



Perfect Love

ABIDING IN CHRIST

1 John 2

Teaching Notes

INTRO

Today, we continue in our study of the General Letters (those not written by the apostle Paul). Our phrase for 1 John is *Perfect Love* (4:18). Through Christ, we have received perfect love, and we no longer have to function in fear. Really, the word for all the letters of John could be LOVE.

TEACHING

1 John 2:1-6: John wrote this letter to keep his readers from sin, not implying they would never sin again but that when they sinned, Jesus was their advocate with God (v. 1). MacArthur writes, “Although Satan prosecutes believers night and day before the Father due to sin (Revelation 12:10), Christ’s high priestly ministry guarantees not only sympathy, but also acquittal (Hebrews 4:14–16).”¹

You can be carrying the weight of sin for a long time, but you don’t have to! Jesus is your advocate, so let go of the guilt. But doesn’t mean we can intentionally sin.

John describes Jesus as the “Righteous One” who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (v. 2). The term propitiation means appeasement or satisfaction through what Jesus did on the cross.² *Nelson’s Commentary* defines propitiation as “the merciful removal of guilt through divine forgiveness.”³ The only way for propitiation in our lives, and for all mankind, is through Jesus’ death on the cross.

We come to know Christ by keeping His commands (v. 3). MacArthur explains, “Obedience is the external, visible proof of salvation.”⁴ Those who claim to be followers of Christ but do not obey His commands are liars (v. 4).

Most of us know someone who claims to be a Christian, but we’re not sure if he or she really is because there is no spiritual fruit that shows outwardly. Maybe this means they are someone who knows Christ but is walking in sin. An example is a believer who spends his or her private time looking at pornography. That believer is a liar because he or she isn’t in obedience to Christ’s commands. I know that’s a drastic statement, but it’s what the passage says.

MacArthur writes that the word “commits” in 1 John 3:4 is translated from a Greek word that “conveys the idea of habitual practice.”⁵ We have a sin nature, and we can and do sin. However, when we acknowledge our sin and accept God’s forgiveness, we can break the sin from becoming habitual. MacArthur provides four reasons why Christians cannot habitually sin:

1. “Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the law of God, which they love.”
2. “Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the work of Christ.”
3. “Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because Christ came to destroy the works of the arch-sinner Satan.”
4. “Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit” who lives within us.⁶

God’s love is perfected in those who obey Christ’s commands (v. 5). That means remaining in Him and walking as He walked (v. 6) (1 Corinthians 11:1). MacArthur writes, “Those who claim to be Christians ought to live as He did since they possess His Spirit’s presence and power.”⁷

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), pp. 1951.

² MacArthur, p. 1951.

³ Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, eds., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p. 1707.

⁴ MacArthur, p. 1952.

⁵ MacArthur, p. 1951.

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1 John 2:7–17: Therefore, John wrote about an old command, “not new in the sense of time, but something that is fresh in quality, kind, or form; something that replaces something else that has been worn out”⁸ (vv. 7–8). John continued the same theme in verses 9–10, stating if a believer cannot love his brother he is in darkness, while the one who loves his brother remains in the light without stumbling in sin (vv. 9–11).

John wrote to remind his readers that their sins have already been forgiven through Jesus. Since they know Christ, they can be victorious over Satan and sin (vv. 12–13). Notice the progression—fathers, young men, and children (v. 13)—of spiritual maturity. The fathers were the most spiritually mature, and they knew God. The young men had strong doctrine but not the years of spiritual experience as the fathers. The children had a basic understanding of God but needed to mature. Regardless of the level of spiritual maturity of each group, none of them were to focus on the world or the things that belong to the world (v. 15).

The love of things should never be elevated above the Father. The things that belong to the world—lust, flesh, pride—do not come from God (v. 16). The things of the world are temporary; only the things of God are eternal (v. 17).

1 John 2:18–27: Focus on the things of God because the “Antichrist is coming” (v. 18). The tribulation is coming, and until that happens, multiple people have modeled the antichrist to us already. In verse 19, these antichrists (false teachers) in the past led believers away from the truth of God. However, the church/believers don’t have to worry about it because they’ve been anointed by the Holy One and have knowledge of His truth (v. 20).

These antichrists will deny God and will deny that Jesus is the Messiah (v. 22). Verses 23–24 warn how this will happen. But we have the promise of eternal life through Jesus (v. 25). John warned his readers not to be deceived (v. 26). We have received an anointing from Christ through the Holy Spirit (v. 27).

CLOSING

When you have a relationship with Christ, the Spirit of God will show you what is of God and what is not. Walk in His anointing like He walked.

⁸ MacArthur, p. 1953.