

## 2. 1 John 2:1-17 of a Verse by Verse Study of the Letters of John and Jude

The introduction to chapter 2 is in the last of chapter 1. 1 John 1:7 teaches, “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, purifies us from all sin.” Walking in the light becomes the theme of the next several verses and carries into chapter 2. In chapter 1:8-10, John introduces the certainty of sin in our lives and the continuing nature of a faithful and just Christ who forgives those sins that Christians commit.

Chapter 2:1-17 teaches us to “walk in the light as he is in the light,” avoiding both sin and darkness.

### ***The Atoning Sacrifice of the Righteous One***

1 *John 2:1-17*

2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

John begins chapter 2 by showing his affection to those to whom he is writing by addressing them as *my dear children*. John spreads such terms of love and affection throughout the letter. Having already established that we Christians sin and that Jesus is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, John writes the letter so that we will not sin. This statement is akin to Paul’s statement in Romans 6:1-2: “6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”

Jesus Christ the righteous speaks to the Father in our defense. Some versions translate this as *we have an advocate*. Paul teaches that Christ is our one and only mediator in 1 Tim 2:5-7, “5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time.” To become the atoning sacrifice for our sins, Christ became a ransom for all men. The sacrifice was for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

### ***Knowing the Lord***

3 *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

The key to knowing that we have come to know the Lord is if we are obeying his commandments. This idea of full and obedient knowledge appears in 2 Thess 1:8, “8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” Jesus affirmed the necessity of this full, obedient knowledge in 2 Thess 1:8: “8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” John 6:44-45 teaches that through this full knowledge, the Father draws us; and through it we come to the Lord: “44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.” Jesus taught that knowing him was not mere credence and good works, but knowing him and obeying him went hand in hand. Matt 7:21-23 teaches:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Whoever is in Jesus and lives in him must walk as Jesus walked. Thus, we are back to the premise of

chapter 1: "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, purifies us from all sin."

### ***The True Light Shining***

*7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.*

Many have trouble in the contrast here between "I am not writing a new command but an old one." and "I am writing you a new command. The real contrast is between *light* and *darkness*. John represents them in the letter by the polar opposites that from the beginning have separated Man from God—love and hate. John will begin the next paragraph with hate and darkness and love and light. The commands are as old as Cain and Able are, as John will explain 1 John 3:11-12: "11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." The Lord spoke of the new command in John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." It is in the fulfillment of the new commandment that darkness passes and the true light is shining.

### ***Walking in Darkness***

*9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

John extends the absolute difference in light and darkness to include love and hate. Remember John has said that if we walk in the light as he is in the light, his blood purifies us from all sins. However, hate makes all sin possible. When we love our brother, we live in the light and there is nothing to make us stumble. Hate puts us in darkness where we are lost and blind, stumbling on the sins that beset us. The core of sin is hate: adultery, murder, false witness, lies, envy, etc. The protection against sin is love.

The poetic inclusion of verses 12-14 summarizes the abstract subject matter of this introduction and addresses his dear children, fathers, and young men.

*12 I write to you, dear children,  
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.*

*13 I write to you, fathers,  
because you have known him who is from the beginning.*

*I write to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one.*

*I write to you, dear children,  
because you have known the Father.*

*14 I write to you, fathers,  
because you have known him who is from the beginning.*

*I write to you, young men,  
because you are strong,  
and the word of God lives in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.*

These might be considered the truths of the gospel: our sins have been forgiven on account of his name; we have known him who is from the beginning; we have overcome the evil one; we have known the Father; we have known him [Jesus] who is from the beginning; we are strong, the word of God lives in

us; and we have overcome the evil one.

### ***Loving the World***

*15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

The path from the light to darkness is through the world. Therefore, John tells us not to love the world or anything in the world. We cannot love the world and have the love of the Father. Nothing from the world comes from the Father. Everything of the world includes the craving of sinful man for things of the world, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what one has and does. Older versions say the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Two famous examples illustrate these principles of worldliness—Adam and Eve and the Christ Jesus himself. The devil tempted Adam and Eve. The fruit was good to look upon; was good to eat, and would make them wise like God. The devil tempted Christ, using these same avenues. The devil tempted Christ with food, the power to command the angels of God to come to his aid, and the inheritance of all the kingdoms of the world (Matt 4:3-11).

Christians must understand that the world passes away along with its desires. If a man does the will of God, he will live forever.