

THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LOVE OF GOD

Please do not read these comments until you have read the Scriptures for this lesson. Begin by letting the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

In this lesson we will consider the law of God (2:3, 5) and the love of God (2:15; cf 4:8). God has laws for believers to obey, but they are given to perfect His love in them (2:5; 4:12-5:3). The children of God should aim to obey God's commandments so they can be holy like He is holy (1 Pet 1:15-16). The law of God teaches us what sin is so we can cut off the serpent's head before it can strike and wound us with its poisonous venom. But if we do sin in a moment of weakness or negligence, God has provided us a remedy that will restore our spiritual health. That remedy is the blood of His Son that was shed on Mount Calvary. He is our great Physician.

God also has provided a righteous Advocate (lawyer) for us when we sin. He opposes the accusations of Satan with the truth that His blood has paid for all our sins and pleads for our forgiveness when we confess our sins to our heavenly Father.

An amazing thing happens when the children of God wholeheartedly keep the law of God. It will bring them into fellowship with God, which will expose them to the heart of God, which in turn will open their hearts to receive the love of God. Now they will be able to love the children of God. Fellowship with God will radically change a believer's life. Seek His fellowship every day, throughout the day.

In the last lesson it was stated that there are four aspects of fellowship with God. First, we must grasp the character of God so that we know who He is (1:5-7). Then we must understand what is involved in true confession of sin to have fellowship with God (1:8-10). In the first part of this lesson, we will look at the next two aspects of fellowship with God: the conciliation of Christ (1:1-2) and the conformity of children (2:3-6).

II, The Communion of Fellowship – 1:5-2:6 (continued from lesson 1)

C. Fellowship and the Conciliation of Christ – 2:1, 2

2:1 – “Little children” –John **addresses** the believers lovingly. He could call them “little children,” (1) because of (1) his office as an apostle; (2) because of his mature age (probably above ninety), and (3) because of his great love for them. His **aim** in writing is that they might not sin. This is God's will for every Christian.

2:2 – “Propitiation” –The word means expiation, or sin offering. Jesus Himself is at once both the priest who mediates, and the sacrifice which expiates. He has **satisfied** God concerning the sins of believers.

“Not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” – Jesus' sacrifice is enough to save the whole world, but it effective only for those that believe and receive it as a gift from God (Jn 1:12; Eph 2:8). Since Jesus' sacrifice is enough to save the whole world, it certainly is enough to cleanse a believer of any sin he may commit so his fellowship with God can be restored.

D. Fellowship and the Conformity of Children – 2:3-6

Fellowship is built upon a person's relationship to another person. Since that relationship can easily be broken by sin, fellowship is fragile as glass. Fellowship with the Father and with His Son must

conscientiously be maintained. For a believer to keep in fellowship with God, he must keep His commandments. Outward evidence of being in fellowship with God is shown in three ways.

2:3-4 – A believer in fellowship with God has confidence. He knows God as his Father and he makes every effort to obey His commandments. If a person says, “I know Him,” and does not obey His commandments, he is a liar. He certainly is not in fellowship with God and may not be His child. Disobeying God’s commands is serious.

2:5 – Secondly, a believer in fellowship with God takes on His character. When he obeys God, the love of God is perfected in him. The degree of his obedience determines the degree of God’s love in him. His love is a measure of his personal development. The Christian who lives by God’s word will be changed by God’s word into a person that loves others like God does. The one who loves has assurance that he is “in Him.”

2:6 – Thirdly, a believer in fellowship with God is godly in his conduct. His walk is as good as his talk. The bible that the world reads is the life of a believer. What kind of a bible does the world read that sees your life? The claims of a Christian must match his conduct.

III. The Commandment of Love – 2:7-17

John next touches the topic of love through a positive/negative approach. He leaves the believer in no doubt as to what he should and should not love. The object of his love should be the family of God. The world, by contrast, must not be the object of his love.

A. Love for the Family – 2:7-11

2:7 – John stresses the two different sides of the command to love. It is both **ancient** in origin (v. 7) and **advanced** in character (v. 8a). The admonition does not claim to be fresh and original, but old and venerable. It formed the core of the “word which (they) had heard from the beginning.”

2:8 – The freshness and advancement of the command to love is stressed in this verse. It is fresh and new because it transforms. This was true in Christ and it was true in them, but in different ways. In Christ, love was demonstrated in a new way that was transforming sinners into saints. In them, love was received in a new way that was transforming their lives and ministries from darkness to light.

“The darkness is past and the true light now shines” – This shows the command was **applicable**. The verb, “past,” is in the present tense and should have been translated with a present progressive idea: “the darkness is passing.” This shows **how** the love commandment had become true and fresh in their lives. They were conquering sin (darkness) and they were incorporating righteousness (light) into their lives on a continuing basis.

2:9-11 – Love has the remarkable capacity to show a person’s true standing with God. Love shows the authenticity of a person’s profession. In this case it is shown by an attitude. A certain man may claim that he has entered into the light but he hates his fellow man. This attitude shows that he has never seen the light and still remains in the darkness. The darkness, in turn, keeps him blind as to his real condition.

By contrast, he who loves his brother does not cause stumbling either to himself or to others. Love for the family is a valid test of family membership.

B. Love for the World – 2:12-17

2:12-14 – This section is both symmetrical and almost poetic. It has two parts, each beginning with an address to little children. These two sections contain the same information, except the second reference to young men, which is somewhat longer.

“Little children” – This is may not be one of three classes, but includes both the fathers and young men. It is a term of relationship because their sins are forgiven. Then the fathers and young men are addressed according to their actual spiritual experience and maturity. This somewhat poetic address is the **preparation** for John’s second appeal for love. It forms the basis on which the appeal is made.

2:15 – “Love not the world”– The **proposition** is straight forward. They are prohibited from loving the world. This encompasses both the worldly sphere and worldly objects. The world is that system of government organized and controlled by Satan so that he is its god. He violently opposes God’s plan, which will dethrone him and make His Son the King of all nations. Although God loves the world of men (John 3:16), He does not love the world system. Therefore, believers must not love the world system, which is organized against God (see 1 John 5:19; John 3:19; James 1:27; 4:4).

2:115b-17 – The appeal is **prolonged** into a powerful argument against the love of the world. The first problem with-love for the world is that it excludes God – “The love of the Father is not in him” (15b). Secondly, it did not come from God - “The lust of the flesh, and he lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father” (16). Finally, it is only temporary - “The world passes away, and the lust thereof” (17). Those who love the things of the world will lose their treasure when it passes away, while those who do the will of God will preserve their treasure in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-20).

IV. The Conflict of Truth – 2:18-28

2:18 – The **time** is late. Evidence of the “last times” is revealed by the many antichrists that precede the last Antichrist.

2:19-23 – “They went out from us” – These men will continue to oppose Christ and His followers, while God’s patience endures throughout the Church Age. These individuals are identified by their **breach** with the body of believers (19). Their **beliefs** about Christ are not orthodox; they deny that Jesus is the Christ. By this denial, they deny the Father as well as the Son (22-23).

2:24-26 – The members that remained in the church fellowship were encouraged to abide in the truth that they had received regarding the Father and Son so they would receive God’s promise of eternal life. John wrote these things because he knew those that left them would seek to seduce them.

2:27-28 - In spite of the persistence of false teachers, the **truth** has a three-fold lasting quality. The Christian is able to identify the falseness of these men because he has the anointing of the Holy Spirit to teach him (cf 20-21). Second, his adherence is to God and to His promise of eternal life (cf 24-25). Thirdly, he has a real alliance with Christ who teaches them the difference between truth and error (27-28). When Christ appears, the Christian will have no cause for shame, if he has been loyal to Him.

V. The Conduct of Children – 2:29

The righteous character of Jesus Christ is the standard for the lives of God’s children. Those who live righteously are those who are born of Him. This is a practical test for judging between true and false Christians.