

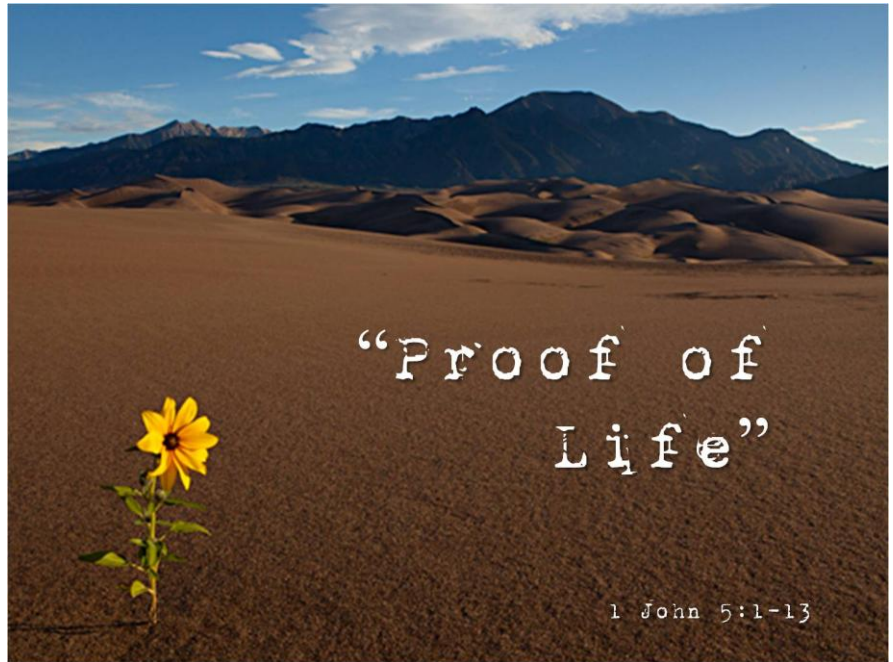
“Proof of Life” 1 John 5:1-13

by Pastor Tim Dodson

at Jesus Fellowship of Believers

in Menomonie Wisconsin

on April 25th, 2015



(1) *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. (2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (4) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is he who overcomes the world,*

but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (6) This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. (7) For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. (9) If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. (10) He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. (11) And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (12) He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (13) These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal

John has written this letter, according to his own words, so *“that you may know that you have eternal life.”* So that we would know *“full joy”* (1:4) He wants us to be **sure** of where we stand spiritually. Thus his letter is directed toward believers or at least those who believe they are one. John wrote in chapter 5, verse 13 *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”*

Yet for many of us, this letter has done everything *but* make us sure. I mean, we *were* sure...or at least we thought we were before we jumped into this letter! But now...*well*, now we're a little concerned. I mean there is all this talk of the fact that if we say we know God but fail to keep His commandments, that we're a "liar."(2:4) If we say we love God but don't love our brother, then again... *“we're a liar.”* (4:20) If we “love the world” God is not in us,(2:15) and if we sin we “have not seen Him nor known Him.” (3:6). Let's face it, this can be some harsh stuff, and we are easily apt rather to feel condemned, not “full of joy.” (1:4)

Thus it is easy to move to take one of a couple of positions: **One**, *that we're not a Christian at all.* I thought I loved Jesus and was a part of His church body, but I guess I'm not. **Two**, *I was saved but I guess I lost it somewhere along the way.* I started out ok, but now I'm apparently no longer part of the club. **Three**, *I don't care what John says, I'm a Christian and no one can tell me any different.* I don't care what evidence he gives to the contrary in this letter. Or **four**, *I got this thing in hand and now I don't sin anymore and I love everyone.* I'm a regular 'Christian Gandhi.'"

The way we get these often somewhat paranoid and far flung ideas is we fail to see the whole letter in its totality and context. We ‘snack’ on a few verses that were covered that particular Sunday, and fail to include the rest of the letter as part of the discussion. I do not believe that John was writing this letter to thump these people on the head. He wasn’t taking the position that they all were rotten sinners and needed to get their act together like He did!

No, he clearly covers the idea that we are *not* sinless and never will be. But he tells us that we have an “attorney in heaven” for such times, to intervene on our behalf. If we never sin, then such a defense attorney would not be needed.

He also never implies that we could ever have once been a part of the family, and then “un-adopted” once it was found out that we weren’t ‘Mayberry kids.’ No in fact, he stresses that if you are indeed out of the club, you really were never a member anyway, because in this club, membership is for life. In fact, *eternal life*.

But lastly, on the flip side, we are flat out endangering our eternal soul to not hear John in this matter, to write him off on his warnings. Because frankly, he has the street cred and the anointing of the boss to speak on His behalf, and we are never going to get beyond such warnings. Not *ever* on this side of eternity! So it is nothing short of suicide to write him off as being radical or ‘fringe,’ or speaking in hyperboles.

1st John is not a letter about being a better disciple, or a more committed servant. It is not about degrees of holiness, or dynamic of faithfulness. It is about whether you are *really* a child of God, redeemed for eternity, or *not*. That is the thrust of this letter and the point of John writing it. But the fact is we all still sin, all tend to love the world and often do not love our brethren. *So are we all lost?*

All of this letter of 1 John is about “proof of life.” In the movies, we often hear that term. The idea is that when a person has been kidnapped...and/or in emanate danger of death...before effort is given to rescue them, it is common practice to ask for "proof of life." Proof that the person is actually alive. Because if he or she is not, then what's the point of going further in the process of redemption?

It doesn’t mean we are free from danger or without issues moving forward, but it is an evidence...a "proof" that the guy is indeed with us, because without such it would mean that all the further negotiations and efforts on our part is without merit and frankly without a point. Because if we are not, in fact, spiritually alive, then church and classes and service and discipleship, *all of it*, are *meaningless*. For many of you, every Sunday is nothing more than Pastor Tim “greasing up the paddles” and shouting “CLEAR” before I hit you once more in an attempt to bring you back from the dead. And I may be on the paddles, but the miracle is in the hands of God. And with *you*, on just how bad you want to live.

Let’s see if we can get our hands around this thing then. Back in chapter 1, verses 5-7 we are told: *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie (...there’s that word again) and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Let’s break this down: *“If we walk...”* meaning our very living and motion of life...and do so *“in the light,”* which means *“IN”* Him because *HE IS LIGHT*, then we are good horizontally (fellowship with one another), and *“the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin,”* we’re good vertically. *“Cleanses us”...present tense continually*, meaning even for the sins we have yet to commit. For it says *“all sins,”* so how could we ever therefore sin our way out of the family? How many sins does *“all sins”* include? That’s right...*all of them!*

But in that same passage lay these words: “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*” Thus, if we claim to be on board with Jesus, but our living and motions of life are done in the **absence of the light**, we are lying to Jesus, ourselves and everyone around us. That would make us the most pitied of individuals, and perhaps the greatest of fools. So the bottom line in our salvation status is not whether we still fall down, but whether we are doing so in the light or in the dark. But the next question certainly arises here...*How do we know if we are walking in the light or in the dark?* According to this passage, all of us sin...both the “light walker” and the “dark walker,” so how do we cut it? Where is the line?

John openly acknowledges that even the one who walks in the light will sometimes stumble...however it is genuinely safe to say “far less” than the guy moving around out there in the darkness! But, ...*let’s stay the course*...we need something definitive here! The difference is what happens next. Here is the ‘smoking gun,’ the conclusive ‘tell.’

We all have fallen down at some point...perhaps even inexplicably in the light of day. But have you ever fallen in the dark? It seems the damage is always greater because all depth and surroundings are lost in the darkness. The getting up can be just as dangerous, and one can easily take a second or third ‘smack’ just trying to regain our footing...running into everything and/or *everyone*, trying to get back up. (assuming one gets back up at *all*.)

We can lose our bearings in the darkness, as well as do some serious damage. But when we walk in the light, we are better able to get up without destroying everything around us. The answer isn’t “do we fall” but “do we get back up” and how well does that go? In the light we are more sure of our footing, our direction, and our pathway...*with all of its dangers and traps*. We are able to ‘dodge that lamp’ and ‘not step on the cat,’ *spiritually speaking*. But if we **do** stumble, the ‘light’ is there to help us return to our feet. Without Christ, **our light**, we are on our own and frankly, *it shows!*

John tells us herein that if we are a truly reborn individual, we will indeed “overcome the world.” It will never be in an instant, and none of us will ever find any level of righteous perfection in this life. But we will *get up* and we will...in the light of Jesus, brush ourselves off, crack our neck, regain our bearings, *and go on* in this race of life. And the fact is that without the presence of light, doing that will be impossible or certainly highly implausible. THAT is how we know we are or are not one of the kings kids! Because if not...when they stumble, they “will depart from us, confirming that they *were never one of us*.”

In the light, when I get back up, I can see clearly what I tripped over and how the whole thing happened. I know then how to avoid doing so again, and can therefore negotiate the traps with far more clarity and success. In the dark however, that just isn't so. In fact, in the dark things can easily go from bad to worse. I stumble...lose my bearings, fall, try to get up, fall again not knowing where I am. It can be a domino effect, with this last piece falling out the door of the church.

John goes on to warn us about the testimony of men here. It is a fact that many of us rely on those around us to give comfort on this matter or to point their finger. I’m not talking about Christian accountability...that is a different issue and is meaningless if you are not indeed part of the family of God. I’m talking about giving us the ‘thumbs up’ or ‘thumbs down.’ Meaning that as long as people around us think we are a-ok, we can tend to relax and put our faith in them. Not *God*, but men. And that will be a fatal mistake. Man cannot condemn you, cannot redeem you, and cannot do for you what you are unwilling to do yourself.

Verses 11-12 tells us this: *“And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life.”*

Knowing that chapter 1 verse 5 tells us that *“God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all,”* we can read this passage in verse 11 and 12 as follows: *“And this is what the Light testifies: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the light. Whoever has the Light has life, and whoever does not have God’s Light does not have life.”*

Verse 10 tells us that *“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.”* Some points of clarity: remember that to “believe”...**really believe**, has profound reflection in our actions and our actions on our belief. They are innately connected. If we have this, then the “witness of God” is in us. You ever see those headlamps that people wear sometimes? They are for free flow movement while negotiating in the dark. And let’s face it...*it’s dark out there in the world.* Jesus in us operates like that headlamp. That’s where the light is emanating from. It doesn’t necessarily help make the whole world a brighter place, but that light...shining from within us is illuminating the path before us, and can even help the people around us see the way to the door also. That’s why Christians have that “thing” that people inexplicably are drawn to. It’s the light.

Verse 12 says *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* What John is looking for...what *we are being called to look for herein*, is “proof of life.” How does thing look for you out there today? Do you know where you are going? Do you clearly see the path ahead and the spiritual goals and callings that God has placed on your personal life? Can you see how to get back up when you fall? Do you find your feet, fix the danger in the road, and move on? Or do you rather find yourself so often laying on the floor wondering what just happened and how to get back up?

John already said in chapter 2 verse 8 that this *“thing is true **in Him and in you**, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.”* He said in verse 10 of that chapter, that it is ‘*in the light*’ that we love our brethren, and therefore *“there is no cause for stumbling in him.”* Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 that *“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”*

The “proof of life” is the presence of, and the walking in, that light...