

**John's First Epistle**  
**Week Two**  
**1 John 2:9-29**

**Day One**

<sup>9</sup>Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.  
<sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup>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.

2:9 – John emphasized in his gospel and his epistles that anyone who claimed to love God but did not love his brother or sister was a liar. The love of God is expressed when you show that love in tangible ways to those who are also part of the body of Christ. This theme is repeated throughout the New Testament. Here is an example:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10).

2:10 – Jesus came not just to save men from their sins but also to build a community of believers to worship the King and love one another. You see the effects of Jesus' commands in the early life of the church as described in Acts. People loved one another and lived in godly community.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:32-35).

One way you know your relationship with the Lord is strong is that your relationships with your brothers and sisters are strong as well. Loving the Lord while sitting at home instead of being in church is not consistent with the Christian faith.

2:11 – Hatred toward a brother or sister is a dangerous condition. It blinds you to the truth of your situation. Jesus was clear that all such problems must be settled quickly lest the hater and the one hated forfeit spiritual blessings:

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

I have quoted quite a few passages above to indicate that John was sharing basic but important truths with his readers. **Have you applied these truths to your walk with the Lord?**

### Day Two

<sup>12</sup>I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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.

2:12 – This series of three statements repeated twice has always confused me, and no commentary I have ever seen has an answer for why John structured them this way. Yet in the context of whom he was writing, it seems that John was refuting the claims of those who left the church, claiming they had special spiritual insight. These three statements seem to indicate there is a natural progression of spiritual maturity that cannot be circumvented with special spiritual insight. There is no substitute for consistently and faithfully, walking with the Lord for many years.

First, we are children and we come to the Lord for forgiveness of sins. That is where it all begins. No one can come to God on his or her own merits. You come to Him through the name and blood of the Son, Jesus Christ. There are no shortcuts and everyone comes by the same way.

2:13 – Once we are children, we hopefully mature into believers who can help others and have a deeper understanding of and relationship with the Lord. If you have ever been with a mature saint who has walked with the Lord for many years, you can say that man or woman “knows” the Lord. They know His ways and not just what He does:

He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel (Psalm 147:19).

The young men, the stage in between childhood and maturity, have had to wrestle with the devil and their own inadequacies. They have had the idealism removed from their walk as they encounter tests and trials they perhaps thought they would never have to face. This is one way to understand John's progression of children, young men and fathers.

Then John returned to the children, stating that they have known the Father. When a young believer has his or her sins forgiven, then that person can build a relationship with the Father. Those early days of faith are so exhilarating as the Father reveals Himself and His goodness to His child.

**So father, young men, children – where are you in this process?** I would say that I am a father after thirty-six years with the Lord!

2:14 – John repeated his reason for writing the fathers again – they have known Him who is from the beginning. Those mature in the faith know the Lord and can share that knowledge with others. They provide the stability in a fellowship because they have seen and walked through so much.

Then John wrapped up by addressing the young men once more, stating that they are strong and have the word in them, thus allowing them to overcome the evil one. There is no substitute for young men and women and, as I advance in years, I must make room for those who have the energy and enthusiasm to attempt things that I once did, but no longer have the desire or oomph to try. Those young men and women, however, must have a deep encounter with God's word if they are going to make it to the next step of being mature parents in the Lord.

**Once you identify your stage in life as per John's three-fold structure, what do you think is expected of you at this point in your development?**

### Day Three

<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

2:15 – The world system is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God. Its values are not God's values and the behavior it honors is often opposed to God's righteousness. James explained it in these terms:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (James 4:4).

Yet the world system is what appeals to your sinful nature. This is why Jesus said that you must deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Him if you are going to be obedient.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

**Are you doing a good job of turning your back on the world, or is the world winning the war for your heart and mind? What indicators do you have either way? Ask God to help you see reality.**

2:16 – John described the means through which the world can capture your allegiance. I like how this verse is translated in the Amplified Version:

For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]--these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself].

The Message translation puts it like this:

Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity.

Take a moment and prayerfully consider where you are in regards to these three sinful tendencies: cravings, lusts, boasting.

2:17 – This worldly system and all that goes with it will surely pass away, but anyone who does God's will lives forever. Of course that will isn't just doing good deeds, but putting your faith in Christ and then performing the good deeds with right motives and from a pure heart.

#### Day Four

<sup>18</sup>Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. <sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. <sup>20</sup>But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

2:18 – This verse has led people to conclude that John believed the return of Jesus was imminent because he said it was the last hour. That is not necessarily the case. John indicated that the antichrist was coming and many had already come. When you look at

what John wrote in Revelation, he was indicating the very real spiritual battle that was always going on in this last age prior to the Lord's return.

Notice also that John was looking for many antichrists, not just one. I am not sure if there is one big antichrist that will usher in the return of the Lord. Remember, John was writing to encourage the church after some had left the fellowship in pursuit of other doctrinal positions in conflict with the apostolic traditions. It seems that John was referring to those who left the church as people following an "anti-Christian" spirit.

2:19 – Here we see the dilemma. The group went out from the church that received John's letter. John interpreted this to mean that they were not of the church in the first place. **Was John just being hard or intolerant?** No. John and the apostles received the message from Jesus and they faithfully imparted that message to the churches they founded. John, Paul and Peter had no tolerance for anyone who tried to change their gospel!

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-8).

This indicates that what you believe is very important and that no one has the right to alter or add to the message of the apostles. John intimated that those who left had to go, and their going proved the invalid nature of their message. Of course, the modern church has many more worship options and people can pick and choose what church they want to attend and base that decision on the quality of music, children's ministry or facilities. Yet I think that doctrine and teaching should be at the top of a church choice list. It seems that doctrine was important to John and it should be important to you as well.

v. 20 – **Did you ever know something to be true the first time you heard it?** That is the dynamic that John referred to here. The Holy Spirit has come to lead and guide you into truth and, since He dwells in you, He will help you recognize truth when you hear or see it. That means that anyone who ignores or walks away from the truth has to overcome the leading of the Holy Spirit to do so!

Those who had left the church had followed a spirit contrary to the Holy Spirit! John was comforting those left behind with these words. We cannot interpret this today to mean that anyone who leaves one church and going to another is following the spirit of antichrist! We can make that judgment, however, when anyone leaves a church to follow strange doctrines not consistent with Scripture and the tradition of the Church.

*Lord, keep me from straying from Your way and Word. I want to be consistent in what I believe and what I do, and I want to stay in You. Keep me from doctrinal weirdness and allow me to fellowship with Your people in Your church. Amen*

## Day Five

<sup>21</sup>I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. <sup>22</sup>Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup>No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

2:21 – John wrote not to tell the reader the truth, but to assure them that they had the truth. They had remained true to the Church of Jesus by staying true to the message of Jesus. **Can we surmise from what John wrote that those who left had believed a lie and that is why they departed? What was the nature of the lie?** We find that in the next verse.

2:22 – Those who left denied that Jesus was or is the Christ, the Anointed One. You will find that most heresies since Jesus departed have been around who He is, His person and nature. That would make sense. Surely the spirit of the antichrist would promote doctrine that is against the mission, person and nature of Christ. **What hope do we have of combating his plots?** We have God’s word and we have the Holy Spirit. If you want to stay in the truth, then you simply submit to those two and you will have no problem. Those who do not follow another spirit and that can only be an anti-Christ spirit.

John indicated that when someone denies the Son, they also deny the Father. So it is not possible to come to God, according to John, unless one comes through Jesus to the Father. This is the standard message of the gospel from all the apostles. When people reject the highway to heaven, they cannot choose another road! This is the dilemma of our modern era, for many proclaim that there are multiple ways to God. John refuted that doctrine when he wrote and it is still valid today.

2:23 – Here John repeated this truth plainly: If anyone wants the Father, he or she must acknowledge the Son. This makes sense. If the Father sent Jesus, which of course He did, then anyone who rejects the Son is rejecting the Father’s will. I am listening to a series now by a secular author, and her theme is making a case for God. She traces the history of God, or attempts to trace it, from the earliest times and it is obvious she is not a believer. I think she believes in God, but she does not acknowledge the Son.

What stands out in her historical overview is how man’s sinful nature causes him repeatedly to look for a god who is more to his liking. Man is always at the center of the discussion and not God Himself. When the Son is not the anchor, then someone’s ship of faith wanders and floats all over the sea of error.

Man cannot decide what kind of god he wants or needs. That is idolatry, even if no graven image is fashioned. There is a mental image of what kind of god the person desires and that breaks the commandments that forbids strange gods. **Where can you get an accurate picture of the true God?** You get that by studying Scripture and accepting what it has to say about Jesus?

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

### Day Six

<sup>24</sup>See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup>And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. <sup>26</sup>I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

2:24 – You and I must work to maintain the Word that we received. That means that there is someone or something that is working to take the Word away. Jesus indicated this in His parable of the sower:

Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them (Mark 4:13-15).

**What do you have to battle to keep the Word in you, to keep it from being snatched, or choked or stolen? How effective are you at maintaining what you have so that you can get more?** What you believe is important, for John instructed that correct doctrine enables you to maintain your fellowship with the Father and Son!

I mentioned a series I am listening to in yesterday's study. The spirit of unbelief is so strong in that series that I have to battle to control my thoughts as I read Scripture and some of my class textbooks! **If that is what I have to battle and I am grounded in the Word, what do others who are not grounded experience when they encounter the spirit of this age? Has the spirit of unbelief or doubt attacked you? What can you do to win the battle?** You can get into the Word and accept what it says, and you can call on the Holy Spirit to help you. That is why He is here according to John:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come (John 16:13).

2:25 – Jesus promised that anyone who believed His words would have eternal life; He would preserve them forever! **Isn't that simple?** Yet mankind wants something more intricate and complex, something that man can be involved in to earn salvation or right standing with God. That is not possible, yet man tries in every generation to find a way around what Jesus said and He said that He is the only way to the Father:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the **Father** except through me" (John 14:6).

**Do you accept this truth? Or have you been affected by the spirit of the age that questions whether or not God really said or meant this?** If you have been affected, then repent and ask for God's help. You are in real danger!

2:26 – So now we see that those who left did not simply leave, but they were also trying to lead the sheep away into error. John was vigilant, through the Spirit, to combat these efforts and the Spirit left us John's letter to help us do the same. Just as that series to which I am listening is trying to lead me astray, there are many intelligent evil forces who are trying to do the same to you. The good news is the God is with you and He will protect you as long as we stay under His protective covering.

By the way, you may ask why I am listening to this series if it is so steeped in unbelief. I want to hear and know what is being said in other circles so that I can combat that in my preaching and teaching. I pray for God to protect me and then I listen to help others. I am not afraid I will lose what I have for God is greater than any spirit of unbelief. My hope and trust are in Him.

### Day Seven

<sup>27</sup>As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. <sup>28</sup>And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. <sup>29</sup>If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

2:27 – John did not mean that these believers did not need teachers, for teachers are among the five-fold gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:9-11. He did mean that they could recognize the truth that they had as just that: truth. Whereas those who departed were searching for new insight and wisdom, John's friends were grounded in the Spirit of truth who was leading them to remain in God's word and in fellowship with one another. They had no need of anyone bringing them additional revelation, which the group that left obviously tried to do. They had everything they needed (the group who stayed, that is) and if they remained in that truth, they would remain in the Lord Himself.

John alluded to a counterfeit anointing and this would be expected. The reason there would be a counterfeit is because there is a real. This indicates that there is a real intelligence behind the counterfeit who can recognize the real but with malicious intent then copies the real to create a forgery. There is only one way to identify a forgery and that is to be so familiar with the real that a fake cannot be tolerated. John simply kept reminding his readers of what Jesus said – the truth – so that they could confidently resist the false.

2:28 – John referred to his readers as dear children, not of him, but of the heavenly Father. There are some who make quite an issue of being a spiritual father and having

spiritual children. That is a concept foreign to the Scriptures. There is only one Father and we are His children and no one else's.

John affirmed again that Jesus will return and that each believer will give an account for his or her behavior, which in this context relates to correct doctrine as well as behavior. That correct doctrine for these readers led them to be true to their fellowship and that was the correct thing to do.

You should behave and act like the Lord will return at any moment, which is also what Jesus Himself advised His followers to do.

2:29 – Jesus is righteous, so those who follow Him shall do what is right. That is how you will know that person is a follower of Jesus.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

"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. 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?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:15-23).

John wrote to comfort all those who felt loss as those who were considered part of God's family abandoned the family. That happened then and it happens today. The only way to stay true to the Lord is through obedience to His word and commitment to follow Him no matter what.