

5:9 The Testimony of God

The Testimony of Humans.

Hilary of Arles: The testimony of men refers to the testimony of people like Moses and the prophets, who were all men of God. Introductory Commentary on 1 John.³³

5:10 Unbelief Makes God Out to Be a Liar

Does Unbelief Make God a Liar?

Hilary of Arles: God can never turn himself into a liar, because he is the essence of truth. But an unbelieving man is a liar, because he does not believe in the truth of God. Introductory Commentary on 1 John.³⁸

The Testimony God Has Borne.

Andreas: After giving us one testimony about his Son, God gave us another, which is eternal life. Catena.³⁹

5:11 God Gave Us Eternal Life in the Son

This Life Is in His Son.

Oecumenius: God has promised to give us eternal life because we have been adopted into him through his Son, of whom Scripture says: "In him was life."⁴³ Therefore whoever has the Son by holy baptism also has life. Commentary on 1 John.⁴⁴

5:12 One Who Has the Son Has Life

Life Only in Christ.

Augustine: Here John testifies that no one has life unless he has Christ. Against Julian 6.9.27.⁴⁵

5:13 That You May Know That You Have Eternal Life

To You Who Believe.

Oecumenius: John says that he has written to those who are inheritors of eternal life, for such things would never be written to people who are not. After all, it is not right to give holy things to dogs or to scatter pearls before swine. ⁵⁰ Commentary on 1 John.⁵¹

5:14 God Hears Us If We Ask According to His Will

The Confidence We Have in Him.

Didymus the Blind: Those who possess technical skills and know how to repair things are fully confident that when the need arises they will be able to do so. Similarly these holy men, John and the other apostles,

knew from their own experience that if they asked God for what was pleasing and acceptable to him, they would obtain it. For God is most generous to those who have this knowledge and will grant the requests of those who ask according to his will. Commentary on 1 John.⁵²

5:15 *We Know He Hears Us*

He Hears Us.

Oecumenius: What this means is that if we ask according to his will, he hears us, and if he hears us in everything that we ask of him, we know that we are praying according to his will. Therefore we already have inside us the things which we have asked for. For these are the kingdom and righteousness of God, which he has asked us to pray for. Commentary on 1 John.⁵⁶

5:16 *Mortal and Nonmortal Sins*

Some Sins Are unto Death.

Origen: Since there are sins “unto death,” it follows that anyone who commits one of them will die as a result. Sermons on Leviticus 11.2.6.⁵⁷

Self-Contradictory to Pray That Some Sin Be Forgiven.

Augustine: Even though the Lord commands us to pray for our very persecutors, this passage clearly shows that there are some brothers for whom we are not commanded to pray. We therefore must acknowledge that there are some sins among the brothers which are worse than persecution by enemies. I think that the sin of a brother is unto death when anyone who has attained a knowledge of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ opposes the brotherhood and is aroused by the fires of envy against that very grace by which he was reconciled to God. Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount 1.22.73.⁵⁸

Especially Sins at the End of Life.

Augustine: In another place I defined the sin of a brother unto death [see above], but I should have added: “if he ends this life in a perversity of mind as wicked as this.” For surely we must not despair of anyone, no matter how wicked he is, while he lives, and we should pray with confidence for him of whom we should not despair. Retractations 1.18.7.⁵⁹

Who Can Pray Against God?

Andreas: It is the sin of heresy, or of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which leads to death. If one man sins against another, pray for him. But if he sins against God, who is there who can pray on his behalf? Catena.⁶⁰

5:17 *Not Every Sin Is Mortal*

Sins That Lead to Death.

Oecumenius: Only those sins which are not repented of lead to death. Judas, for example, although he showed remorse, did not repent and was led off to his death. But whoever has given himself over to Christ cannot commit mortal sin, even though his nature ⁶⁴ remains unchanged and he still sins. Commentary on 1 John.⁶⁵

5:18 *Anyone Born of God Does Not Sin*

The Evil One Cannot Touch God's Children.

Didymus the Blind: If it is true that when someone does what is righteous his power to do so comes from God, and if it is also true that righteousness and evil cannot live together, then it is perfectly clear that as long as a person does such things he is righteous and does not sin. But because this ability is given by grace and is not natural, John adds that the righteous person must watch out, so that evil will not touch him. Commentary on 1 John.⁶⁶

No One Is a Child of God by Nature.

Andreas: It may be true that the righteous person does not sin, but no one is a child of God by nature. This is why we avoid sin, not by the way in which we were made, which would make sin impossible for us, ⁶⁷ but by watching out that we do not fall into it. Catena.⁶⁸

5:19 *The World Is in the Power of the Evil One*

In the Power of the Evil One.

Clement of Alexandria: "World" does not mean creation as a whole but rather worldly people and those who live according to their lusts. Adumbrations.⁷⁰

The World Subjected to Evil.

Didymus the Blind: The "world," that is, those who love the world, are subjected to evil. This includes everybody, because we are all born under sin, which traces its origin to the disobedience of Adam. Many heretics claim that there is a creator god who made the world evil to begin with, but this is not so. The word refers to people, not to the material substance of creation. Commentary on 1 John.⁷¹

5:20 *We Are in Him Who Is True*

To Know Him Who Is True.

Didymus the Blind: The understanding which God gave, by which it is known that the true Son of God is coming, is the same as the mind of Christ. Commentary on 1 John.⁷⁴

The Son Has Given Us Understanding.

Andreas: Even at the end of his letter, John never stops insisting on the need for right doctrine. We have been given understanding to the extent that we have known the Son of God, who really has come into the world. This is what it means to say that “we have the mind of Christ.”⁷⁵ The person who has this mind and understanding knows what is really true and is united with him because he shares the same mind. Catena.⁷⁶