

# CHURCH HISTORY LITERACY

## *Chapter 15 Part 2*

### St. Augustine – Part 2

For nearly four decades, I have enjoyed teaching classes on Sunday morning. I have taught on more subjects than I can count, mainly in four churches. One of those early churches was called the Bering Drive church of Christ. Our pulpit minister was a marvelous preacher named Bill Love.

Unlike the classes I've been teaching for the last 15 plus years at Champion Forest Baptist Church, I did not do a written handout in those classes at Bering Drive. I thought about it. In fact, at one point I decided to write a book and use the book for teaching.

I talked to Bill about it over lunch one day. He looked at me and chuckled. He said, "Oh, I'd advise you to wait a few years on that!" I asked why, and he told me, "I think you will likely change your views on that subject some over time, and you may not want what you might write today to be out there!"

I don't know if I was ready to concede to what Bill thought, or if I was just so busy I found an excuse not to write convenient. Either way, I didn't write my book, nor did I write handouts. I changed that policy about 15 years ago and started writing for this class.

Now I can readily admit, Bill was right. My views have grown and morphed a good bit since my mid-20's, and what I write today is different in many respects. I know that in part, because several of my views today are modified from what they were even when I began writing for this class! I have learned more, thought more, grown more, and studied more. This has changed my perspective in many ways.

I like looking back on what I have written. In many ways, it has stood the test of time and I'm not sure I would change it if I could. But in other ways, it is a reflection of a place I was, and reminiscent of the journey that brought me where I am today.

This is not true on core gospel fundamentals. But it is true on many nuances of Scripture, on historical interpretations and theological understandings, and on points of emphasis. I wonder what I will think if I get to read this again 20 years hence.

With this in mind, it is fun to read Augustine. One cannot easily give a full assessment of Augustine's views on certain theological issues. Because he wrote so much for so long, some matters in Augustine's writings almost seem to contradict each other. This is not surprising. Over the decades, as Augustine's viewpoints matured and he faced different challenges, growth and change occurred. This is magnified by the social, cultural, and political upheavals occurring during his active ministry and writing, the most notable being the sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410.

The net effect, however, is that many who write about Augustine, or who seek his support for various views, are often able to find what they want/need even though the support may not be that strong in the balance of his work!

Since this is not a graduate course on Augustine but one seeking literacy on the basic concepts of his thought, we do not need to fret much over these differences beyond simply noting they exist.

Last week, we covered the basics of St. Augustine's life as revealed in his autobiography (of sorts), the *Confessions*. This week, we will spend our time studying core principles of Augustine's theology. Augustine so influenced theology that theologians have given the name "Augustinianism" to concepts associated with him.

Augustine had much to say over many theological topics. His thought was significant to the church's understanding of faith and reason, core philosophy, the Trinity, Christology,<sup>1</sup> interpretation of scripture, how we come by knowledge, and other things. We will address three areas of Augustine's thought which, according to theologian Roger Olson, are core areas where Augustine affected the development of Christian theology: (1) good and evil, (2) the Church and its sacraments, and (3) grace and free will.<sup>2</sup>

## **AUGUSTINE ON GOOD AND EVIL**

Before we explore Augustine's views on this subject, we ought to put the issues he faced into a focus that makes sense to us. A few questions seem in order!

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<sup>1</sup> One of Augustine's great statements about Christ cannot be passed over! Augustine wrote, "Out of a certain compassion for the masses God Most High bent down and subjected the authority of the divine intellect even to the human body itself" to redeem mankind. *Answer to the Skeptics*, iii, 19, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, (Apollos 1999), Chapter 17.

First, an easy one: Who made the good things in the world? Who is the creator of good? Well, the answer seems as obvious to us as it did to those in Augustine's age – "God." No believer has had problems answering that one. The next question is the perplexing one: Who made evil? Did God??? Did our creator God make evil people, make sin, and make sinners?

Those questions plagued the early church, and continue to bother certain folks in the church today! The questions fed the Gnostic philosophies as well as other philosophies closely associated with Gnosticism. Last week, for example, we discussed that Augustine was involved in a cult for much of his early adulthood. That cult was called "Manichaeism." The cult sought an intellectual answer to the questions on the origination of evil.

Manichaeism taught that God made all good things, but God could never make anything evil. To suggest that God was the creator or source of sin and evil seemed, in their eyes, to be a great affront to God. Even today, many say or think, "I cannot believe in a Christian God who would create a world or people who have evil and sin."

In response to these questions, Manichaeism taught that God did in fact make all that is good. But, that which is evil and sinful was made by an evil force or being. We might word it this way – God made the good things in the world, but Satan made the evil. God and Satan are in a cosmic fight where God's peace and love, the things of the spirit, are in struggle against Satan's created evil and hatred. In an almost Gnostic fashion, the Manicheans believed that God's good things were the unseen spiritual things while the evil was material-based and worldly.

Like no other in his age, Augustine was the one best positioned to stamp out this cult movement. The movement claimed intellectual superiority over Christianity, and yet Augustine was more brilliant and intellectual than any in the movement. Although Augustine had been a Manichaean disciple for years, he left Manichaeism behind *before he became a Christian* because Manichaeism did not offer adequate answers to his intellectual challenges and questions.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>3</sup> The ultimate question that the Manicheans were unable to answer for Augustine involved the cosmic battle of good and evil. If there was a God who was incorruptible and good, and if there was an evil principle that wanted to engage God in this cosmic fight (our existence on earth being the battle ground), then why did God choose to engage in the battle? If God did so for fear he would lose or get injured by the evil principle, then God was not truly incorruptible (which God needed to be to justify the whole belief system in the first place!). The corollary issue was: if God could not be injured, then logically, God had no reason to engage in battle and allow "particles of goodness" to be captured by the evil force. Either way, there is no satisfactory answer for Augustine and the religion fell apart on logical grounds (*Confessions*, vii, 2,3).

because of his time spent as a teacher within the Manichaean religion, Augustine had credibility when he spoke of it and its problems.

So, we find in writings by Augustine what not only brought about the demise of a major cult, but also brought a theological understanding and terminology about the origin of evil that would ultimately become a basic tenet in most all Christian doctrines and dogmas.

Augustine found his answers in his adaptations of the Neo-Platonic Greek philosophy circulating still in his day. Much like Origen (who we studied a number of lessons back), Augustine thought it appropriate to use the truths he could glean from secular philosophy and spiritualize them. This was the equivalent of the Jews “plundering the Egyptians” as they were leaving in the exodus.

Neo-Platonism taught that material existence and goodness were not two dueling forces, but rather both parts of a whole. As Augustine saw it, God created only good and all good. The evil we observe was never created. It was/is merely a corruption of the good God created.

Although Augustine did not have 21<sup>st</sup> century medical knowledge, we can use it to analogize as a way of explaining Augustine’s view. We might think of cancer. Cancer cells are not the normal cells of a body. Rather, they are the defective corruption of cells that otherwise would be normal. In this analogy, evil was never made by God, Satan or anyone else. God made good and when that good is corrupted, it becomes what we call “evil.”

Of course, the next logical question becomes, “How can God make something good that can become corrupted? If it can become corrupted, then was it ever really “good” to begin with?

To answer this question, Augustine put forward several arguments. Most notable, Augustine set forward his belief that God himself alone is perfect.<sup>4</sup> God made man and the earth and pronounced it “good,” not “perfect.” Anything created, Augustine reasoned, by definition must be less perfect than that which always existed. Hence, God’s nature could never be subject to change or corruption, but not so for those things created!

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<sup>4</sup> In this sense, Augustine meant God in the fullness of the Trinity. Augustine was an absolute Trinitarian, as you would expect from a disciple of Ambrose. About the Trinity, Augustine was reputed to have commented on the mysterious nature of the Trinity saying, “If you deny it you will lose your salvation, but if you try to understand it you will lose your mind!” Notwithstanding that comment, we do find reams of Augustine’s writings on the Trinity!

A second argument Augustine used centered on man possessing the gift of freedom. Free will, by definition, means man has a choice to do a higher good or a lesser good. Inherent in this choosing ability is the option of corrupting good. In this sense, Augustine saw real evil not as the action itself. Any action could be good if done right with right motives. The real evil or corruption is the evil “will” which makes choices and corrupts what otherwise could be good. In this sense, eating is something God gave us as a good thing. Choosing to eat beyond good sense is gluttony. That is sin, but the evil is the choice to overeat, not the inherent eating.

When asked about the cause of human evil or perversity, Augustine saw three potential answers: (1) man; (2) something else; or (3) nothing. Augustine then sets forward his arguments on why the answer is “nothing.” Augustine immediately eliminates God from the possible cause affirming, “God is the cause of good.” If the cause is believed to be man, then Augustine asserts that no one could force man to be perverse, lest something be more powerful than God. Nor could man be persuaded to evil by another man, because that just sets up the issue of why the persuader was evil.<sup>5</sup> Augustine leaves the viable option that nothing created evil.

This makes sense to us if we think of evil not as a creation, but a disturbance of creation, or a lack of goodness. Augustine was writing in Latin, and to some degree we have to work to understand the words as he meant them. If we follow the translation of David Mosher, we get close to what Augustine asserted.

Everything which exists is not without some form. But where there is form, there necessarily is measure, and measure is something good. Absolute evil, therefore, has no measure, for it lacks all good whatever. It thus does not exist, for it is embraced by no form, and the whole meaning of evil is derived from the privation of form.<sup>6</sup>

Mosher adds in footnotes that he used the word “measure” to translate the Latin *modus*. We can think of it as a capacity to determine a “form.” To put Augustine into a more colloquial translation, we might say that everything – visible or invisible—has some definite essence that makes it what it is. Evil, however, is

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<sup>5</sup> Augustine, 83 *Questions*, no. 4. From 388 (in Italy) to 396 (in North Africa), Augustine was often asked questions which he answered, reducing those answers to writing. Later in life, Augustine oversaw gathering those questions and answers into a book. Later in life, Augustine revisited those answers, editing where he thought important to do so. This gives us some idea that answers were formulated early, but edited for growth in Augustine’s maturing process.

<sup>6</sup> Mosher, David, *The Father of the Church: Saint Augustine – Eighty-Three Different Questions* (CUA Press 1977), at 39.

really just an absence of good. Pure evil is what is left when all good is stripped from something or someone.

Augustine did not claim that full understanding of this issue was ours to have. Instead, he would speak of the “mystery of iniquity.” Like the mystery of the Trinity, that did not keep Augustine from writing on it a good bit!

Olson summarizes this Augustinian point well:

Augustine...was able to provide certain models for Christian thinking about God, creation, sin and evil that have become deeply ingrained in at least Western Christian thought ever since. God is infinite, absolutely omnipotent, perfectly spiritual and free from every defect.... But evil as the privation of the good is inevitably a possibility in any creation and especially in one that includes morally free and responsible created agents such as angels and human beings.<sup>7</sup>

This makes sense if we see man as free to choose good or free not to choose good (which as an absence of “good” leaves man choosing what we call “evil.”

Once Augustine was baptized, he radically changed his life, including leaving his profession of a rhetorician. He opted for life as an ascetic, believing it to be the proper hallmark of a Christian. He was not an ascetic because of the Manichaean concern that the world was evil. Instead, he believed that asceticism was overcoming the world and its sinful desires that feed the flesh.<sup>8</sup>

## **AUGUSTINE ON THE CHURCH AND ITS SACRAMENTS**

After Augustine’s baptism in 387, he planned to return to Africa with his mother. While waiting in the port city of Ostia (the port outside of Rome), his mother Monica died. Augustine put off his return to Africa for about a year, while he lived a rather solitary life in Rome, frequenting various monastic communities. It was in this time that Augustine picked up his pen and began to write in support of the church and against various other groups, including the Manichaean cult. For Augustine, the church was “the true mother of all Christians” embracing both the

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<sup>7</sup> Olson at 264.

<sup>8</sup> Moreschini, Claudio and Norelli, Enrico, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature, a Literary History*, (Hendrickson 2005), Vol. 2, at 369.

Old and New Testaments.<sup>9</sup> In 388, Augustine returned to Africa, remaining there until the end of his life. Augustine continued to live in poverty, dedicating himself to the church in service, study, writing and prayer.

The Manichaean cult was not the only problem facing Bishop Augustine and his flock in the early 400's. The Donatist movement was another (perhaps even stronger) issue facing the church in North Africa. Donatism's origins came from the days of religious persecution and martyrdom by the state some 100 years earlier. A number of church leaders recanted their faith in the face of persecution and possible death. Then, along came the decrees of Constantine that "legalized" and legitimized the Christian faith. Afterwards, many of the church leaders who had recanted in the face of persecution reclaimed their faith publicly. The big issue became whether those who had denied faith could reassume priestly and pastoral positions in the church.

The Donatists believed that those who had recanted their faith or aided the Romans in persecuting the church were not valid Bishops. Similarly, the lineage of Bishops and church leaders ordained by these defective Bishops was also tainted and illegitimate. So, the church and its authority structure were considered impure and so was its teaching. Moreschini and Norelli believe that the Donatist movement "quickly became the Christian majority in Africa."<sup>10</sup>

Augustine went after the Donatists full force, and in doing so shaped a number of church views for the future! Augustine would never dispute that the church had both good and evil in it, for it was full of fallen people. Still, Augustine considered that there was only one church, whether mankind chooses to acknowledge it or not. Augustine argued that the Donatists were walking in a sin of division destroying the unity of the church. Augustine composed a hymn (chant) that set out the errors in the Donatist movement, making it as easy to memorize as he was able. The hymn was memorized by all sorts of folks, and is one of several mechanisms Augustine used to help dismantle the Donatist majority. He engaged in public debates, wrote volumes of books, preached sermons, and used some coercive powers that have left him subject to criticism (using the police to compel people to confess the Catholic faith.) Augustine also worked to apply the old Roman laws of heresy that came about under Theodosius to label Donatists as heretics.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, at 370.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, at 380.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, at 392.

Augustine was not at the time a Bishop, and seems to have strenuously avoided going to places that had open sees (i.e., needed a Bishop). Augustine was afraid that the populace would appoint him Bishop. In spite of Augustine's efforts in this regard, while he was in Hippo (modern day Annaba, Algeria), the elderly priest Valerius was a native Greek speaker. As such, he was ill fit to argue in Latin against the Donatists. He used Augustine for help in that and also in preaching Latin sermons. In 391, Valerius decided he needed a priest to help, and the local Christian populace proposed Augustine by popular acclamation. Despite his best efforts, Augustine thus found himself in the priesthood. Four years later, Augustine was elevated to a co-Bishop role with Valerius.<sup>12</sup>

Because Donatists believed that the church leaders were tainted, they argued that baptisms and communion given by the illegitimate leaders were equally illegitimate. In response to this belief, Augustine argued that the power of the sacraments (baptism<sup>13</sup> and the Lord's Supper) was in the elements themselves, not the priest administering the elements. The meaning of the sacrament was that God met man there, not that the priest brought God and man together. The key for Augustine was that the Bishop giving the elements be appointed in proper apostolic succession. In other words, the Apostles had chosen their successors as leaders. Those successors then chose the ones to follow them, etc.

### **AUGUSTINE – GRACE AND FREE WILL**

A monk from Britain named Pelagius came to Rome around 405 A.D. At that point, Christianity was a morally different religion than in the times when Christianity was illegal. When you could get killed for being a Christian, those who were of faith lived lives of deep devotion and moral character. Once Christianity became not only legal, not only socially acceptable, but something that even helped further your economic and political life, those of the faith included many whose lifestyle did not reflect great piety or devotion.

Such was the situation when Pelagius came to Rome. He found folks living in great obvious sin without any great care about it! Pelagius was rightfully horrified. After looking into the situation a bit deeper, Pelagius decided that the cause for the moral disregard for holiness was in large part because of Augustine!

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<sup>12</sup> Moreschini, at 373, 377.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine believed that the waters of baptism were regeneration waters. That is, in baptism, God washed away guilt of the original sin with which we are born. Without baptism, Augustine believed there could be no forgiveness of sins. Even infants who died without baptism were to suffer either Hell or at best "Limbo." Limbo was considered a place of neither heaven nor hell that would hold those who were unregenerated, yet without real personal guilt.

Pelagius came across a prayer of Augustine that Pelagius saw as a core cause. The prayer was one expressing hope in God's mercy because God was the reason we can abstain from sin. Without God, we have no hope of purity or holiness.

Pelagius was upset! He saw Augustine as teaching that, absent God's aid, man will sin. Pelagius believed that left people sinning while they waited for God to give them the gift of abstaining!

Pelagius went to work. He wrote two books on the subject attacking the "view" of Augustine. Pelagius taught that man was born morally pure. He rejected the doctrine of "original sin." For Pelagius, it was simply a matter of choice. People could choose to be righteous and free of sin or people could choose to sin. Pelagius was never too clear on the need for God's grace in the salvation process. Pelagius believed that one was baptized into a right relationship with God, but technically, the real need of grace to Pelagius was the "grace" or "gift" of Scripture. At that point, mankind should be able to take Scripture and choose to live righteously. In fact, Pelagius even believed that one could live a perfect life, never sinning in any degree. He would add that no one had actually done that except Jesus, but theoretically, it *could* be done.

Not surprisingly, Pelagius was no fan of infant baptism. Because children were born without the taint of original sin, there was no need for baptism.

Augustine went after Pelagius for a long time! Augustine wrote against his teachings publishing books from 412 up through 429 (which was several years *after* Pelagius died). Augustine taught the doctrine of original sin. In Augustine's understanding, Adam's sin corrupted all of Adam's offspring. Anyone conceived of man and woman would have the same sinful nature as Adam after the fall from Eden.<sup>14</sup> The sin of Adam and Eve tainted all their offspring. This meant that everyone was guilty and rightfully condemned before God. Augustine relied heavily on Paul's letter to the Romans for his teaching on this point.

Augustine taught that if Pelagius was right, if man could live without sin, then Christ died for nothing. Augustine also taught that absent the sacrament of Christ's blood, man could neither be redeemed nor justified from God's righteous wrath.

The conclusion Augustine ultimately drew from his beliefs centered on the absolute necessity for the intervention of God in his grace and sovereignty to save

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<sup>14</sup> This was one reason Augustine taught that Jesus must have had a virgin birth. Augustine believed that since Jesus' birth was not from the union of a man and woman, Jesus could be born without the original sin of Adam and Eve.

those whom God chose. Augustine was, at least by the time of his last writings, teaching that God's selection was the only way mankind could turn from his sinful nature and find salvation. The saved man still has working within him this law of sin (Rom. 5:12). Augustine just understood the sins were forgiven!

If we were to ask Augustine why some people are saved and why others are left to hell's condemnation, Augustine would ultimately refer to the mystery and secrets of God that we do not know or understand. These were what he called God's "hidden determinations."

Augustine's views on this issue were not as absolute in his earlier life as they were later in life. When Augustine wrote his commentary on Romans, he would assert the predestination principle but with a free will twist! Augustine argued that God made the choice of who would believe, but that choice was made based on God's foreknowledge of those he foreknew *would* believe.<sup>15</sup> In his responses to questions by other Christians, which were assimilated from notes of Augustine written out over an extended time period during his ministry after returning to Africa, Augustine readily asserted that "free will" was God's "fitting and appropriate gift for man."<sup>16</sup>

Later, Augustine wrote *The Predestination of the Saints* (around 428-429), answering a man's questions on some passages in Romans. Then, Augustine would write that we really have nothing of our own to boast over, not even the faith we have.

Regardless of how we view Augustine's analysis of predestination and free will, we must be impressed with the language and force of Augustine's understanding of God's grace. Augustine would write, "The human race lies ill, not with diseases of the body, but with sin.... To heal this huge patient the omnipotent physician descended from heaven. He lowered himself to mortal flesh, as if to the bedside of ailing humanity."<sup>17</sup>

Calling Christ the Good Samaritan, Augustine wrote, "The passing Samaritan did not scorn us; he cared for us, put us on his animal, and on his own flesh brought us to the inn, that is, the Church."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *An Explanation of Some Propositions From the Letter to the Romans* (written around 394-395) 52.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *83 Questions*, no. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *The Soliloquies*, 87, 9, 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Homilies on the Psalms*, 101, s. ii, 11.

## CONCLUSION

There is much more to write about Augustine. The African population increased notably after the sacking of Rome in 410. The old debate raged again whether this was judgment of the “gods” for Rome going Christian. Even the Christians were upset, believing with Constantine that the Christianity ensured Rome’s safety. After all, who can conquer God? Augustine always pointed his followers to see God and his eternal kingdom as their fatherland protected by God’s might.

Augustine died in 430 while the political and societal upheavals continued to rage. The Vandals had invaded Africa by that point and had laid siege to Hippo. Augustine died meditating on the penitential Psalms, working till the end to see that the church and its Scriptures were protected as best he could.

### POINTS FOR HOME:

1. “*God is light; in him is no darkness at all*” (1 Jn 1:5).

For some, light and darkness help us understand Augustine’s views on evil. God is light, and in him is no darkness. God doesn’t make darkness. Darkness is simply where there is no light.

In a similar way, Augustine saw God as good, and evil as an absence of good. It is not created, any more than darkness is. It has no form, much as darkness has none. It is simply where light has been removed.

May we walk not only in God’s light, but in his goodness. For as John added in the next verse, “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth” (1 Jn 1:6).

2. “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Christianity is not a solo project. There was an ancient Greek motto, εἰς ἄνθρωπον οὐδεὶς ἄνθρωπος (*eis aner oudeis aner*) meaning “one man is no man.” We are called into fellowship and are part of the *body* of Christ. Each one of us is accountable for himself before God and has a one-on-one

relationship with him, but we are also part of a much larger body—that of all the saints. That is the church and the kingdom of God. We are to treasure it, work for it, and seek to make it all it can be for the Father!

3. *“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...”* (Eph. 2:1-2).

Sin does not creep into us at some various points of failure. We are not merely sick with sins. Paul says we are DEAD in our trespasses. Dead means we need a new LIFE! Augustine understood that there is willful sin, but also a sinful condition. The original sin of Adam taints all his offspring. That is the taint that Jesus died to remove, and the taint he is constantly scrubbing from us. May we take sin as seriously as God, and seek to walk in the purity of his holiness!

## HOME WORK

To recap, we are memorizing 1 John this year in the English Standard Version. That amounts to two verses a week. To be current, we need to have memorized 1 John 1:1-3:3. This week we add 1 John 3:4-5. We provide all verses below for your help!

**1John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

**1:5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**1John 2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4**Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **7** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

**12** I am writing to you, little children,  
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

**13** I am writing to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children,  
because you know the Father.

**14** I write to you, fathers,  
because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I write to you, young men,  
because 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, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**18** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. **20** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **21** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **24** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

**26** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **27** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. **28** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **29** you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

**1John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.