



Galatians & 1 John

Path 6: Clarifying and Defending the Gospel

Galatians & 1 John

Supplemental Reading:

“From Jerusalem to Irian Jay: A
Biographical History of Christian
Missions”

by Ruth Tucker

Memory Verses:

Gal. 2:20, Gal. 5:22-23,
Gal. 6:14, 1 John 2:16

Outside The Journey:

Consider going on a mission trip

Disciple-makers,

The Gospel Journey is about studying the Word of God, led by the Spirit of God, in a discipleship relationship, to grow in the grace of the Gospel. The Field Guide is NOT to be taught as a Bible Study or even as the primary curriculum for the Gospel Journey. The curriculum is the Word of God, and we want there to be great freedom for those in a group to discuss what the Holy Spirit has been revealing to them in their study that week. We do not want the discussion to be limited to the content covered in the Field Guide.

With that being said, the Field Guide is an effort to prepare you for significant theological terms, concepts, and themes that will likely arise in the course of discussion in a given week of reading. Thus, we encourage you to read over the content we have chosen to include in the Field Guide a couple times before your weekly discussion, so that you are able to explain these terms, concepts, and themes faithfully and clearly as they come up. If they do not come up naturally, we'd encourage you to bring them up at some point in the discussion, as we believe they are things that a mature and equipped disciple of Christ needs to understand.

Again, our hope is that far more than what is covered in the Field Guide be brought up in discussion each week, and that this tool might prepare you to explain foundational Gospel terms, concepts, and themes found in each week's reading. Ultimately the Gospel Journey is about studying the Word of God, led by the Spirit of God, in a discipleship relationship, in order to grow in the grace of the Gospel. May your journey be blessed!

The Harvest Team

Intro to Galatians

Galatians is a letter written by the apostle Paul to a group of churches most likely located in modern day Turkey. Paul writes with a lot of emotion and urgency as he must fight against false teachers who are teaching that you must be circumcised in order to have eternal life. They are teaching that faith in Christ alone is not enough for one to be accepted by God, but that human works must also be added to what Christ has done. Paul knows that a false gospel is one that enslaves instead of bringing freedom, and he will expend himself in this letter calling these churches back to the truth.

Historical Content

Author: Paul

Date: Approx. AD 48

Purpose and Occasion: Paul is writing to the Galatian churches because some of them are falling prey to false teachers who are saying that you must be circumcised to be saved. The theme of their false teaching is saying that salvation by grace through faith is not enough and that human works must be added to what Christ has already done.

Gospel from God (1:1–5)

Paul begins his letter to the Galatian churches with striking intensity. Paul is responding to false teachers who are calling into question his authority as an apostle and furthermore, they are calling into question the truth of the gospel that Paul has given his life to proclaim. This is an emotional letter. Paul writes with urgency and passion as perversions of the gospel leave no room for patient, soft responses.

That said, the introductory lines of Galatians are of note not simply because of what they say but also because of what Paul has left out. Paul's letters usually include a thanksgiving in the introduction (Paul even offers thanksgiving for the Corinthian church which was riddled with sexual impurity, lawsuits, and disorderly worship), but we do not find one here. There is no time. The errors in Galatia are too grave because they attack the heart of the gospel itself. Paul must first correct the core of the faith before he can move on to address specific areas of sin.

(See also: 2 Corinthians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 2:10 and Hebrews 1:2)

Distorted Gospel (1:6)

Verse 6 is loaded with emotion as Paul states that he is left in wonder and amazement that the people he preached to, and loved so dearly,

have so quickly departed from the truth. The gospel is supposed to be “good news”, but when it is distorted it is emptied of its goodness and becomes a terrifying message of salvation by works. How could these believers leave the faith? How could they depart from the gospel of Christ’s grace? The fact is, sometimes departing from the Gospel is a more subtle and normal drift than we might think. Anytime we believe our actions, prayers, words, Bible reading, discipleship, etc.. earns us more favor and love from God then we are believing a false gospel. The person and work of Christ can never be improved upon and the salvation he accomplished for us is offered freely to all. (See also: Galatians 3:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 11:4-6)

One True Gospel (1:6-10)

As noted above, the term “gospel” means good news, but it is interesting to note that this is not originally a Christian term. “Gospel” was a military term and it was the good news that the King had conquered the enemy and the people could now rest peacefully. Our King, Jesus, defeated our enemies of sin and death and now we can rest peacefully in Him. This is the message of the Gospel that Paul is fighting for the Galatians to once again embrace. Paul says that if ANYONE or ANYTHING ever preaches a gospel contrary to the one they learned from him then let those false teachers be condemned

for eternity. That is strong language for our 21st century sensibilities, but we would do well to carry such a strong conviction into our culture and context. We cannot get the person of Jesus and the gospel message wrong! Eternity is at stake.

(See also: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and John 3:16)

Former Life (1:11-24)

Testimonies are effective tools when proclaiming the gospel, and Paul's testimony is a shining example of God's power to transform lives.

However, it is easy to believe that some testimonies are "better" or more powerful than others but that only happens when the focus of a testimony is more on the sins of the person than on the grace and glory of Christ. We are amazed and awed when we hear triumphant stories of someone being saved out of their addiction to drugs or out of their former commitment to atheism, but these stories are no less miraculous than the person who grew up in church but had lived a life of self-righteous religiosity. ALL OF US are equally in need of the grace of God because ALL OF US were equally separated from God regardless of our specific sins. All of our testimonies are stories of undeserved grace, and all of our testimonies should end with "to God be the glory."

(See also: Galatians 2:20, Ezekiel 36:25-27, 1 Timothy 1:13-14 and Ephesians 4:22-24)

The Gospel + Nothing (2:1-10)

Paul recaptures some of his story here to let the Galatian church know of his personal experience with the same issue they are battling. After coming to faith, Paul had been confronted by “false brothers” (verse 4) who were trying to force his co-laborer, Titus, to be circumcised and force Paul to observe other Jewish laws in order for them to be truly saved. Paul makes it clear that he stood against this false teaching and by doing so; he preserved the truth of the gospel and is pleading for the Galatian church to do the same.

What a joyful reminder it is to know that we can never improve upon the work of Christ and that we do not have to! Jesus’ work on the cross is perfect and complete. We get the joy of living in gospel delight instead of the slavery of religious duty.

As an aside, this is a good time to clarify what Paul is and is not saying. Paul is saying that there is no work we can perform that will add to our salvation or earn additional favor from God, but there will be times where we might make strategic cultural choices for the sake of evangelism. Paul writes about this at length in 1 Corinthians 9, and we actually see an example of Timothy being circumcised because of evangelism reasons in Acts 16:1-5.

Remember, these choices are not to participate in the sins of a particular culture, but they are amoral decisions that might help us earn more credibility with our hearers.

(See also: Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 3:5 and Romans 3:24)

Gospel Rebuke (2:11-14)

This passage again has Paul citing personal experience as a way of driving home his point. How serious is Paul about the purity of the gospel? He is serious enough to publicly rebuke one of Jesus' closest companions and one of the preeminent apostles of the church. For Paul, no one is above the truth of God's word and the gospel must be protected at all costs. However, some have mistakenly taken this passage as a license to freely rebuke whomever, whenever, and wherever. We must remember that Paul and Peter had a preexisting relationship (Galatians 1:18), and that Peter's sin is a public assault on the gospel. A sin of this magnitude that is played out in such a visible way demanded an instant, public rebuke from a person Peter already knew and trusted. Lastly, we can overlook the fact that Paul's motivation was not to shame or defame Peter but to love Peter and protect the gospel. Fighting for the truth of God's word in our lives and the lives of others is often times the most loving thing we can do, even when it leads us into uncomfortable confrontations. We need gospel courage to lovingly call out our brothers

and sisters who are in sin, and we need gospel humility to receive rebukes when they are rightly aimed at ourselves.

(See also: Matthew 18:15-20, Matthew 3:8 and Proverbs 12:1)

Justification by Faith (2:15-21)

Justification is a legal term that means to be “declared righteous,” and our ability to be declared righteous before God is not due to our own works but to the work of Christ. The OT law worked really well to show us that we cannot keep all the rules, and thus, the OT law could not make us righteous but only show us how unrighteous we are. Christ’s fulfillment of the Law and his payment of the Law’s penalty sets us free from the demands of the law if our faith is placed in Him. We are no longer under the law nor do we have to fear the penalty of our sins. Paul states it very plainly here that if we could obey the law and become righteous, then Jesus died for nothing. (For a more in depth study of our justification by faith see Romans chapter 4) (See also: Romans 3:21-26 and Colossians 2:11-14)

Continued Growth (3:1-7)

There is a subtle shift that can enter a Christian's life as we get further away from the time of our conversion. Yes, we are saved by faith but we can begin to believe that once we are saved then it is up to our own efforts to "be better Christians." This passage teaches us that our growth in Christ is 100% dependant on grace and the Holy Spirit. Our own rules and regulations may help curb our behavior, but it is only the Holy Spirit that can change and curb the desires and motivations of our heart. The same power of God that rose Jesus from the dead is at work within us and supplies with everything we need to be more and more conformed into the image of Christ. (See also: Ephesians 5:15-17, Romans 8:29 and Titus 2:11-14)

The Promise Fulfilled (3:15-18)

In Genesis 3:15, God promised that a "seed" or singular male would one day come and defeat the work of the serpent. We learn in Genesis 12, 15 and 17 that this person will come from the line of Abraham, and here in Galatians 3, Paul tells us that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise! The promised seed has come into the world and defeated Satan's works of sin and death. (See also: Genesis 3:15 and Colossians 2:15)

The Purpose of the Law (3:19-21)

Does the coming of Christ mean that God's giving of the law never mattered? No. The Law had a HUGE purpose in God's plan of salvation and that was to help us all see how sinful we are so that we would cry out for a savior. When we clearly see what we have done wrong then we can more clearly long for the one who has done everything right. Paul's description of the Law as our "guardian" is key here. Culturally, the guardian is someone who helped restrain the children until they matured into adults. Coming to faith is likened to coming into adulthood. Immature children need rules and regulations to make them act a certain way, but mature sons and daughters only need the taste of grace that comes through faith in Christ. (See also: Romans 9:32, Romans 4:15, Romans 5:20 and Ephesians 2:15)

Abba! Father! (4:1-7)

Entrance into the family of God comes only through faith in Christ, and entrance into this family brings us into the privileged position as sons/daughters of God. The use of the term “Abba” is similar to our term of “Daddy” or “Papa”, and it is used by Paul to help us see that God is deeply personal and cherishes us as his children. The God of the Bible is one that is worshiped as the all-powerful creator while still being prayed to as a loving Father. (See also: Romans 8:14-16, Ephesians 1:3-4, John 1:12-13 and 2 Corinthians 6:18)

No Longer Slaves (4:8-11)

The great tragedy of the Galatian church’s departure from the truth is that it is leading them to choose slavery over freedom.

Now, we have to be careful here because the Scriptures do not believe that rules, regulations, or “laws” are inherently bad things. Jesus himself gives us “laws” to follow in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7). These are good things that help us live holy and righteous lives. The problem comes when the purpose of these rules and regulations are perverted into being our means of salvation or growth in Christ. For example, following Christ’s command not to get angry is a good and right thing when it comes from our desire to please God. However,

following Jesus' command to not get angry can actually enslave you to false living if it is being obeyed for the purpose of earning God's love and salvation.

(See also: Galatians 5:1-6, Philemon 1 and Romans 6:17-18)

The Two Covenants (4:21-31)

This is a peculiar passage that can be confusing, but keep in mind that it is meant to illustrate the big picture of the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant is represented by Hagar and Ishmael (not the child of promise), and the New Covenant is represented by Sarah and Isaac (the child of promise). Departing from the true gospel that Paul is preaching is to once again follow the Law and choose the path of Ishmael into slavery whereas holding fast to the truth is following the path of Isaac into freedom.

(See also: Deuteronomy 27-28, Jeremiah 31:31-40, Hebrews 8:1-7 and Ephesians 2:11-22)

Freedom from Legalism (5:7-12)

A proper definition of legalism is important as we move forward because often times if you call anyone to obedience then they will respond by saying “you’re just being legalistic”. Legalism is anything we do (or tell others to do) because we believe we can earn God’s salvation, love, forgiveness etc... Legalism and obedience ARE NOT the same thing. Two people can be doing the exact same action and one is being legalistic while the other is simply obeying from the heart. Salvation is obtained through faith in Christ. It is never earned nor deserved.

(See also: Matthew 11:28-30, 1 Samuel 16:7 and Ephesians 2:15)

Freedom as Opportunity (5:13-15)

With freedom comes great opportunity, and that is what Paul presents to the Galatian church. The grace of Christ was never meant to be taken cheaply and used as an excuse to indulge our flesh in whatever we desire, rather it sets us free to serve and love each other out of pure motivation instead of the self-centered motive earning something from God. We can love and serve freely because we have been freely served and loved.

(See also: 1 Corinthians 9, Romans 8:18-21 and Galatians 5:1)

Walk by the Spirit (5:16-26)

In the Scriptures, often times “walking” is synonymous with someone’s way of life, and here Paul is urging us to make it our way of life to walk by the Spirit. How do we know when this is happening? It will be seen as the fruits of the Spirit are more and more evidenced in our lives. The longer we walk with Christ, the more patient, gentle, peaceful etc... we should be.

The opposite of walking in the Spirit is the way of life that is dominated by the flesh. Examples of those types of lives are also seen in this passage, and we must remember that someone who is truly born again will not be able to live in sustained, unrepentant sin. Repentance is the great identifier of someone who desires to walk by the Spirit instead of the flesh.
(See also: Romans 8:4, Ephesians 4:1 and Ephesians 5:15-17)

Spirit of Gentleness (6:1-5)

It is inevitable that brothers and sisters in Christ will fall into sin, and it is our job as loving family members to help them be brought back to repentance and restoration. When Paul says to do so with a “spirit of gentleness” it is similar language to how a doctor would mend a broken bone. Yes, there will be pain involved but not more than is necessary. This passage also notes that we are to only watch over the lives of others, but we are to also keep watch over ourselves. It is oftentimes much easier to see the sins of someone else while being blind to our own. (See also: Ephesians 4:2 and 2 Timothy 2:25)

Sowing and Reaping (6:6-10)

In this passage, Paul returns to an earlier theme of how Christians can use their freedom to either serve others or serve their flesh while also stressing the need to love “the household of faith.” This is a particularly good word for us today in the midst of the “missional movement.” As ambassadors of the gospel, we should always be the beautiful feet that bring the good news to our neighborhoods, workplaces, etc..., but at times we can fall victim to thinking that all of our efforts should be towards non-Christians. This passage reminds us that we are called to love and cherish fellow Christians, and oftentimes it

is our deep love for one another what will serve as powerful aid in our evangelism efforts. (See also: Ecclesiastes 11:1 and Matthew 6:26)

A Final Word (6:11-18)

Paul ends this letter summarizing the same truth he has been trumpeting since his introduction. There is only one gospel. It is the gospel of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no work of the flesh that we can do to add to this work. Our lives are based not on what we do but on what Christ has done. Paul is a true apostle who is contending for the true gospel, and he is exhorting the Galatian churches, and us, to spend our lives contending for this great truth as well.

(See also: Ephesians 4:4-6)

Intro to 1 John

1 John is best understood by seeing it through the lens of the purpose statements John gives throughout his letter. There are four primary reasons John gives for writing this letter with the last reason (5:13) being the overarching purpose statement of the book that “you may know you have eternal life,” and this idea of assurance of our salvation in Jesus is a thread sown throughout the book. The other three purposes for John’s writing are to promote joy in his life and the life of other believers (1:4), to prevent Christians from choosing patterns of sin (2:1), and to protect the church from false teachers (2:26). John desires for us to walk in the truth, which, for him, means us believing correctly about Jesus, and living lives that are congruent with that belief. Lastly, God’s attribute of love dominates this letter as John wants us to be continually assured of how great God’s love is towards us, and how that same love should be moving through us to one another.

Historical Content

Author: John, the beloved disciple

Date: It is almost impossible to know the exact date that 1 John was written, but most agree that it was written no later than the 90s AD.

Genre: General Epistle (Letter)

Purpose and Occasion: While it cannot be known for certain, it is likely that John is writing this letter to help Christians battle against an early form of false teaching known as Gnosticism. John knows that any presence of false teaching demands an urgent response, and will repeatedly elevate the truth of Christ and a call to live lives that confirm our true faith in Him.

The Truth About Jesus (1:1-4)

This passage begins by telling us that not only is Jesus God (from the beginning), but that He took on flesh and entered into human history as the God-man. This is the Being that John has seen, witnessed, heard, touched, and known. Jesus is neither a myth nor a religious character created by attention seekers. He is a historical reality, and His arrival and work represent the most crucial years of human history.

The idea of “fellowship” is often used in church contexts, but rarely is it tasted to the depth the biblical authors have in mind. It is not simply spending time with other Christians but rather having all of our hopes and hearts so tightly knit to the hope of Christ that our love for him and each other is the defining aspect of our lives. (See also: Philippians 2:6-11 and John 1:1-14)

True Fellowship (1:5-10)

As previously mentioned, the biblical idea of fellowship goes further than most Christians have experienced, and in this passage John puts forth some characteristics of true fellowship with God and others. In order to have fellowship with God we must not be living in unrepentant sin. In order to have fellowship with others we must not believe we are sinless, but must confess our sins to one another. Notice the direct relationship here. The reality of our fellowship with God is necessarily linked with the reality of our fellowship with each other. This echoes Jesus' teaching that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor.

(See also: Matthew 22:34-40 and John 13:31-35)

Love Based Obedience (2:1-3)

This passage reminds us that sin is serious and that it should not define the life of the Believer. John is clear that we will sin, but one of the assurances we have that our faith is in Christ is that our sin grieves us and leads us to repentance. The other aspect of assurance found in this passage is our obedience. Followers of Christ obey him, and the motive of that obedience is not religious duty bent on earning but joyful delight aimed at the one who gave His life for ours.

(See also: Romans 6:17, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and John 14:21)

Propitiation (2:2)

One way that the term propitiation has been defined is “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath and turns it into favor.” This is one of the great aspects of Christ’s work on our behalf. He absorbed God’s rightful wrath towards sin so that we could experience God’s favor through Christ. Jesus’ sacrifice satisfied the wrath of God so that we do not have to fear, or experience, it. The phrase “but also for the whole world” has led some to believe that his passage states that all people will be saved, but Scripture teaches that salvation comes through faith and repentance. This passage is teaching that Jesus’ sacrifice is

available to the whole world but the whole world will not embrace it. (See Romans 3:25 for more on propitiation)
(See also: Romans 3:25 and Romans 5:9-11)

Do Not Love the World (2:15-17)

This passage is not promoting hatred of creation but rather the call for the Christian's life to be countercultural. Where the world says we should seek our own glory, the Christian lays down his/her life for the glory of God. Where the world seeks revenge, the Christian pursues forgiveness. Where the world says this life is all we have so consume as much material wealth as you can, the Christian knows that this life is but a shadow of the greater life that is to come. (See also: John 17:16, John 15:19 and John 12:26)

Antichrist/antichrists (2:18,22; 4:3)

In John's letter, an "antichrist" is anyone that denies the truth about Jesus. John sees these people as emissaries of the evil one as they carry and spread his anti-gospel message and all that it implies.

(See also: 1 John 2:22 and 1 John 4:3)

The Power to Persevere (2:15-17)

This passage reminds us that there will always be cultural pressure points that will test our resolve to continue in the faith. We will witness lots of people who are seemingly sold out to Jesus, yet overtime their faith will fade and their departure from Christ will inevitably follow. John does not want this to surprise us, nor does he want it to be true of us. He is calling us to continue in the truth for all of our days, and our ability to do so is found in the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Through his Spirit, God has given all of us the power to reject lies, cling to the truth, and persevere until the end.

(See also: Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 1:11-12, Revelation 3:10 and James 1:12)

Children of God (3:1-3)

One of the great truths of the gospel is that we have been adopted into the family of God. It is popular now for politicians or pundits to say that “all people are God’s children”, but that is not biblically true. All people are created in the image of God, but only those who respond to the work of Christ with faith and repentance are members of God’s family. Through the work of Christ, and because of the Father’s great love, God has made a way for lost and wandering rebels to come home as fully loved children. (See also: Ephesians 1:3-4, Galatians 4:1-7, John 1:12)

Living As God’s Children (3:4-10)

In this section of his letter, John is stressing that one of the ways you can have assurance that you are IN CHRIST is that you practice righteousness instead of evil. To “practice” righteousness means that the overall direction and desire of our life is to obey and please God. To “practice” evil means that someone is living in unrepentant sin with no desire to change. If someone claims to be a Christian but is comfortable living in their sin without repenting then such a person is self-deceived and should not be assured of their salvation. (See also: Romans 6:1-14 and Romans 8:1-8)

Called to Love One Another(3:11-18)

This passage stresses the necessity of Christian love for one another. This is another avenue of assurance. We are called to love the family of God, and if we find ourselves having no desire or tangible expressions of love for our brothers and sisters in the faith then it follows that we should not be assured of our love for God. The love of people and the love of God are inseparable in Scripture. If we hate others then the reality is that we hate God as well. Lastly, this passage ends by teaching us that love is not simply an emotion but should be expressed through action. (See also: Matthew 22:34-40, 1 John 1:5-10 and John 13:31-35)

Walking in Confidence (3:19-24)

There are daily realities to our walks with God and our struggle with sin is one of them. When we sin, our hearts “condemn us” by allowing us to feel the guilt of what we have done. In that moment, we should be reminded that Christ has forgiven us and empowered us to have victory over that sin through the Holy Spirit. This truth allows us to keep approaching God in prayer and daily living with the confidence that He is unendingly gracious and will never cast us aside. Our response to this great truth is to live lives of obedience that reflect our love for him. (See also: Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 4:16 and Ephesians 3:12)

Testing the Spirits (4:1-6)

In this passage, John is highlighting the role of discernment in the life of a believer. We are going to be continually exposed to thoughts and teachings, and it is imperative that we be able to discern what type of “spirit” is behind the truth that is being communicated. Anything that is contrary to God’s word is being influence by a “spirit” whose origin is Satan, and anyone representing these views are considered to be “anti-Christ”. However, when the truth of God’s word is being taught, these truths find their origin in the Holy Spirit and these truths should be received and obeyed. The message of the world is not compatible with the message of Scripture and vice versa.

(See also: Philipians 1:9 and Hebrews 5:14)

Correct Thinking About Christ (4:2,15)

One of the ways to identify false teachers is by discerning what they are saying about Christ. While we cannot fully comprehend the ways of God, we must accept the Biblical teaching that Jesus was truly human and truly divine and that these natures were never confused or separated inside of him. The most important thing about our theology is what we think about Jesus. All other truth is informed by what we think of Him. (See also: Titus 1:9, Titus 2:1 and 1 Timothy 4:6)

Love That Drives Out Fear (4:16-18)

The “fear of God” is depicted as a good thing in the Scriptures, so what is John talking about here? There is a “fear of God” that means to worship, respect, and stand in awe of him and Christians are always supposed to retain this posture. In this passage, John is most likely addressing the fear of God’s wrath and punishment. The believer does not have to live in fear of God’s wrathful condemnation because Christ took that upon himself so we could be set free.

(See also: Romans 8:1 and Matthew 10:29-30)

Obedience and Overcoming (5:1-5)

This passage presents a condensed and brilliant explanation of the Christian life. We are new creations because of Christ, and our new desires and actions should be in line with obeying him. We have overcome, meaning to have victory, over the system and power of this world because of the victory Christ won for us through his life, death, and resurrection. Our victory over the world and its ways are more and more evident as we live lives of love-based obedience to Jesus. (See also: John 16:33, Romans 12:21 and 1 Corinthians 15:57)

His Commandments are not Burdensome (5:3)

Here John is reiterating Jesus' teaching in Matthew 11:30 where he states his yoke is easy and burden is light. This does not mean that it will be easy to follow Christ or that we will not face struggle in fighting sin, rather it means that his commands are not a burden to us because we are not following them as a means of earning salvation. Instead, they are a delight to us because they bring him pleasure and usher us into a more intimate relationship with Him. (See also: Psalms 119:1-9 and Matthew 11:30)

Spirit, Water, and Blood (5:6–8)

Jesus' coming by water is referring to his baptism and his coming by blood is referring to his atoning sacrifice on the cross. It was at Jesus' baptism that the Father declared that Jesus was sent from Him and it was at Calvary that God accepted Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross. This passage teaches us that it is only by the Holy Spirit that someone can come to a true understanding of the person and work of Jesus, and this true understanding involves knowing that Christ was sent by God to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

(See also: Matthew 3:13-17, Matthew 27:45-56 and Matthew 16:17)

Sin That Leads to Death (5:16–17)

It is hard to say with great certainty what John means by "sin that leads to death," but one likely interpretation is that this is a sin that is never repented of. Likewise, sins that are repented of would not be sins that lead to death. "Death" here likely means an ultimate death that would come in eternal separation from God.

(See also: Romans 6:23, Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15)

That You May Know (5:13-21)

This is the section that contains John's overarching purpose of the letter, "that you may know you have eternal life." John does not want Christ-followers living out their days wondering if they really know Jesus. This letter leads us to examine ourselves. Do we love one another? Do we embrace truth and reject error? Do we obey God out of delight instead of duty? John is leading us down a path of self-inventory while assuring us of the love of God and power of the Spirit to work in our lives every step of the way. (See also: 2 Peter 1:10 and Philippians 1:6)

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