



# Love & Truth

## Authentic Christianity in 1, 2, and 3 John

### SESSION 2

#### Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-2:14

#### 1. INTRODUCING THIS SECTION

John counters the religions of his day, especially Gnosticism, which spoke little about sin and the moral implications of knowing God. John takes sin seriously. For John, the test of genuinely knowing God is obedience to the command of love, and the test being in fellowship with God is imitation, being like God. This walking in the light is the best measure of the authenticity of our faith.

#### 2. NOTES ON 1 JOHN 1:5-2:14

- 1:5: “message” (Gk, *angelia*) can also be translated “news”
- 1:5: “light” (Gk, *phos*) and “darkness” (Gk, *skotia*): Light is goodness and truth; darkness is evil and lies. There is no duality to God. God is all light.
- 1:6: “live by the truth” (Gk, *aletheia*): The unity we find in God is meant to be a marker of us as well. Our fellowship with God shows itself in our ethics. We are not “double-minded.” See James 1:5-8. God’s light will be evident in God’s people. See John 3:19-21. For Christians “truth” is both absolute or objective and personal (John 14:6).
- 1:7: “walk” (Gk, *peripateo*) = the conduct one’s life
- 1:7: “If we walk in the light as he is in the light”: Marking us as authentic Christians in fellowship with Christ is our imitation of Christ. See Is. 2:5.
- 1:7: “the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us”: See Leviticus 17:11; Romans 3:25, 5:9; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 10:23-28.
- 1:7: “all sin” (Gk, *hamartia*): The word for sin, used 27 times in 1 John, means missing the mark as on an archery target.
- 1:8: Denying that we have sin is an illusion and a lie.
- 1:9, “if we confess our sins”: Confession makes us aware of our sins and our need for God’s forgiveness. Confession is one of the three parts of true repentance: 1) confession; 2) faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ; and 3) a turning from sin to holy living.
- 1:9: God’s forgiveness of sin is rooted in His own faithfulness – His commitment to His people and His perfect record in keeping His promises. See Jeremiah 31:34.
- 1:10: Denying that we are unclean before God because of sinful behavior makes God out to be a liar (since God has said we have all sinned; Romans 3:23). It further shows our disregard for God’s Word, which teaches the reality of our sin.
- 2:1, “My dear children”: John’s focus here, as he says, is to have his readers face the reality of sin in their lives, the need to confess it, and to grow in avoiding it. He sets this in a context of warm, fatherly love, not scolding, not judging.

- 2:1, "*defense*" (Grk, *parakletos*): This is one of two beautiful metaphors for Jesus in 2:1-2, Jesus as paraclete or advocate. One of its uses is that of defender.
- 2:2, "*atonement sacrifice*" (Grk, *hilasmos*): Jesus here is the sacrifice that removes the stain of sins from us. Note that this sacrifice counts for "the sin of the whole world." Needed for it to be counted is each person's individual faith.
- 2:3: God's faithful forgiveness is no excuse for disobedience. The measure for whether we truly "*know*" God? Obedience to God's commands.
- 2:4: The measure for whether "*the truth*" is in us? Obedience to God's commands.
- 2:5: The measure for whether God's "*love*" is being completed in us? Obedience to God's commands.
- 2:6: The authenticity of our being in Christ ("*in him*") is the kind of life we live: do we live as Jesus Christ lived?
- 2:7-8: The command to love is both old and new. It is not a new command but there already in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). Yet it is new in two senses: 1) the new standard Jesus Christ has set; and 2) the growth of Christians in the practice of love as we progress as Christ's disciples.
- 2:9: Biblically, hatred and love are attitudes that lead to actions more than raw emotions (1 John 3:15-16). Hatred, the opposite of love, does not seek another's highest good but holds others in contempt and sees them as a nuisance or as an enemy. Hatred separates us from others and from God.
- 2:10-11: Love toward others authenticates our relationship with Christ and takes away the power of hatred to cause us to stumble into sin. Hatred blinds us to the truth and so to wisdom, discernment, and good decision-making.
- 2:12-14: These repetitive, rhythmic verses have the feel of poetry. The words, "*children...fathers...young men*" could refer to stages of spiritual maturity. "*Children*" could refer to all John's readers (as in 2:1) with "*fathers*" and "*young men*" being spiritual stages. Yet the benefits John lists are available to every Christian. Those benefits include: 1) forgiveness on account of the name of Jesus Christ; 2) increasing knowledge of God; 3) victory over the Evil One.

### **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

1. The Scriptures testify throughout to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus.
2. Truth for Christians is both objective and personal.
3. Knowing Christ shows itself in our obedience to God's commands, especially His command to love.
4. Our union with Christ is authenticated by our looking life, living like Christ.
5. Confessing our sins is a crucial Christian discipline reminding us that we need God's forgiveness.
6. Obedience and change are motivated best by a spirit of genuine love and affection.
7. Christian knowledge, truth, and love have in common the same standard of authenticity: obedience to God's commands.
8. Hatred blinds us to the truth.
9. Christians have every reason in Christ to be confident in their relationship with God and with others.