

1 John Chapter 2

1 John 2:1 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

"My little children" indicates John's deep concern for his readers. In preceding verses, he had been concerned with erroneous notions that some may have held and advocated; now he turns directly to his addressees.

John calls the Christians; (my little children). That is what we really are; (sons of God). In this, John is expressing the Christians relationship with the Father. The desire of the heart of the Christian must be to sin not. If we commit a sin and confess it, Jesus will represent us to the Father.

This does not, however, mean that we continually sin, which would be a sinful way of life. If we live continually in sin, we have chosen darkness over Light.

"Advocate" means intercessor, or comforter. This is the only mention of this word.

Although a Christian must continually acknowledge and confess sin (1:9), he is not powerless against it. Fulfilling the duty of confession does not give license to sin. Sin can and should be conquered through the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7 translates "advocate" as "Helper", literally "one called alongside". Perhaps a modern concept of the term would be a defense attorney. Although Satan prosecutes believers' right and day before the Father due to sin (Rev. 12:10), Christ's High-Priestly ministry guarantees not only sympathy but also acquittal (Heb. 4:14-16).

1 John 2:2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world."

"Propitiation", in this verse means appeasement or satisfaction. An atoning sacrifice that Jesus bore in His body for the punishment due us for our sin. In so doing He propitiated God, satisfied God's just demand that sin be punished. Thus, Jesus is both the advocate for sinners (verse 1), and the sacrifice for their sins.

"For the sins of the whole world": This is a generic term, referring not to every single individual, but to mankind in general. Christ actually paid the penalty only for those who would repent and believe. A number of Scriptures indicate that Christ died for the world (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 1 Thess. 2:6; Heb. 2:9).

Most of the world will be eternally condemned to hell to pay for their own sins, so they could not have been paid for by Christ. The passages which speak of Christ's dying for the whole world must be understood to refer to mankind in general (as in Titus 2:3-4). World indicates the sphere, the beings toward whom God seeks reconciliation and has provided propitiation.

God has mitigated His wrath on sinners temporarily; by letting them live and enjoy earthly life. In that sense, Christ has provided a brief, temporal propitiation for the whole world. But He satisfied fully the wrath of God eternally only for the elect who believe.

Christ's death had unlimited and infinite value because He is Holy God. Thus, His sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all whom God brings to faith. But the actual satisfaction and atonement was made only for those who believe.

The pardon for sin is offered to the whole world, but received only by those who believe. There is no other way to be reconciled to God.

Verses 3-6: Tells us that obedience to God's commands constitutes a third test of genuine fellowship. First John presents two external tests that demonstrate salvation: doctrinal and moral. The doctrinal test consists of confessing a proper view of Christ and of sin (see 1:1-4 and 1:5-2:2), while the moral test consists of obedience and love (see verses 7-11).

While subjective assurance of salvation comes through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (5:10; Romans 8:14-16; 2 Cor. 1:12), the test of obedience constitutes objective assurance that one is genuinely saved.

Obedience is the external, visible proof of salvation. The false teachers' failure to obey God's commands objectively demonstrated that they were not saved (Luke 6:46). Those who are truly enlightened and know God are obedient to His Word.

1 John 2:3 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

John writes so that his readers may not sin (verse 1). Now he sets forth a characteristic of genuine knowledge of God: obedience to His commandments. This is a major teaching of Jesus.

A Christian is a follower of, and a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we desire in our heart to please Him, because we love Him, we will keep His commandments. It must be the desire of our heart not to sin.

John 14:15 Jesus said: "If you love me, keep my commandments."

In this verse and the next, the repetition of the words "know ... keep" emphasizes that those genuinely born again display the habit of obedience. Obedience results in assurance of salvation, (Eph. 2:2; 1 Peter 1:14).

That these two words are among John's favorites is clear since he uses "know" approximately 40 times and "keep" approximately 10 times in this epistle.

1 John 2:4 "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

There are many who profess to be a Christian who are not living their day to day lives for Christ. This is what this Scripture is about. There will be some who will stand before Jesus on judgment day who will say:

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

God looks on the heart of man. The face we show the world is not always what we really are.

1 John 2:5 "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

"Perfected" is in the perfect tense. John refers to the decisive and enduring effect of the indwelling love of God. But the test of knowing God's love is keeping His Word.

Is the Word of God the most important thing you have? When you really love, it is the desire of your heart to please the one you love. To perfect the Love of God within yourself is to be completely sold out to Him.

We are in Him and He in us, if His love is perfected in us. All through the Bible, there are blessings, if we are obedient to God, and curses, if we are not. This is no exception to that.

1 John 2:6 "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

"Abides or Abideth" is one of John's favorite terms for salvation. "Even as he walked": Jesus' life of obedience is the Christian's pattern. Those who claim to be Christians ought to live as He did (John 6:38), since they possess His Spirit's presence and power.

This is referring to Jesus' earthly days. While no one can or need duplicate Jesus' atoning ministry, His disciples are called on to imitate His devotion to God and compassion for others (see John 13:15 and 1 Peter 2:21).

Jesus placed His footprints for us. If we are following Him as we should, we will step in those footprints. Walk, in this instance, is speaking of making it a habit to walk in the footprints of Jesus. This is not an occasional encounter with God, but a way of life.

Verses 7-8" John's commandment is both old and new. This commandment, as is clear below, is to love on another. Jesus called it "new" (in John 13:34), though it appears in similar form (in Leviticus 19:18). By late in John's life it is no longer so new; yet in the sense that it continually transforms and renews the lives of Christians, it is and ever shall be new indeed.

Verses 7-17: Love of the brethren constitutes the fourth test of genuine fellowship. The primary focus of the moral test is obedience to the command of love because love is the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8), and is also Christ's new command (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). True enlightenment is to love. God's light is the light of love, so to walk in light is to walk in love.

1 John 2:7 "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning."

Not referring to new in the sense of time but something that is fresh in quality, kind or form; something that replaces something else that has been worn out.

"New commandment ... old commandment": John makes a significant word play here. Though he doesn't state here what the command is, he does (in 2 John 5-6), it is to love. Both phrases refer to the same commandment of love.

The commandment of love was "new" because Jesus personified love in a fresh, new way and it was shed abroad in believer's hearts (Romans 5:5), and energized by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 4-9). He raised love to a higher standard for the church and commanded His disciples to imitate His love ("as I have loved you").

The command was also "old" because the Old Testament commanded love (Lev. 19-18; Deut. 6:5), and the readers of John's epistle had heard about Jesus' command to love when they first heard the gospel.

"From the beginning": This phrase refers not to the beginning of time but the beginning of their Christian lives, as indicated (by verse 24; 3:11; and 2 John 6). This was part of the ethical instruction they received from the day of their salvation and not some innovation invented by John, as the heretics may have said.

"Brethren" here, is speaking of those who are of a common faith. Jesus did not come to do away with the law, but to fulfill it. The commandment spoken of here, has to do with love. We are taught from the beginning to love one another. When we love Him, we walk as He walked.

The Word is the commandment of God. Jesus said all the law and the commandments were caught up in loving God first, and then loving your fellowman as yourself. The "commandment", then, is righteous love.

1 John 2:8 "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

This is just expressing how much easier it is for us to understand the law of God, since the Light of Jesus has shown on it. This "new commandment" is let Jesus, (the Light of the world), live in you and through you. We do not have to question about God anymore.

His perfect Light has shined in our heart and made us aware of His perfect Love. The Light of Jesus brightens our path that we are to walk. It is not a dark and fearful walk anymore.

1 John 2:9 "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

This is just saying, those who hate others are not walking in the Light. The perfect Light provided for believers leads us into His perfect love. It does not allow hate of any kind. Hate is of the devil and is surrounded by darkness.

Doctrinal truth about spiritual matters means nothing without compassion for others. For John, hateth seems to mean simply "fails to love."

In the original language, hate conveys the idea of someone who habitually hates or is marked by a lifestyle of hate.

"Is in the darkness even until now": Those who profess to be Christians, yet are characterized by hate, demonstrate by such action that they have never been born again. The false teachers made claims to enlightenment, transcendent knowledge of God, and salvation, but their actions, especially the lack of love, proved all such claims false (see also verse 11).

1 John 2:10 "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

"Abideth" means to continue to live. Love is a product of Light. There is no temptation to steal from your brother, if you love him. There is no desire for things that your brother owns, if you love him.

These are just two examples, but you can see that loving your brother causes you to have no desire to do him harm in any way. The lust of the flesh causes sin. The Light of God helps us see things more clearly, and causes us not to lust.

He who truly loves (not "he that saith," verse 9), abideth in the light, that is, the presence of God. He does not stumble, nor does he cause others to stumble. John stresses actions, not mere words.

1 John 2:11 "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

"Walketh" means "lives". He habitually spends his life in darkness, or sin (see 2 Corinthians 4:4), for the blinding effect of Satan and sin. Hate is a product of the devil. The devil is in darkness.

John 12:35 "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

In the darkness, we cannot see clearly and do not see things that cause us to stumble.

Verses 12-14: John addresses different groups and assures them of their steadfastness in the true faith, contrary to many of those with whom his letter must deal. Little children, fathers, young men, and may have reference to spiritual maturity or level of responsibility in the fellowship, for example, to new Christians being “children.”

Only two families exist from God’s perspective: children of God and children of Satan (see John 8:39-44). John reminds his readers in these verses that as Christians they have been forgiven and have come to know God as their heavenly Father. As a result, they are a part of God’s family. They must not love Satan’s family or give their allegiance to the world controlled by him (see verse 15).

The word “little children” (in verse 12), is general for offspring of any age. In contrast to a different Greek word for “children” (in verse 13), which refers to young children.

“I write you ... I have written”” John repeats the message in these verses to emphasize the certainty of their belonging to God’s family. “I write” is from John’s perspective, while “I have written” anticipates his reader’s perspective when they received the letter.

1 John 2:12 "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

This is John stating his reason for writing the letter to them. Their sins are forgiven, so they are Christians. They are sons of God. They are not full grown, because he calls them little children. God forgave us our sins, because Jesus paid our debt. It is in the name of Jesus that we are forgiven.

Verses 13-14: “fathers ... young men ... children”: These very clear distinctions identify 3 stages of spiritual growth in God’s family. “Fathers,” the most mature, have a deep knowledge of the Eternal God. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is to know God in His fullness (Phil. 3:10).

Young men” are those who, while not yet having the mature experience of knowing God in the Word and through life, do know sound doctrine. They are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in them. Thus, they overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of children (Eph. 4:14).

Since Satan’s efforts are in falsehood and deception, they have overcome him. “Children” are those who have only the basic awareness of God and need to grow. All are in God’s family and manifest Christ’s character at different levels.

1 John 2:13 "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."

When we look at the three this is spoken to, it is the progression of growth in our belief. We come to Christ as little children. We grow to young men as we learn more about God, and are better equipped to resist the devil. Then lastly, we rest as old men in the knowledge of God.

1 John 2:14 "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

This is very much the same as the verse above. The difference being that the little children are omitted. Those remaining have learned to overcome the devil. They have matured by the study of the Word of God.

They are not overcome of the devil, because they are grounded in the Word of God. Again, speaking of fathers is just a further knowing of God.

We see in this, the growth of the Christian and the knowledge acquired to help live in the Light.

1 John Chapter 2 Questions

1. In verse 1, what were the believers in Christ called?
2. If any man sin, we have an _____ with the Father.
3. Who is the advocate?
4. What does the word "advocate" mean?
5. Does this mean it is alright to continue in sin?
6. What does the word "propitiation" mean?
7. Who did He provide forgiveness for?
8. We do know that we know Him, if we do what?
9. What is a Christian?
10. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a _____.
11. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my _____."

12. How can you perfect God's love in you?
13. "Walk", in verse 6, is speaking of what?
14. What is the "commandment" in verse 7?
15. What is the "new commandment"?
16. When you hate your brother, you are walking in _____.
17. What does "abideth" mean?
18. Love is a product of _____.
19. What causes sin?
20. Hate is a product of the _____.
21. Your sins are forgiven you for His _____ _____.
22. Why are father, young men, and children mentioned in verse 13?
23. Why are little children omitted in verse 14?