

“Let us teach the New Testament!”

First Epistle of John

Lesson 2, 1 John 1:5–2:2

1john.currah.download August 2019

Introduction

In this second of 15 lessons on the New Testament Book of 1 John, we shall look at the following nine matters.

1. The English Standard Version text of 1 John 1:5–2:2.
2. The Greek text, noting variant readings from ancient manuscripts.
3. A teaching outline for preachers and teachers.
4. Phrases in the passage that have parallels in the Gospel of John.
5. Important words and their historical meaning.
6. A note on Greek grammar.
7. Teaching summaries that you might find helpful.
8. Historical Christian doctrines that the passage contains.
9. Suggestions for Christians who want to apply the passage in their life.

1. The English Standard Version text of 1 John 1:5–2:2

⁵ Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth.

⁷ But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. ¹ (My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, ² and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world. (English Standard Version, 2016)

2. The ancient Greek text of 1 John 1:5–2:2

⁵ Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία.

⁶ Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, ψευδόμεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ⁷ Ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ’ ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἶμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας. ⁸ Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. ⁹ Ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ καθάριση ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.

¹⁰ Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. ¹ Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε. καὶ ἐὰν τις ἀμάρτη, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, ² καὶ αὐτὸς ἰλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. (Society of Biblical Literature, ²⁰¹⁰)

Manuscript Variants

1 John 1:5–2:2 was well preserved through 20 centuries of copying, being attested by scores of Greek manuscripts. Nevertheless, a few scribes made tiny changes. Leaving aside a few differences in word order, which matter little in Greek, we note the following textual variants.

1.5 From the 4th century, some manuscripts spell the word “message” (αγγελια) with a prefix (επαγγελια); and two manuscripts read, “love (αγαπη) of the message,” an apparent copyist’s mistake.

1.7 The earliest surviving manuscripts provide a conjunction (δε) at verse 7: “But if we walk in the light.” Other manuscripts do not have a conjunction, and it remains hard to know if the conjunction was original.

Some early manuscripts insert “Christ (Χριστου) after “Jesus (Ιησου).”

From the 8th century, some manuscripts replace “cleanses” (καθαριζει) with “will cleanse (καθαρισει).”

1.8 From the 12th century, a couple of manuscripts insert “of God” after “the truth.”

1.9 From the 4th century, some manuscripts read “our sins” instead of “sins”.

From the 5th century, some manuscripts spell “cleanse” (καθαριση) a little differently (καθαρισει), probably due to changes in Greek pronunciation.

1.10 From the 10th century, a couple of manuscripts read, “we did not sin” (ημαρτομεν) instead of “we have not sinned” (ημαρτηκαμεν).

2.1 From the 10th century, two manuscripts read, “stop sinning” (μη αμαρτανητε) instead of “not sin” (μη αμαρτητε).

2.2 From the 4th century, a few manuscripts read, “only (μονων, an adjective) ours” instead of “ours only (μονον, an adverb).

3. Analytical outline for preachers, teachers and groups leaders.

This outline reflects a “discourse analysis” of recurring words and themes, transitional phrases and internal logic.

Part 1: Our Fellowship with God 1.1 - 2.17

II. The Original Message 1.5 – 2.2

A. The True God 1.5

1. Message received
2. Message proclaimed

B. Three tests of truth

1. True fellowship
 - a. Those who lie 1.6
 - b. Those who have fellowship 1.7
2. True confession
 - a. Those who deceive themselves 1.8
 - b. Those who confess their sins 1.9
3. The true faith
 - a. Those who deny their sin 1.10
 - b. Those who admit their sin 2.1

C. Jesus is our sacrifice 2.2

1. For our sins
2. For the whole world

4. Parallels between this passage and the Gospel of John

| | |
|---|--|
| We walk in the light, as he is in the light, 1:7 | “I am the light of the world Whoever follows me ... will have the light of life.” 8:12 |
| We have an advocate [Helper] with the Father, 2:1 | I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 |
| Propitiation for sins ... whole world 2.2 | Takes away the sin of the world 1.29 |

The first recipients and readers of this epistle of 1 John knew John and his teaching. They were so familiar with the Gospel of John, that they understood what he meant by the terms Light, Walk, Advocate, Christ, Propitiation, Just and World.

5. This passage's special vocabulary

1 John 1.5 – 2.2 is rich in specialized vocabulary that was current in Judaism and the new Christian faith, as well as in Greek religions and philosophies. I recommend that you download the definitions document from the download site.

We note in particular the following:

Light. The exclusive domain of God, completely pure, good, true and righteous, free of all ignorance, sins, demons, false religion, and immoral behaviour.

Fellowship. Close association with God in which he shares with us his strength, wisdom, joy and hope.

Blood. Jesus' death on a cross allows a righteous God to forgive and remove human sins, guilt, shame and fear.

Confess. Admit our sins, first to God, then to others whom we may have harmed or offended.

Advocate. Jesus Christ who appears in heaven with the Father in our behalf, announcing to angels that he had died to forgive us our sins.

Atoning sacrifice (Propitiation). Jesus' death on a cross satisfies God's holiness that had been offended by human sins.

6. A note on Greek Grammar

In verses 1:6—2:1, John employ six conditional sentences, each beginning with “if”. These form three pairs of conditions, each pair having an error and a corrective to that error.

1:⁶ **If** we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, [then] we are lying and not practicing the truth. ⁷ **But if** we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, [then] we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸ **If** we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, [then] we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ **But if** we confess our sins, [yet] he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ **If** we say we have not sinned, [then] we make him a liar and his word is not in us. 2:¹ **But if** anyone does sin, [yet] we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One.

Greek grammar provides two main ways in which to form conditional sentences: (1) the ‘first class condition,’ which is assumed to be true, formed with the particle εἰ (‘ei’, *if* or *since*) followed by a verb in the indicative (reality) mood; and (2) the ‘second class condition,’ which is assumed to be possible, formed with εἰαν (‘ean’ *if* or *should*) followed a verb in the subjunctive (potential) mood.

In these verses, John employs the second class condition, underscoring that the errors could be true of some Christians, yet also that the correctives can become true of all Christians.

7. Teachable observations from the passage

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you teaching from this passage. For examples, see the following five summaries from 1 John 1:5—2:2.

1. Three amazing truths about Jesus Christ:

- He serves as a righteous Advocate in heaven in behalf of Christians.
- He died as a propitiation, a sacrifice that pleases God.
- His death has power to cleanse away our sins.

2. Three provisions that God has made to deal with Christians' sins:

- He promises us fellowship with him.
- He remains faithful and just to forgive our sins.
- Jesus-Christ serves as our righteous Advocate in heaven.

3. Three mistakes that Christians make regarding their own sin:

- To imagine that one can have fellowship with God while committing evil deeds.
- To imagine that one has no desire or ability to commit evil deeds.
- To imagine that one no longer commits sinful acts.

4. Three correctives for Christians who sin:

- Restore our fellowship with God by abandoning evil deeds.
- Admit our ability and desire to commit evil deeds.
- Confess our many sins as we become aware of them.

5. Three promises of God for Christians:

- To enjoy fellowship with God when we avoid sinning.
- To forgive our sins and cleanses us from unrighteousness when we confess our sins.
- To apply these promises to anyone in the whole world that becomes a Christian.

8. Doctrines to teach from the passage

1. *Light and Darkness.* God is light, that is, the Father and the Son are just and morally pure, have no sin, cannot lie, and cause no one to do evil. Those who disbelieve God or who disobey God are in darkness.

2. *Truth and lies.* God has spoken to humanity through prophets and through Jesus Christ. God's words are entirely true. Those who say anything that contradicts God's revealed messages are liars, and they make God out to be a liar.

3. *Sin and unrighteousness.* When human beings violate God's words, laws or commandments, they commit sin and become unrighteous. Humans have sin, that is, a capacity and will to commit evil, and they commit sins, acts that offend God. Having committed sins, humans become unrighteous, that is, they break their fellowship with God.

4. *Jesus*. The eternal son of God became a human being through birth. Jesus led a sinless life, worked merciful miracles, declared himself to be One with the Father, atoned for human sins by his death, rose back to life, and has ascended bodily into heaven, serving as Advocate before God in behalf of Christian believers.

5. *Christ*. God revealed to his prophets that a descendent of King David would one day rule over all nations. They foretold where and when he would be born, that he would perform signs, and how he would suffer and gain glory. The man Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

6. *Forgiveness of sins*. God remains 'faithful and just,' remitting or cancelling the sins of human beings who confess their sins. God cleansing humans from their sins by the blood or death of Jesus Christ.

7. *Atoning sacrifice*. Jewish and Roman leaders conspired together and crucified Jesus. Because Jesus was both God and sinless Man, his death propitiates God, that is it satisfies God's holiness, and it expiates (pays the penalty of) human sins.

9. Suggested applications for Christians

In small gatherings of learners, pose queries such as these:

- What have you learnt from this passage about God?
- What have you learnt from this passage about Jesus?
- What have you learnt from this passage about sin?
- What promises of God have you learnt from this passage?

Seek to live this week in a way that pleases God, expecting him to suppress our evil desires.

Confess to God our sins, every time we become aware of them.

Thank Jesus often for serving as our righteous Advocate in heaven.

Help others to plan their next time with family members, to learn from 1 John and to pray one for another.

Conclusion

- Download the document of this lesson at **1john.currah.download**.
- Read five times 1 John 2:3-11 before you view the next video lesson.
- Please, leave comments or queries, or write to me at the download site. I shall try to reply to you by email or on line.