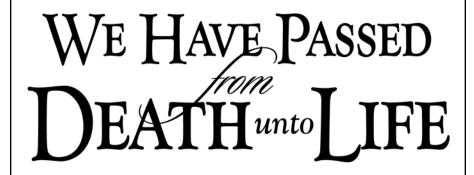
WE HAVE PASSED Morre DEATHunto LIFE

CLARENCE SEXTON



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his book is affectionately dedicated to Dr. and Mrs. J.R. Faulkner. These dear ones have consistently demonstrated the new life we have in Christ. Eternal life is a present possession. We have truly "*passed from death unto life*" in Christ Jesus.

Charence Herton



WE HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE

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Introduction

he book of I John is written to believers. Eternal life is a present possession of every child of God. This eternal life is the life of the Eternal One, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour have truly "*passed from death unto life.*" This book of I John brings us face to face with the evidences of this eternal life.



Ι	The Word of Life10
II	GOD Is Light24
III	WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE
IV	WE KNOW HIM46
V	THE TRUE LIGHT NOW SHINETH
VI	KNOWING GOD66
VII	WE HAVE AN UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE78
VIII	THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL90
IX	We Have Passed From Death Unto Life102
X	THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR112
XI	Perfect Love124
XII	THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER136
XIII	THE TRUE GOD148



CHAPTER ONE

THE WORD OF LIFE





he "Word of Life" is one of the wonderful titles given to our Lord Jesus Christ. The powerful purpose of the Bible is to reveal the Word of Life to us. We find this purpose clearly declared in I John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life,

and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

As the Lord opens for us the first epistle of John, we find how quickly He leads us to the Word of Life. The things we find in this epistle are written to believers who "...believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13). Every believer should take the time to read meaningfully this entire epistle.

The human penman of this epistle is also the human penman of the gospel according to John, II John, III John, and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. He writes in John 1:1, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."* John writes about the beginning. Note



that this is not a start of things; it is a state that God is speaking about. God had no beginning. "In the beginning was the Word." Remember Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created..." But John 1:1 goes further back than the book of Genesis. God takes us to a state in the beginning. God has always existed. He had no beginning; He has no ending; He has no middle.

Our God is eternal. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are co-equal, co-existent, eternally existent. God the Son became a man without ceasing to be God. He is co-existent, coeternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He came to earth robed in flesh—the incarnate God.

In John 1:14 the Bible says, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." When considering the Word of Life, we must remember that God became man without ceasing to be God. The Lord Jesus did not lay aside His deity; He laid aside His glory. He was robed in flesh and came to dwell among us, that He might go to Calvary to bleed and die for our sins. He died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose from the dead. He ascended on high where He intercedes for us. He is alive forevermore.

John wrote a testimony to believers in this first epistle concerning the Word of Life. The Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the *"Word."* We all have thoughts, but thoughts are not known until they are formed into words. Those words express our thoughts. They express who we are and what we believe.

In the Word, the Lord Jesus, we have the very expression of God. God reveals to us who He is in the Person of Jesus Christ. He also reveals His great love for us. The Bible says in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

The Lord Jesus is referred to as the "Word of Life." I trust you know Him—not simply in His humanity, in only a historical sense; but I trust you know Him as your Saviour.

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THE MANIFESTATION OF THE WORD OF LIFE

God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of the Son of God. He became flesh and dwelt among us.

I John 1:1-2 declares,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).

John, the human penman of this book, is the brother of James. John and James were sons of Zebedee. They grew up in Bethsaida near Capernaum along the north of the Galilee. They were fishermen, and among the first called to follow the Lord Jesus.

James, the brother of John, was the first of the martyrs. John was the last of the apostles to die. More than likely, he wrote this epistle from Ephesus, where he served the Lord faithfully. He is testifying, we believe, to a third generation of people who needed a fresh touch from God.

Dr. John Phillips, a noted commentator, has stated that the first generation of Christians has convictions. The second generation has beliefs. The third generation has opinions.



As the apostle John wrote these words to believers under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he gave a personal testimony. He did not give us this account as one would give an account secondhand. He states, "I was there! I heard His voice!"

Christianity must be contemplated in two important aspects: first, in reference to its influence in this world, and secondly in reference to our destiny in the world to come. John remembered the day when someone came to him and told him of the Messiah. He recognized the Lord Jesus Christ for who He is. He said, "I heard Him speak! With these ears I heard His voice! I heard the very voice of God! With these eyes I have seen God in the Person of His Son! I heard Him say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' and with my eyes I beheld the Lord Jesus Christ!"

John not only saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His public ministry performing miracles such as healing blinded eyes, making lame people walk, and raising the dead; he also stood at Calvary alongside Mary when the Lord Jesus spoke from

the cross and said to John, "Behold thy mother" (John 19:27). He saw the Lord Jesus Christ bleeding and dying for our sins, taken down from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb. John was a witness when Christ came forth from the grave, alive forevermore.

Try to imagine the radiant hope in this man's heart as he said, "I have seen the risen Christ! I know He is real! I have examined every aspect of His life in detail. I have looked upon Him. He is everything that He claims to be. He is God! He did have a real body. He came forth bodily out of the grave, alive forevermore! I have handled the Word of Life!"

John says in verse two, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Christ existed before He came to earth. He was with the Father, and He was manifested unto us.

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After the home-going of Mrs. Lee Roberson, Dr. Roberson and I were riding together, headed toward the funeral home. He said, "After all these years in the ministry, I still hold to one truth at a moment like this. I think that my Saviour lived and died and was buried; my Saviour rose from the dead, and He is alive forevermore."

In my reading, I came across a statement by Governor DeWitt Clinton, who lived from 1769-1828 and had a distinguished political career. He was mayor of New York City, governor of the state of New York, and a U.S. Senator during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. He was a driving force behind the twelfth amendment. In a statement reflecting the beliefs of many of the founding fathers, he declared, "Christianity must be contemplated in two important aspects: first, in reference to its influence in this world, and secondly in reference to our destiny in the world to come."

There are people who want us to believe that nearly all the founding fathers of our nation were secularists, people who wanted to keep faith out of all areas of public life. The secularist says, "You can have your Christian faith. Just do not bring it into the marketplace!" Most of our founding fathers, however, were men who understood that our faith was more than something to talk about having in order to get to heaven. It was to make a difference in our daily lives. Without that faith and biblical values, the behavior that faith produced, we could never be the nation that God intended for us to be.

I want you to see this as clearly as possible. If all you want to do is intellectually talk about how God manifested Himself in the Person of His Son and how He revealed Himself to us, then I feel sorry for you. John's life was changed by Jesus Christ. John said, "This is real

The Mord of Life

to me! I have seen Him! I have handled Him! My eyes have beheld Him! My ears have heard His voice!"

This is somewhat the same testimony that Peter gave. II Peter 1:15-18 says,

Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Peter declares, "This is not a cunningly-devised fable that we followed, or a dream that someone had about a Messiah and a Saviour. We were with Him! We know He is true! As a matter of fact, we were with Him on that holy mount when He was transfigured into the glorious likeness that He shall come in someday. We beheld the glory of God! We saw Him! We heard God speak! No man can take that from us!"

Many people might say, "Well, if we could have been there and heard that, then we could speak with this same kind of assurance." On the contrary, the Bible says in II Peter 1:19-21,

> We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time

The Mord of Life

by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

We have a more sure word of prophecy than someone testifying about what he saw! Peter said, "This is not just a man's testimony; we have a more sure word of prophecy than that! God has recorded in His Word for us that these things are true."

Has God made Himself known to you? Do you truly know Him? Some of you on occasion talk about Him when you are called upon to do so. Some of you give answers to please people who question you. Some of you give answers because that is what you know others want to hear. But do you truly know Him?

THE DECLARATION OF THE WORD OF LIFE

You cannot know Jesus Christ without declaring Him. You cannot know Him without speaking about Him. In I John 1:3 the Bible says, *"That which we have seen, and heard, declare we unto you."* We must declare what we have seen and heard. We "*declare"* Him.

My lovely wife and I have been married since 1967; and, of course, I am very grateful to God for her. We have a wonderful marriage. I am certainly not a perfect husband, and we do not have a perfect marriage—I do not know if there is such a thing. But I truly love her. I do not have any trouble talking to people about her. I do not have trouble speaking about her or making people aware that she is my wife because it is in my heart to do so. She means more to me than words can express. By the way, once in a while she tells others that she loves me, too!

The truth of the matter is, when you love someone and know someone, you are going to speak about that person. If you and I are



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not talking about Christ, it is because something is wrong with our knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have allowed a fruitful knowledge to become an unfruitful knowledge. We have gotten into the facts and

True followers of Jesus Christ cannot be silenced. ideas and quoted things and given cute little answers to religious questions to get people off our backs. But the truth of the matter is, He is nearly meaningless to us. How shameful!

John penned under the inspiration of God, "We have seen Him and heard Him, and now we declare Him." I think he could not help but declare Him.

I wish I could adequately express what the disciples were going through and the persecution they were receiving because of their faith. In Acts chapter four, they were told not to speak. They were beaten and threatened. It was going to cost some of them their lives. It would certainly cost the lives of many followers through the centuries. The Bible says in Acts 4:19-20,

> But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

They had to talk about Christ. They could not keep themselves from it because of what He had done for them. True followers of Jesus Christ cannot be silenced.

I love to meet people who talk about our wonderful Lord. They do not limit their talk about Him to Sunday. They speak of Him freely at home. They talk about Him on the job. They talk about Him at lunch, and on the hospital elevator, and in the doctor's office.

Is it not wonderful to meet people who cannot help but talk about Him? They have heard Him, they know Him, and they love Him. It does not make any difference where they are. Their motive is not to be seen of men; it is not something they work up—they love Him and declare Him.

THE POSSESSION OF THE WORD OF LIFE

How are the lives of people changed so dramatically from a life of sin and self-service to a life of true joy in following Jesus Christ? The Bible says in I John 1:3-4,

> That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

How does this happen? How do people who are not in agreement with the things of God have their lives so drastically changed that now they enjoy fellowship together with the Lord and His people?

The apostle Paul wrote of this change in lives. The Bible says in I Corinthians 6:9-10,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

This is a very bad list! I do not want to live in the same neighborhood with this crowd! These are people you do not want around anyone you love. But note what verse eleven of this chapter says, *"And such*



The Mord of Life

were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our

The only hope we have as a nation is to get our homes right. *God.*" They were changed by the blood of Christ. They were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

II Corinthians 4:7 says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." What is this treasure we have in earthen vessels? What is this possession we have in earthen vessels? It is none other than the

Lord Jesus Christ. He has come to live in us. If you are a Christian, He has come to live in you.

God made Himself known in the Person of His Son. Someone declared that message to you. You may have been a reviler, or an adulterer, but someone declared that message to you, and you believed it. Now God has made Himself known to you. Jesus Christ is your Saviour, and now you desire to declare Him to others. He has given you what He promised.

The Bible says in I John 1:3-4,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Every person wants exactly what God says here in verse four of I John chapter one. There is no doubt that everyone wants to be full of joy. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:11, *"These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."* Where is the joy the Lord Jesus promised? It is in Him.

The older I get, and the longer I live, the more simple the Christian life becomes for me. We are to meet God in His Word and in prayer. We are to serve the Lord in a local assembly of baptized believers where we can have confidence that God's work is being done God's way.

In an issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, I read an editorial by a man who has been an advisor of the presidents for many years. In the article, he said, "Sixty percent of the American population believes that this country is off course, and they do not have any idea how to get it back on course."

Do you know what is more tragic to me than that? Many Christians listen to the preaching of God's Word every week, but their lives and their homes are off course. They have given someone else the responsibility to read the Bible and pray. They have given someone else the responsibility to teach their children about God.

Do you love the Lord enough to make sure your family hears His message and sees Him at work in your life?

Each of us has a world view. A world view is an interpretation of the world and

an expression or idea about how it came to exist, and an application of that to your own life. A biblically-correct world view needs to be shaped in the hearts and minds of children at home.

Public education in America is derailed. It is derailed, but we are not going to change this country by changing the school system. The only hope we have as a nation is to get our homes right. It is just that simple. God makes Himself known to us. As He becomes real in our lives, we declare Him to those we love.

Fathers are not reading the Bible and praying with their children, or even trying to lead their family spiritually. The issue is not a lack of importance placed on families. Your family is important to you. The issue is that Jesus Christ is not given His proper place in your life.



You may say, "I love my kids!" Of course you love them! You may love them more than you love God! Do you love the Lord enough to make sure your family hears His message and sees Him at work in your life?

If you love God like you ought to love God, you will be leading your home like you ought to lead your home. Yes, this is convicting, but it is the only hope we have. It requires such effort, diligence, and discipline, and we have become a nation of undisciplined people. Our children are all we have on earth to take to heaven with us, and so many Christian families are losing their children. We have all failed, but I thank God for His forgiveness and mercy.

When God manifests Himself to us, He becomes real to us, and then we declare Him to others. As we declare Him to others, they come to know Him, and they find the joy that can only be found in Him as He manifests Himself to them, and they want to declare Him to others.

You may have promised the Lord many times that you were going to change, but every time you attempted and failed, you tried in your own strength. You must confess to God that you are not capable of doing what you ought to do apart from His strength at work in your life. Ask God to enable you, and He will.