

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

1 John #1

1 John 1:1-10, 4:19-21

Dear friends, this is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. And this is love: not that we loved God, but that he first loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

At Dyer Chevrolet in Vero Beach, Florida, there is an automobile in the showroom that has been hailed by Chevrolet as the Corvette of Corvettes. It's the 2024 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray. And for one easy payment of only \$182,640, it can be yours. It's candy apple red and completely polished from bumper to bumper. It's got Michelin tires on it that glisten as the light shines on it through the showroom windows. But one thought occurred to me the moment I saw it. This corvette looks great in the showroom. But you will never really know how it performs until you take it out for a drive. It's where the rubber meets the road.

Today, we begin the Rubber Meets the Road Book of the NT: 1st John. Here's why it's called the Rubber Meets the Road Book of the NT: John wrote it for two primary purposes: (1) He wrote it to assure Christians of their salvation. "These things I've written to you dear children," says John, "so that you who believe in the name of the Son of God may know that you have eternal life." He wanted them to live blessed assurance. He wanted their hearts to rest in the goodness and eternal security that Christ promised. He wrote it to tell 2024 Corvette Stingrays that they were, in fact, 2024 Corvette Stingrays. On the other hand, he wrote it to inform us that not everyone who says they are a Christian is, in fact a Christian. Just because someone claims to be a 2024 Corvette Stingray doesn't make them a 2024 Corvette Stingray. It's where the rubber meets the road.

At the Chevrolet Factory in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Stingrays are put through a serious of tests in order to bear the name "Stingray." Chevrolet takes the name that seriously. John takes claiming to follow Jesus even more seriously. Here's why: he lived in a world where people who said they were Christians were not acting like Christians or even confessing things that make Christians Christian. Therefore, he gives his audience four tests that occur throughout the book: What Do I Believe? What Do I Walk? What Do I Do with Sin? What Do I Do with Love? These things were written that we may know we may have eternal life. But they were also written to urge those who have trouble with those tests to reevaluate. It's where the rubber meets the road. We see John giving this four-question test to his audience in 1 John 1:1-10 and 4:19-21. It's where the rubber meets the road.

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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete. ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But 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. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. . . ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

1. What Do I Believe? (1:1-4)

- **The Piccadilly:** (1) You know the world isn't like it used to be when you are driving in Orlando and your age slips out with: "I wonder if they have a Piccadilly around here." (2) And your kids respond with: "the Picca what?" Then for the next ten minutes a bit of nostalgia comes flooding into your soul as you explain the glorious meats, vegetables, Mexican cornbread, and Boston Cream pie that used to be at your disposal. (3) Unfortunately, Christianity in our society today functions much like that old Piccadilly line. We get to walk through the line and pic out the type of Jesus we prefer.
- **Main Idea:** According to John, there's only one view of Jesus sufficient to save and assure: The Jesus that the apostles confessed.
- **There Is a Reason John What He Does in the First Verse:** (1) He says "that which was from the beginning" because there was a group of heretics in the time John wrote who said Jesus was not preexistent and therefore not equal to the Father. He only at the moment of the incarnation. John says this to tell them they were wrong. (2) Then he says that which we have "heard, seen, looked at, and touched" for a different reason. There was another group who believed that the human body was evil and corrupted, only the spirit was good. Therefore, they said Jesus didn't come in the flesh. He only came in the Spirit. They were called the Gnostics. But here's the thing: they were elitists who said: "if you were as smart as me you would recognize this. But you're not. You're a commoner. So let us do your thinking for you. John says they were wrong.
- **There Is a Reason John Says We in Verses 2-4:** (1) Notice that it dominates the rest of these verses: "we" have seen it; "We testify to it;" "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard." (2) That "we" refers to the apostles and the apostolic message: (a) Unto us a child is born but a son is given because he has always existed. (3) He was God in the flesh, both body and spirit. He died. He rose again. He's the only way, the only truth, the only life. And by faith in that Jesus and that Jesus alone you can have life in his name.
- **App:** When you recreate Jesus into what you want him to be, you move away from the Jesus the apostles confessed: one who is mighty to save.

2. Where Do I Walk? (1:5-7)

- **Movie Matinee:** (1) About the only movie affordable anymore is a matinee in the early afternoon. (2) After you spend two hours in a movie matinee, something that happens that leaves you feeling one of two ways. (3) When the sunlight hits your eyes, you say (a) “finally. It’s good to see you again, Mr. Sun.” Or you say (b) “Oh it’s bright. I need to get out of it as quick as possible.”
- **Main Idea:** You don’t have to convince someone walking joyfully in the light and truth of God that they are saved. They know it. It’s the individuals who prefer darkness yet confess Jesus as their savior that take a bit of convincing on their need to reevaluate their status.
- **Great Metaphors of the Bible:** (1) There are a lot of great metaphors in the Bible, many of which John himself uses. (2) He records Jesus using metaphors like “(a) I am vine. You are the branches. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the good shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep.” (3) There is no greater metaphor in 1 John than the metaphor of walking in the light and walking in the darkness. He uses this metaphor to teach his audience the difference between those who walk in obedience to what God commands vs those who walk in disobedience to what God commands.
- **Therefore, Light and Darkness Ties Everything Together in This Passage:** (1) If I believe in the Jesus the apostles confessed, I will walk in the light by obeying what he commands. In doing so, I will equally sin less even though I’m sinless and I will love more because he first loved me. (2) On the other hand, if I don’t believe in the Jesus the apostles and instead believe in a version of Jesus, I want to be true, I will walk in darkness by disobeying what he commands. I will therefore sin more and love less because my whole concept of love isn’t based on the fact that he first loved me.
- **App:** Light is truth. It’s bright. It heals. It reveals. It repeals. It causes you to stand with your chest out, look up to the heavens and say: “Thank you, Jesus. I know I am saved because I’m walking in obedience to your commands. I’m far from perfect, but I’m also not what I used to be. I can love because you first loved me. And I intend to. Darkness, on the other hand, is the opposite.

3. What Do I Do with Sin? (1:8-9)

- **Jeffrey Grabosky:** (1) From January 20 to May 20, 2011, he ran solo and unsupported for over 3,700 miles from Oceanside, California to Smith Point, New York. (2) When he finished, he said: “the toughest part of the run wasn’t traversing the steep slopes of the mountains or crossing hot, dry, barren stretches of desert. The thing that came the closest to defeating me was the sand in my shoes.”
- **Main Idea:** We are all sinners. Sinners saved by grace who walk in blessed assurance know that if we confess our sins, he’s faithful and just to forgive us. Sinners still living in sin as a lifestyle confuse grace with license. That’s why their hearts condemn them.
- **John and Sin:** (1) 3 of the original twelve wrote books in the NT: (a) Matthew; (b) Peter; and (c) John. Of those three, John spoke about sin more than any other. And 1 John is his manifesto about the reality of sin and how we deal with it. (2) There were those he wrote to that didn’t want to hear about their sin. They thought they had somehow graduated from the reality of it. Those are the individuals he addresses in v8 and v10. (3) There were those who said “I know Jesus as my Savior. Therefore, my it doesn’t matter if I sin and continue to do it willingly. Grace is sufficient for me after all.” To those, he writes: “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” (1 Jn 3:5-6). (4) Then there were those who lived on the other side of both of those. They had committed sin and thought that doing so put them outside of the faith. To those, he says: “If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **App:** When it comes to salvation, there are two types of doubters. The first doubts their salvation because they continue to live in sin. To those, John says the doubt should be there because those individuals have made light of the grace of God. The second doubts their salvation because they’ve committed sin and think God won’t let them into heaven because of it. To those, John says live in forgiveness.

4. What Do I Do with Love (4:19-21)

- **In Your House Somewhere:** (1) There is a picture or a quilt with these words on it: “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give my body to the flames, but I do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast.
- **Main Idea:** Love is the most dominant test of 1 John. Those who walk in assurance love because he first loved us. But those who sing blessed assurance with hatred and animosity in their hearts have every reason to question their blessed assurance.
- **The Reason, Reality, and Requirement:** (1) 4:19-21 is a beautiful section in 1 John because these verses contain a three-fold concept of the type of love that Jesus requires. It’s three-fold because 3 is the number for completeness. (2) He says: (a) Love has a Reason – We love because he first loved us. (b) Love has a Reality – Who does not “love” their brother cannot love God. You can’t do it. The love of God and neighbor are wed together throughout the Scriptures. (c) Love has a Command – Anyone who loves God must love their neighbor. John doesn’t say “should” to imply an ideal or standard. He says must. That means the ideal and standard has become the command: “Surely, I tell you the truth, you must. You must today. You must tomorrow. You must always.
- **App:** A car may look great in a showroom, but you really don’t know how it performs until you take it out for a driver. That’s where the rubber meets the road. What we believe, where we walk, what we do with sin, and what we do with love is where that rubber of following Jesus meets the road in all of our lives.