

The Epistles of John and Jude

I John 2:1-6 Notes

Lesson 4 Walking in the Light Part 2

Introduction

In chapter 1 we saw the apostle John earnestly contending for the true Gospel by highlighting the life and doctrine of the genuine believer. In short, his undeniable passion was that believers who were reading his letter would come to a full assurance of their salvation, and overflow with joy because of their fellowship with God. At the time the epistle was written, John saw that false doctrine was influencing the church, and leading many into the heresy Paul had warned of some 40 years before (Acts 20:29-32). As MacArthur writes,

“Like any pastor, John could not stand idly by when his people were being assaulted by the satanic lies of false teachers. Responding to the serious crisis threatening the churches under his care, the apostle sent them this letter to help check the deadly plague. But John’s purpose was not merely polemical, but also pastoral, expressing his deep concern for his people. He wanted not only to refute the false teachers, but also to reassure the genuine believers. Thus, while the gospel of John was **“written so that people may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing (they might) have life in His name”** John 20:31, I John was written to those **“who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that they might know they have eternal life”** I John 5:13. By repeatedly cycling through the essential truth of Christianity, John with

increasingly deeper and broader disclosure, fortified his people against the assaults of the false teachers and reassured them that they possessed eternal life. I John thus spirals through the biblical balance of truth, obedience, and love.”

As a review, the primary truths John focused on in chapter 1 had to do with the nature of God as light, and the undeniable effects of God’s light on the believer. To the one who denies his sin or says, “I know God,” but still lives habitually in unrighteousness, John says “You are a liar and the truth is not in you.” While some might argue for a more nuanced approach to speaking truth, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chose to speak in absolute terms. Yet, the reader must not allow the apparent rigidity of John’s theology to cause him to miss the glories of Christ that are bound up in every page.

Christ our Advocate (2:1-2)

Chapter 2 starts with the apostle giving another reason he is proclaiming the truth to them. He writes, “**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.**” Speaking in loving, familial terms, John again reiterates that his desire for them is that they would walk in their new life, so that they would come to experience the fullness of joy and a deepening assurance. Next, he gives them a tender reminder. He writes, “**But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world**” (ESV). Here we see some of the most comforting truth in the entire epistle. Jackman writes of this,

‘But knowing his dear children, and being the realist he is, John also knows that there will be occasions of defeat in every Christian’s life. So that mark of reality is

not a hazardous 'perfection' which is only attainable by redefining sin. Rather, it is seen in what we do about the sin **'that so easily entangles us' (Hebrews 12:1)**.

That depends on our having a genuine knowledge of Christ, what he has done and what he is doing for us. Our belief about Christ is always the foundational test for reality in Scripture. If we are wrong here, nothing else will be right."

Spurgeon speaking on this wrote,

"We have an advocate- sinners though we are. All the sins that a believer ever committed, or can commit cannot destroy his right to have the Lord Jesus Christ as his Advocate. The name that our Lord is called in the text is significant. First, He is called "Jesus." He is just the Advocate we need, for Jesus is the name of the One whose business and delight it is to save. (Matt. 1:21) ...Second, He is "Christ." The word Christ in the Greek is Christos, meaning anointed. This shows he has the authority to intercede on our behalf. The Christ has a right to intercede, for He is the Father's own appointed Advocate and elected Priest. If He were our choosing, He might fail....However.. He is Christ, and therefore He is authorized. He is Christ, and therefore He is qualified, for the anointing has fully equipped Him for His work. He can intercede in such a way that He moves the heart of God and prevails...One more part of his name remains, "the righteous." This title reflects not only His character, but also His plea. Righteous is His character, and if the Righteous One is my Advocate, then my cause is good, or He would not have espoused it. It is also a plea, for He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by the plea that He is righteous. He declares Himself as my substitute, and puts His obedience to my account."

The words, “**He is the propitiation for our sins**’ should not be missed for the advocacy of Christ would be null and void if Christ had not appeased God’s wrath by becoming our atoning sacrifice. Macarthur writes,

“Christ could never make his case for the saints as their Defense Attorney if He were not also their propitiator who completely turned God’s wrath from sinners to Himself thus removing all their guilt and condemnation. Propitiation through the death of Christ is one of the critical doctrines of the Christian faith, and the very center of God’s redemptive plan. (Rom. 3:25, 5:1, 10-11, I Cor 15:3, Col. 1:20-22, Heb. 12:24) An accurate understanding of this truth in all its essential aspects is vital to salvation and the pursuit of a life of holiness...The term propitiation, in definition and application, is most notably a biblical and theological word. It is a translation of *hilasmos* which means appeasement or satisfaction.”

Going further he adds,

Propitiation is necessary because of sins (Ps. 7:11, Ezek. 18:4, Rom. 1:18, 3:23, 6:23, I Thes. 1:10) Sinners continually shatter God’s perfect law (Jer. 17:9, Matt. 15:19-20, John 8:34) and He, as the righteously offended Creator, must react justly in holy anger, wrath, and judgement (Gen. 6:6-7, Deut. 25:16, Job 34:21-22, Is. 59:1-2, Jer. 10:10, Luke 13:27, Eph. 5:6). God’s justice must be satisfied. Every sin ever committed by every person who has ever lived will be punished in one of two ways. Either God’s wrath will be satisfied when all unrepentant and unbelieving sinners suffer eternally in hell (Matt. 13:42, 25:41, 2 Thes. 1:9, Rev. 20:15) or for all who, by the convicting and regenerating power of the Spirit, repent and believe savingly in Jesus.”

The main point further explained (2:3-6)

Going onto the next verse John writes, **“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.”** Here the apostle returns to the main idea again, and yet goes deeper with the truth. Simply stated, here he is teaching that obedience to God’s law is another litmus test for determining genuine faith. Jackman explains this by writing,

“Jesus himself told his disciples, **“If you love me you will obey what I command” (John 14:15)**. As with many other of his statements this is not a popular view today, even among some who would want to be called Christians. The fact that to talk about obedience to God’s Word is parodied as legalism is symptomatic of a false dichotomy between law and love. Not long ago a young Christian told me that he no longer needed to obey Christ’s Word (or even read it) because ‘I just love him.’ By contrast Jesus said, **‘If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love’ (John 15:10)**. Grace does not abolish God’s law; it internalizes it, by writing it on our hearts. That is why I John 2:4 reinforces the precedeeding verse, by denying its opposite. The disobedient person who professes to be a Christian is a liar, because such claims are blatantly contradicted by his character. How can the truth of God be in such a person? ‘Actions speak louder than words’ we say. We mean that they are a closer indication of the real person, a better window into the soul. Words are

comparatively cheap. They can easily deceive. Whatever he may claim the person who disobeys God does not actually and truly know God as God. If he did he would bow unquestionably to God's authority, wisdom, and power. He would say, 'God knows best and that is the way I want to go.' In fact, every time we refuse to obey God we accept the slander against his character that lies at the root of all temptation. We are saying that we know better than God, and that simply means we do not actually know God well enough. For truly to know God is to love Him. And truly to love him is to obey him. There can be no substitute for this. We need to be on our guard against self-deception in this, because we can be so easily deluded, especially if we are relying on the subjective evidence of our feelings rather than the objective truth of God's Word. The young couple who told me that they were living together, although unmarried, because they had prayed about it and felt like God was saying it was alright for them were flatly contradicting the fact that God had already said in Scripture that it was not alright. Either they did not know God's character, or they did not love Him enough to obey Him."

Finally, in verse 6 John writes, "**By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.**" Here we see that the obedience of the believer will follow in the pattern of Jesus. So much could be said about this, yet at a basic level we should remember that Jesus was committed to doing the Father's will above all else. He lived for the Father's glory and sacrificed everything to fulfill his Father's plan (John 6:38, 8:29, 10:17-18, 14:31). MacArthur emphasizes this by saying,

“John made it perfectly clear that those who claim to abide in Christ must walk as Jesus. Walk is a metaphor for daily conduct by believers. The Lord perfectly exemplified this principle during his earthly ministry. Obviously, believers’ obedience will not be perfect, as Jesus was. Nonetheless, He established the perfect pattern they are to follow.”

As we will see, John will continue to build upon this truth as the epistle goes along, particularly emphasizing how love of God and love for other believers is the ongoing proof that salvation has indeed occurred. This love that will flow out of the true Christian will provide a deep and abiding assurance that only the Holy Spirit can give.

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