

First John

Translation and Notes

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Translation

^{1:1} What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked at intently and our hands touched, concerning the Word, the source of life –

² This Life was revealed. We have seen it. And so, we testify to it and proclaim to you this Life, the Eternal Life, which was in the presence of the Father and was revealed to us.

³ – what we have seen and what we have heard we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed, this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that our joy may be full.

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⁵ It is this message that we have heard from ‘Jesus Christ’ and make known to you: God is light. There is no darkness in Him – none whatsoever!

⁶ If we say, “We have fellowship with ‘God’,” and yet are walking in the darkness, then we are lying and not living by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as ‘God’ Himself is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

⁸ If we say, “We have no sin,” then we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, because ‘God’ is faithful and righteous, He forgives us of our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make ‘God’ the liar and His word is not in us.

^{2:1} My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you do not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate in the presence of the Father – the righteous Jesus Christ. ² And He is the placater of God’s wrath for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the whole world.

³ Now the way we know that we know ‘God’ is if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, “I know Him,” while not keeping His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in this person. ⁵ But whoever keeps ‘Christ’s’ word, truly in this person their love of God has reached a state of maturity. This is how we know that we are in ‘God’. ⁶ The one who says, “I abide in ‘God’,” should himself walk in the same way as ‘Jesus’ walked.

⁷ Beloved, what I am writing to you is not a new commandment, but an old commandment which you have possessed from the beginning. This old commandment is the message which you have heard all along. ⁸ And yet, what I am writing to you is a new commandment. It is truly expressed in ‘Jesus Christ’ and in you, because the darkness is fading away and the light, the Real Light, is already shining.

⁹ The one who says, "I am in the light," and yet hates his fellow believer, is still in the darkness.

¹⁰ The one who loves his fellow believer abides in the light and there is nothing in him to cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But the one who hates his fellow believer is in the darkness and is walking in the darkness. He does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

¹² I am writing to you, little children, to affirm that your sins are forgiven you on account of "Jesus'" name.

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, to affirm that you know the One who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, to affirm that you have overcome the Evil One.

Indeed, I wrote to you, children, to affirm that you know the Father.

¹⁴ Indeed, I wrote to you, fathers, to affirm that you know the One who is from the beginning. Indeed, I wrote to you, young men, to affirm that you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Evil One.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him, ¹⁶ because all that is worldly –

The craving for what the flesh desires,
The craving for what the eyes see,
The arrogant pride over material possessions,

- is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ What's more, the world is passing away, along with its cravings. But the one who does the will of God abides forever.

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many have become antichrists. From this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They separated from us, but they were not part of us. For if they had really been part of us, they would have remained among us. But they separated, in order that they might be revealed for what they are – that none of them are part of us. ²⁰ You have an anointing from the Holy One and you all understand this.

²¹ I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and you know that absolutely no lie comes from the truth. ²² Who is the liar? Unquestionably the one who denies, saying, "Jesus is not the Christ." This one is the antichrist - the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. The one who acknowledges the Son, also has the Father.

²⁴ As for you, see to it that what you heard from the beginning abides in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will also abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that He Himself promised us – eternal life.

²⁶ I wrote these things to you about those who are trying to mislead you. ²⁷ Now as for you – the anointing you received from "Jesus Christ" abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you about these things. But as His anointing teaches you about all these things (and it is true and is not a lie), indeed, just as it taught you - abide in Him.

²⁸ And so, little children, abide in Him so that when He is revealed we may have confidence, and not turn away from Him in shame when He returns.

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²⁹ If you know that 'God' is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of 'God'.

^{3:1} Look at the kind of love the Father has given to us, that we are called God's children. And we really are! Because of this the world does not know us. And it is no wonder, because it did not know Him.

² Beloved, right now we are God's children, and exactly what we will be has not yet been revealed. But we know that when 'Christ' is revealed, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has such hope fixed on 'Christ', purifies himself, just as He is pure.

⁴ Everyone who practices sin is also rebelling against God. In fact, sin is rebellion against God.

⁵ And you know that 'Christ' was revealed to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.

⁶ Everyone who abides in 'Christ' does not sin. Everyone who sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

⁷ Little children, don't let anyone deceive you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous just as 'Christ' is righteous. ⁸ The one who practices sin is the Devil's offspring, because the Devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God was revealed was to destroy the works of the Devil.

⁹ Everyone who has been born of God does not practice sin because 'God's' offspring abide in Him^a, and he is not able to sin because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is clear who God's children are and who the Devil's children are. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not God's offspring, to be specific, the one who does not love his fellow believer.

¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

¹² We should not love like Cain. He was an offspring of the Evil One, and violently killed his brother. Why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous. ¹³ So, fellow believers, don't be surprised if the world hates you.

¹⁴ Because we love fellow believers, we know that we have passed out of death into life. The one who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his fellow believer is a murderer, and you know that absolutely no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: 'Christ' laid down His life for us. So, we also ought to lay down our lives for fellow believers. ¹⁷ But whoever has a means of living, and sees his fellow believer in need, and closes his heart to him, how can God's kind of love abide in that person?

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love by merely talking about it, rather let us love through actions consistent with the truth.

¹⁹ So this is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will be able to persuade our heart in 'God's' presence, ²⁰ because if our heart condemns us, we know that God is greater than our heart and He knows all things.

²¹ Beloved, when our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² so that whatever we request we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that please Him. ²³ And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and we love one another, just as "Jesus Christ" gave the commandment to us. ²⁴ The one who keeps His commandments abides in "God" and "God" in him. And this is how we know that "God" abides in us, from the Spirit whom He gave to us.

^{4:1} Beloved, do not trust every spirit, but test the spirits to determine whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you know God's Spirit: Every spirit that acknowledges, "Jesus is the Christ who has come in the flesh," is from God. ³ And without exception, every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus in this way is not from God. Indeed, this is a spirit from the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and even now is already in the world.

⁴ But you are God's offspring, little children, and have overcome "the false prophets^b" because greater is the one who is in you than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They, on the other hand, are the world's offspring. Because of this, they speak from the world's mindset and the world listens to them. ⁶ But we are God's offspring. The one who knows God listens to us. Whoever is not God's offspring does not listen to us. This is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

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⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God because God is love.

⁹ And this is how the love of God was revealed among us: God has sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ This is love: Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son, the placater of God's wrath for our sins.

¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us like this, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has reached a state of maturity in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we abide in Him and He abides in us, by virtue of His Spirit whom He has given to us.

¹⁴ We have seen and we testify that the Father sent the Son as the world's Savior. ¹⁵ Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has in us. God is love, and the one who abides in that love abides in God, and God abides in him.

¹⁷ In this way love has reached a state of maturity with us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment, because just as "Jesus" is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in this love, rather mature love casts out fear, because fear comes from an expectation of punishment. The one who fears punishment has not reached a state of maturity in love.

¹⁹ We love because He first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his fellow believer, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his fellow believer whom he has seen,

cannot love the God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And we have this commandment from "God through Jesus Christ": The one who loves God must also love his fellow believer.

^{5:1} Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the father also loves the child born from Him. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and carry out His commandments.

³ For this is our love for God, that we keep His commandments. Moreover, His commandments are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world, and this is the overcoming power that has overcome the world – our faith.

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⁵ Who then is the one who overcomes the world? None other than the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶ This is the One who came through water and blood - Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and by the blood. And the Spirit is the one who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ There are in fact three witnesses – ⁸ the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are in agreement^c.

⁹ If we accept human testimony, then we should accept God's testimony which is greater. For this is the testimony of God, that He has testified about His Son. ¹⁰ The one who believes in the son of God has the testimony within himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified about His Son.

¹¹ And this is the testimony: God gave eternal life to us and this life is in His Son. ¹² The one who has the Son has this life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have this life. ¹³ I wrote these things to you, the ones who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have life, eternal life.

¹⁴ And this is the confidence we have in "God's" presence, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us regarding whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

¹⁶ If anyone sees his fellow believer committing sin that does not lead to death, he should ask, and "God" will give him life - to those committing sin not leading to death. There is sin that leads to death. That is not the sin I am saying he should pray about. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not leading to death.

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¹⁸ We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who was born of God keeps him, and the Evil One does not touch him.

¹⁹ We know that we are God's offspring and the whole world rests entirely in the Evil One.

²⁰ We also know that the Son of God has come and He has given us understanding to know the Real One. And we are in the Real One, by being in His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Real God and Eternal Life.

²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Notes

This translation of First John is based on the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece 27* (NA27) Greek text. It is the result of over a year of translation work during which many Greek grammars and commentaries were consulted.

One of the characteristics of First John is the author's vague use of pronouns ("he", "him", etc.). It is often unclear whether the subject of a verb or the antecedent of a pronoun refers to God, to the Father, to the Son, or to Jesus Christ. This is perhaps due to John's elevated view of the equality and unity of the Father and the Son. As the Expositor's Bible Commentary notes regarding John's theology and writing style:

God is revealed in Christ Jesus. To see the Son is to see the Father; to know the Father is to know the Son. The deeds of the one are the deeds of the other. So completely are the wills of the Father and the Son joined that it is many times a matter of indifference [to John] as to which one is in view. (Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12, The Zondervan Corporation, ©1981, p. 338.)

Scholars call this vague use of pronouns the Johannian Trinitarian Ambiguity. In this translation I have attempted to clarify the referent of some pronouns by replacing them with what I believe to be the corresponding proper noun such as God, Christ, Jesus, Jesus Christ, and God through Jesus Christ (verse 4:21 only). The replacement is indicated by word(s) enclosed in short brackets, such as "God".

The Greek word μένω (*menō*) is an important word in First John and occurs 24 times in various tenses and moods. It means "to be in a situation for a length of time" (*The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Frederick William Danker, The University of Chicago Press, © 2009, p. 227). It can be translated in many ways such as abide, stay, remain, dwell, live, continue, tarry. I have consistently translated it as "abide" throughout my translation.

Footnotes

- a. Verse 3:9. Scholars are divided on how the original Greek text in this verse, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, should be understood and translated. Translation options are highlighted below:

Option used in this translation:

⁹ Everyone who has been born of God does not practice sin because "God's" offspring **abide in Him**, and he is not able to sin because he has been born of God.

Alternate translation:

⁹ Everyone who has been born of God does not practice sin because "God's" seed **abides in him**, and he is not able to sin because he has been born of God.

- b. Verse 4:4. The words "**the false prophets**" have been substituted in the translation for the pronoun "**them**" (αὐτούς) of the original Greek text to clarify the referent.

⁴ But you are God's offspring, little children, and have overcome "**the false prophets**" [them] because greater is the one who is in you than the one who is in the world.

- c. Verse 5:7-8: Translations that follow the Textus Receptus tradition, such as the King James Version (KJV) and New King James Version (NKJV), have additional words between verses 7 and 8, which would read as follows (in bold):

⁷ For there are three testifying **in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.** ⁸ **And there are three testifying on earth:** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three agree as one.

This additional text does not appear in any Greek text earlier than the fourteenth century. The consensus of scholars is that it is a late addition to the text, that it is not what John wrote, and that it came into the text through the Latin Vulgate.