, you must take your Office of Member seriously. It is not to judge, that is God’s business, but you HAVE been given the “keys to the Kingdom” (Matt 16, 18). Your collective assessment of sound doctrine and sincere faith is important.

So, a quick checklist to evaluate true conversion:

1. Is there longing for the Word?
2. Is there a persistence in prayer?
3. Is there a hatred of sin?
4. Is there a love for the brethren?
5. Is there praise to the King?
6. Is there a desire for conversion of the lost?
7. Is there a heart for service to the least?

Again, these do not MAKE a true believer, but they may well REVEAL one! What else would you add to indicate true conversion? A changed heart? Changed speech? Unusual patience? New desires?

The church knows that when Jesus becomes Lord, everything changes! There is nothing in one’s life that is unaffected by it. What do you observe?

CLOSE: Now, how to close this message? Perhaps you are a bit overwhelmed at it all. You may feel weak, wondering if you can make it to the end. The battle is just so hard! But John gives us a key response: “abide in him” (6). Where did John learn this? From the Lord! In the Upper Room: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me!” (John 15:4). Remain near Him! Stay close to Him. That you can do! ABIDE!