

March 10, 2024 (Lesson 2)

LIVE AS A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

1. Obey God's Commands (1 John 2:3-11; 3 John 1:1-8)
2. Know and Love the Father (1 John 2:12-17)
3. Guard Against Deception (1 John 2:18-29; 3 John 1:9-11)

Central Truth: Christian discipleship means living in obedience to Christ.

Focus: Identify and follow the path of Christian discipleship.

Evangelism Emphasis: Salvation is the beginning of the process of discipleship.

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

In today's lesson, John calls attention to several vital aspects of the Christian life. He begins by reminding us how important it is to obey God. The instructions set forth in the Word of God are not to be taken lightly. Obeying them is essential to our walk before the Lord. Throughout 1 John 2, the apostle urges his readers to abide in Christ by knowing and obeying the Word, which leads to eternal life.

Not only does this chapter show us the way to life, it reminds us if we (having embraced life) falter along the way, God has made a provision for us: "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (v. 1). The writer of Hebrews said, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4:15). Christ sits at the right hand of the Father to plead our case. Having walked in human flesh, He knows our weaknesses. When we fall and acknowledge such before Christ, He intercedes on our behalf.

John also names the sins that make up worldliness. They fall into three categories: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). The Father has nothing to do with these attitudes, and if that is where our heart is centered, we do not love Him.

The Apostle John is the only writer in the Bible who names the person who personifies the spirit that defies God and seeks to destroy everything He represents. John calls him the “antichrist” (v. 18). While the spirit of antichrist existed in his day, and has been present in every age, John points to a time when a diabolical person will come on the scene who will be bent on destroying everything God represents.

1. OBEY GOD’S COMMANDS

A. Keeping God’s Commandments (1 John 2:3-6)

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

John wants his readers to have a right perspective about sin. In the previous chapter, he has observed all have sinned. But this is not the end of the story. We are responsible for our sins, yet forgiveness is available to all (2:2). Christ paid the price for our sins on the cross. When we confess our sins, seeking forgiveness because we recognize sin is not to be taken lightly, He pleads our case before the Father (v. 1).

To *know* Christ, to *love* Him, and to be *in Him* are expressions John uses to describe the relationship we should have with the Lord. If we expect Christ to be our advocate with the Father, we must be seeking to live a life that pleases Him. The knowledge of God that John speaks of is more than opinion or speculation; it is a practical knowledge that leads to loving God and keeping His commandments (v. 3). The test of our relationship with the Lord is that we keep—and delight in keeping, and go on keeping—the commandments of the Lord.

When Christ is received and takes up residence in our soul, we will know He is there. We are not speaking of a head knowledge alone, but of a heart experience. There is a difference! Someone said, “A religion you can get and not know it, is a religion you can lose and never miss it.”

Knowing God leads to obeying God (v. 5). When God’s Word becomes our guide, it shows how completely we love Him. Christ becomes our model, and we seek to live as Christ lived. We cannot claim to abide in Him unless we behave like Him.

§ *Who is a liar (v. 4)?*

God’s Satisfying Commandments

Don’t swallow God’s law like castor oil. For when you understand His intent, it will be like honey on your lips and sweetness to your soul.—Sam Storms

B. Observing a New Commandment (1 John 2:7-11)

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. 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. 9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

John assures us he is not presenting some novel idea they had never heard. The commandment to love God came out of the Old Testament and was something they had known from the time of their conversion. What is new is the extent to which they are to love one another. John is referring to Jesus’ statement in John 13:34: “Love one another; as I have loved you.” We are to love one another to the degree Christ loved us . . . and that love extended to His death on the cross.

Verse 9 of the text says we cannot walk in the light of Christ and hate a fellow Christian. Christ is the light of life, and light and love go hand in hand. At the same time, darkness and hatred are in the same camp. To claim to walk in the light and hate another believer is contrary to the design and nature of the Gospel. The genuineness of our faith is seen in a right relationship with God and with fellow believers. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 NKJV).

There may be several reasons for disliking the ways of another believer. We may find another person to be too talkative, or too critical, or too self-absorbed, or too infatuated with their station in life, or too much of a name-dropper. But none of these reasons for disliking a person should ever be elevated to the level of not loving him or her. Jesus is our example. He loved His disciples even when their attitudes and actions were wrong. Clearly, Jesus’ heart went out to them, and He longed to see them choose the right path.

The person who walks in Christ’s light lays no stumbling block in the way of others, while avoiding all stumbling blocks in their own way (v. 10). That person sees plainly the way of the Lord and walks in the light.

§ *Explain the statement “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (v. 8).*

C. Practicing Hospitality (3 John 1:1-8)

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.

John’s third epistle is addressed to Gaius (v. 1), who seems to have been a man of position and influence in the Christian community. John wishes for him prosperity and well-being (v. 2). In verse 3, we see word had been brought to John of Gaius’ faithfulness to the Lord. John now declares he is greatly refreshed and blessed by hearing of Gaius’ spiritual welfare.

In the early days of Christianity, the message was carried forth by itinerant preachers who depended on the hospitality of other Christians for housing, food, and support in their mission. Gaius was one of those who became well known for having performed such duties. This was regarded as a special mark of distinction and worth throughout the Christian church (read Acts 16:15; 1 Tim. 5:10; 2 John 10).

Verse 8 of the text says the example set by Gaius should be followed by all, as much in our day as it was in his. Those who participate in assisting laborers in the Gospel are themselves participants in the Gospel. Those who send the Gospel are partners with those who carry it (Rom. 10:15).

Helping From Home

One of the miracles of the organized church is that you can be busy at your daily tasks at home and at the same time be preaching the Gospel in Africa, feeding the hungry in Haiti, or helping the homeless in India. You can win some victory for humanity, wherever you are, by your tithe.

2. KNOW AND LOVE THE FATHER

A. Members of the Christian Family (1 John 2:12-14)

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

John addresses three sections of the Christian family in this passage. First, he speaks to “little children,” representing all those whose sins have been forgiven, for this is the starting point of the

Christian life (v. 12). All believers share the blessing of sins forgiven. Our forgiveness is based on the mercy and grace of God through the shedding of Christ's blood on Calvary, and the fact that God found His sacrifice satisfactory to cover our sins and purchase our redemption.

Second, John focuses on "fathers," representing those who are mature in the faith (v. 13). These have known Christ and grown in Him over a long period of time. Those who have served God the longest should have a better understanding of the reach of His love.

Third, he refers to "young men," representing those who are newcomers to the faith (v. 14). He rejoices that they are strong in the Word, and have overcome evil and the "wicked one." We must be forever vigilant in resisting the forces of evil, and always consistent in trusting in the Lord to make us overcomers.

§ *What role must God's Word play in our life as maturing Christians?*

B. Warning About the World (1 John 2:15-17)

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The term *world* can refer to the inhabitants of the planet or the creation itself. In both cases, it is the object of God's love. God loved the world so much that He gave His Son to provide redemption for humanity. Christ is both the Light of the world and the Savior of the world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As to creation, God made the world and He made it well. Jesus acknowledged the beauty of creation when He pointed to the lilies of the field and said, "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:29).

But the “world” John is talking about is altogether different than the world described above. The “world” John speaks of is a society organized on wrong principles, based on wrong values, and devoted to false gods. John identifies three elements of the fallen world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The *lust of the flesh* may be described as craving physical pleasures. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21 NKJV).

The *lust of the eyes* may be thought of as wanting everything we see. It speaks of an appetite for great wealth and possessions, but never satisfied with what we have. It is the same attitude Solomon had when he listed the things he had gathered to himself and finally summed it up by saying, “Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them” (Eccl. 2:10). In the end, he determined it was all “vanity and vexation of spirit” (v. 11).

The *pride of life* is an attitude that seeks to show oneself to be more than what one is; it represents an exaggerated sense of one’s importance. The self-exalting posture that lords it over other people is out of step with Christ’s instructions to His disciples: “Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:26 NKJV).

Verse 17 of the text presents us with a choice of lifestyles: to embrace this world system and the temporary pleasures it offers or to walk with God and reap eternal benefits. John realized this world is passing away, and all the things that people desire and seek after are going with it: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. None of the things that are anchored in this world can follow us beyond the grave. Why should anyone place their interests and ambitions in such a perishable order? An inordinate love of the world, when it fails, leaves people bitter and sorrowful.

What a different picture walking in the will of God offers! When we put our trust in the never-changing God, pleasing Him and doing those things that advance His kingdom become the motivations for our life. What joy it brings to us to know we are part of a never-fading, unshakable order! When the world and all its lusts are gone, the kingdom of God will still stand. The individual who loves God and does His will shall enjoy what he or she loves forever.

Great Extremes

If loving God with one's whole being is the greatest commandment, then not to do so must be the greatest sin—indeed, the root of all sin.—Dave Hunt

3. GUARD AGAINST DECEPTION

A. Knowing the Truth (1 John 2:18-25)

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

John is the only Biblical writer who uses the term *antichrist* (v. 18), but the idea expressed by this term is found in other portions of Scripture. Perhaps Paul described him best in writing to the Thessalonians: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4 NKJV).

The spirit of antichrist is seen today in the work of false teachers and false prophets. The closer we come to the end of the age, the stronger this evil influence is felt. It appears the stage is being set for this “man of sin” to take center stage and carry out his diabolical schemes.

Some of those who showed the spirit of antichrist in John’s day had identified themselves with believers. They made up part of the local church. By their departure from the local assembly, they revealed their true colors. They were not merely backsliders, they were apostates. Their purpose was to disrupt and destroy from within (1 John 2:19). To overcome such deceivers today, we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit (v. 20).

The Holy Spirit opens up the Word to us and leads us to a knowledge of the truth (v. 21). Jesus made this clear when He said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26 NKJV).

The greatest lie Satan has perpetrated on the human race is the denial of the truth that is the soul of Christianity—Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who became a man, being born from a virgin’s womb. Whoever denies that wonderful truth is operating in the spirit of antichrist, which not only denies Christ but also denies the Father (1 John 2:22-23). Such a denial strikes at the foundation of the Gospel.

The only way to have continual communion with the Father and the Son is to embrace the truth about them clearly set forth in the Scripture. There are certain truths which we embraced at conversion, and we must hold on to them (v. 24). Times may change; cultures may change; all things around us may change; but the Word of God remains steadfast and true. It is not enough to start well and then drift away; we must persevere in the faith and finish strong. Those who remain true to the Gospel and faithful to Christ are assured of eternal life (v. 25).

§ *According to verse 23, who has the Son? Who has the Father?*

B. Abiding in the Truth (1 John 2:26-29)

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

In John's day as in ours, there were false teachers who were clever enough to deceive the followers of Christ and lead them astray. But John teaches here, and elsewhere, that God has given us safeguards against such destructive outside influences. Living within us is "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). Available to us is the Word of God which can "sanctify" us because it is "the truth" (17:17 NASB). The Holy Spirit unlocks the wonders of the Word.

So, we do not need the aid of some outside force to teach us the truth (1 John 2:27). But we do need to be taught by those who share the same anointing we have. The body of Christ, operating in the Spirit of God with the anointing of the Lord, is able to discern truth. As long as we abide in Christ, He will enable us to recognize and reject falsehood by discerning whatever is incompatible with the truth.

Abiding in Christ involves more than embracing a creed or endorsing a set of beliefs; it also includes living right (v. 29). By righteous living, we give evidence we have been born again. By abiding in Christ, we will have confidence to stand before Him at His appearing (v. 28). Imagine how wonderful it will be to meet Jesus face-to-face and bask in the glory of His presence. John gave us a glimpse of that moment when he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we

shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

Teachability

Since the Spirit is always our Teacher, it is imperative that we always remain teachable.—Lewis Chafer

C. Overcoming Evil and Doing Good (3 John 1:9-11)

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

John’s third letter was written to Gaius, who was a model Christian and a strong supporter of the apostle. Now John speaks to Gaius about a man in the local church who was malicious, power-hungry, and sought to run the church. Apparently, Diotrephes had gathered enough followers to be a force to be reckoned with in the church. He apparently felt threatened by the Apostle John and refused to allow his correspondence to be heard by the church (v. 9). He also spread malicious rumors about John, denigrating his character (v. 10).

John assured Gaius that, upon his arrival, he would confront this troublemaker and expose him to the congregation for what he really was. Diotrephes’ refusal to help traveling preachers and his threat to excommunicate any church member who offered assistance to them grieved the apostle, and he promised to do something about it.

Having pointed out the flaws in Diotrephes, the apostle admonished Gaius not to follow him. Rather, he suggested if he was going to follow anyone, he should follow Demetrius because he had a good testimony and everybody spoke highly of him (v. 12). We need to choose carefully those whom we imitate or endorse.

§ *What is the connection between goodness and God (v. 11)?*

FOLLOW THE LIGHT

One night, during a visit to India, journalist Lee Strobel and his group needed to travel from one rural village to another. There were no street lights or well-marked roads. Their guide was a young Indian man who carried a small lantern.

Lee became impatient with the group's slow pace, so he decided to step out of the lighted path and walk on ahead. But as soon as Lee stepped out of the light, he tumbled down a steep embankment into a dry riverbed.

Lee said this experience gave him a deeper appreciation for Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path" (NLT).—*God's Outrageous Claims*

Daily Devotions

- M. Growing in Knowledge of God (Exodus 33:12-23)
- T. Knowing God Through Obedience (Deuteronomy 6:1-9)
- W. Knowing God Through Worship (Psalm 100:1-5)
- T. Eternal Life Is Knowing God (John 17:1-5)
- F. Making Known the "Unknown" God (Acts 17:22-31)
- S. Knowing Christ's Power and Sufferings (Philippians 3:7-14)