

Introduction to 1.John 2

Part 1

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[00:00:01] As was mentioned before, the subject of the conference is the second chapter of the first epistle of John.

On tonight we have the first opportunity of reading that chapter together. I would like to read from the first epistle of John, chapter 2.

John chapter 2, verse 1.

My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin. And if anyone sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins, but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world.

And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps his word in him verily, the love of God is perfected. [00:01:04] Hereby we know that we are in him. He that says he abides in him ought even as he walked himself also so to walk. Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which ye have had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again I write a new commandment to you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness until now. He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and knows not where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I write to you, children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. [00:02:01] I write to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome

the wicked one. Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because 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. And the world is passing, and its lust. But he that does the will of God abides for eternity. Little children, it is the last hour. And according as ye have heard that Antichrist comes, even now there have come many Antichrists, [00:03:03] whence we know that it is the last hour. They went out from among us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have surely remained with us, but that they might be made manifest, that none are of us.

And he hath the unction from the Holy One, and he know all things. I have not written to you because ye do not know the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either. He who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you. If what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father.

And this is the promise which he has promised us, life eternal. [00:04:02] These things have I written to you concerning those who lead you astray. And yourselves, the unction which ye have received from him abides in you, and ye have not need that anyone should teach you. But as the same unction teaches you as to all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, children, abide in him, that if he be manifested, we may have boldness and not be put to shame from before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, know that everyone who practices righteousness is begotten of him." Last year when we started the first epistle of John, we had some general thoughts on the writer of this epistle and of the general subject of John's gospel.

And so tonight I would like to give a short outline of this second chapter that will be [00:05:04] before us in this conference.

We have already seen or mentioned one of the differences between John's gospel and John's epistle.

In John's gospel we see what our brother expressed in his prayer at the beginning, that the Lord Jesus was here on earth and he manifested the characteristics of eternal life.

But in the epistle of John we see that these characteristics of eternal life are also seen in the believers.

One key verse to this epistle is in our chapter in verse 8, which thing is true in him and in you, that which was true in him when he was here on earth is today true in him and in us, the believers.

If I would give a headline to this short outline I'm going to give, I would call it Three Claims, Three Tests, and Three Stages of Growth. [00:06:05] John the writer of the epistle is very often expressing his ideas in threes.

And so we will find in this chapter, in the first eleven verses, that there are three claims that somebody professes and John gives us three tests to prove if this claim is true.

And later on in the second part of the chapter, which will be, as I understand, our main subject of the

conference, he tells us that there are in this family among the children of God, there are three different stages of spiritual growth. The first two verses of this chapter, we have dealt with that already, show us the Lord Jesus and his wonderful work as an advocate.

In chapter 1, John had pointed out that we could not say we have no sin and we could not say we have not sinned, but that does not mean that the believer has to sin.

[00:07:05] And John says, I have written you these things in order that you may not sin. But if anyone sin, there is this advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ the righteous, who restores the believer into fellowship with the Father and the Son. And from verse 3 to verse 11, we find that John gives us these three claims.

He always starts with a general statement in verse 3, and hereby we know that we know him. He does not say, and hereby we know him, but hereby we know that we know him. John is trying to emphasize the security the believer has in knowing the truth.

And he says, we know that we know him if we keep his commandment. And then comes this first claim.

It always starts with these words, he that says.

[00:08:02] In the first chapter, we all have read, if we say, but here in chapter 2, it's a general statement in the third person, a profession somebody made, he that says, I know him.

So there comes somebody who says, well, I know him, or to put it simply, who says, I'm a Christian, I know the Lord Jesus.

And John says, well, we can prove, we can test such a confession.

If somebody says, I know him, and does not keep his commandment, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Obedience is the first test of this profession. If somebody does not obey the word of God, does not keep his commandments, and these are not the commandments of the Old Testament, but the commandments of the New Testament of the Christian faith, and somebody does not keep his commandments, he says, he is [00:09:01] a liar.

The truth is not in him. He is not a believer. He is simply making a confession, saying he knows him, but that is not true, because there's no obedience in him.

You may remember what we had last year, that John is always writing in black and white. He is giving the principles. He says, if there is obedience to the commandments of God, then the profession is true. If there's no obedience, then such a person is a liar. We all know that in our practical lives we fail, and we may find out that we haven't obeyed in a certain case a single commandment, but he's speaking about the principle. Somebody who principally keeps the commandments, such a one knows that he knows him. He can be sure that he is a Christian, but if somebody does not keep the commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps his word in him, verily the love of God is perfected. [00:10:04] I leave it to the Bible readings to find out if there's a difference between commandments and the word in obeying them, but obedience in general is the proof of the confession here. Then he goes on to a second statement, hereby we know that we are in him. And again, there is a confession.

He that says he abides in him.

Somebody says, I abide in him. I am a Christian, I'm living in fellowship with the Lord.

Well, John says there again, we have a test to prove if that is true.

He that says he abides in him ought even as he walked himself also so to walk.

So the second test is that in the life of such a person who says I abide in him, something of the character of the walk and life of the Lord Jesus should be seen.

[00:11:06] A reproduction of the life of the Lord Jesus should be seen in the Christian. It is a walk of the same order, we may say.

The difference between us and the Lord is not in the kind of walk, but in the degree. In him, of course, everything was in perfection, but with us it is weakness. But that is not the subject of John. He is just saying he should be walking as the Lord walked. I once read in a book an illustration of this, and the writer used Peter, when he was walking on the water. And Peter walking on the water was walking as the Lord walked. He was walking on water, and Peter as well. Well, Peter failed, we know, he began to sink. But nevertheless, in principle, he was walking as the Lord walked. And that should be the characteristic of the Christian, to walk even as he walked. So if somebody says he abides in him, but in his life nothing could be seen that corresponds [00:12:07] to the walk of the Lord, that is a reproduction of the life of Christ, then it is simply a statement with no truth behind it.

Then we find in verses 7 and 8 that he speaks again, we already mentioned it, about a commandment, and he says, in one sense it is an old commandment, nothing new, which he had from the beginning, and this old commandment is the word which he heard, and if we compare this with the beginning of this epistle, where John speaks about the Lord Jesus, that which was from the beginning, concerning the word of life, this has to do again with the Lord Jesus here on earth as the manifestation of the truth of God, of eternal life. But then he says, in another sense, this commandment is a new one, which thing is true in him and [00:13:02] in you.

Now also in the believer, this eternal life, the characteristics of that life are seen in the believer as well as it was in the Lord. And therefore darkness is passing and the true light already shines.

Darkness has not passed yet, this is future, but it's already passing because the light shines because there are those here that manifest new life, eternal life, the characteristics of it.

And now, for a third time, somebody who may have heard this, he comes and says, well, I am in the light.

He who says he is in the light. The third time, again, this confession, he who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now.

So John says the third proof, the third test you have is the love for the brethren. [00:14:03] If somebody says he is in the light but he hates his brother, this is only the proof that he is in darkness, which means that he is not a believer at all because he that loves his brother abides in light.

We mentioned last year that one of John's, three of John's favorite words in the English language and in a number of other languages starts with L. It's love and light and life. And these three terms are connected very often in John's Gospel. Here in our verse, in verse 10, it says, he that loves his brother abides in light. Here love is connected with light. If we turn, for example, to chapter 3, verse 14, it says, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

[00:15:01] The love for the brethren is also connected with life here and in our verse with light. So these three terms, they all go together and the love for the brethren, for those that have the same nature than we have, is the proof that this confession is right if somebody says he is in the light.

With verse 12, he now comes to this subject about these different stages of growth.

The apostles view believers differently in their epistles.

Paul mainly sees the believer as a member of the assembly of God, while Peter sees the believers primarily as members of the flock of God.

He is the shepherd, so to say. And John, he sees the believers, as some call it, as a family of God or the children of God. And that's what he is talking about now.

[00:16:03] And in verse 12, he addresses all of them, all the children, I write to your children because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. So that's the first point which is true of every believer, to say, well, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

So maybe I could ask this question tonight, if everybody here in this room could say, well, that's true of me. I know that my sins are forgiven for his name's sake. Because that's a family matter we are talking about now. What the next verses are talking about is not about you if you do not know that your sins are forgiven.

That is the basis of this relationship of the children of God, their sins are forgiven for your name's sake.

And then the apostle speaks of three groups, the fathers, the young men, and the children, [00:17:09] or little children, the babes, in Christ.

And first of all, on all three of them together, I would like to point out first of all that this is a spiritual growth and not a natural one.

It does not speak about people that are young in the age, or middle-aged, or old people, but it speaks about a spiritual condition in which they are.

So this means there could be the case, maybe an exceptional case, but there could be the case that even a younger person through many things he has experienced in his life with the Lord has matured and is a father in Christ.

And it may also be, and we have to confess this may be not so seldom, there may be the [00:18:02] case that somebody has grown old here on earth but still is a child because he has not grown in the things of the Lord. But how happy it is if there is this natural growth that John puts here before us. And maybe we should mention that there is a difference in our natural way of growing up and this spiritual way.

When a child becomes a young man or young woman, then he normally loses some of the things that characterized him as a children. He didn't do things he did as a child when he becomes a young man. And when he gets older and becomes old, he may lose some of the energy he had as a young man. But this is not true in the spiritual sense. You do not lose what characterized the stage before. So the young men, to say it in the words of John, the young men still know the Father and the Fathers still overcome the wicked one. [00:19:02] They just have matured a stage further. And he writes to both groups twice.

And in my short outline here, I would take these two addresses to the different groups together.

What he said about the Fathers in the first case, in verse 13, is, I write to you, Fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. But here's the Lord Jesus Christ.

The verses he writes to the different groups gets longer when we come to go down from Fathers to Children.

The Fathers, it's the shortest. It's only this one sentence, I write to you, Children, because sins are forgiven. I write to you, Fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. And when he writes to them the second time in verse 14, it's just the same. He does not add anything, because what they have is really a state of maturity where Christ [00:20:04] is all for them.

They have realized the all-sufficiency of Christ.

How wonderful that is if we see a person that really, for whom we could say, well, Christ is all for him.

But we find later, the world, false teachings, always Christ is brought in, and that settles all. Christ is all for them.

I'm sure most of us would really desire such a thing, and I think it would be a good thing if this conference would rekindle this desire in our hearts to be more like that, that Christ might really be everything for us.

Ye have known him that is from the beginning, Lord Jesus Christ, fills all of these Fathers. They are occupied with Christ, and nothing else but Christ. [00:21:02] That is a wonderful thing, to have such a state of maturity where Christ is everything for you.

Then he goes to speak about the young men.

I write to you, young men, because he has overcome the wicked one. The young men are characterized by strength in conflict. They have overcome the wicked one. They have dealt with the adversary, with the devil, and they have overcome him.

They have overcome the wicked one. And if we want to know why did they overcome the wicked one, what was the source of their strength, we have to look at the second time when John writes to them. He says, I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. He says, you are strong, but this strength is not something in us. He says, the word of God abides in you.

[00:22:04] When we are dealing with Satan, the wicked one, it is important that the word of God abides in us.

It means that the word of God forms their thoughts, governs their affections, and rules their actions.

So we may wonder if that is true of us, that all our thoughts are formed by the word of God, that our affections are governed by the word of God, and also our actions, that what we do is controlled by the word of God.

It abides in them.

There is this picture in the Old Testament, which we might use perhaps as illustrating this here, in the time of the judges, where this man was fighting with his sword, a picture of the word of God, and until his hand cleaved to the sword, he was one with the sword, the [00:23:03] word of God. It abides in him. It was really the thing that characterized and governed all his life. The word of God abides in you. What a wonderful state that is, if you have the word of God in you, and it governs everything in you.

You've overcome the wicked one, but different from the fathers, now he also has an exhortation for them.

There is a danger for the young man when he says, love not the world, nor the things in the world.

There is the danger for this young man that the world, again, may become an attraction for them.

We have in the New Testament this companion of the apostle Paul, Demas, who was one, fighting with Paul together against the devil.

But sometime later Paul is to say, well, Demas has left me because he loved the course of [00:24:06] this world.

Love not the world, nor the things of the world. The world is not only an abstract concept. It is something real. There are things in this world which we should not love.

And he says, if anyone loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. He contrasts the love of the world with the love of the Father. And then he says, while talking about the world, when we talk about the world, we may be able to talk about 130 things that characterize the world, but the apostle John just puts it down to three principles that drive everything in the world.

He says, all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

[00:25:04] Everything in the world, John says, has to do with one of these three things. The lust of the flesh, you may call it the desire of having.

The lust of the eyes, the desire of seeing.

And the pride of life, the desire of being something, somebody.

That characterizes all the things in this world. And it is not astonishing, because the wicked one, Satan, is mentioned in connection with the world, that we have the same three things when we find him approaching Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

In the book of Genesis, in chapter 3, when Satan came towards them, in Genesis chapter 3, verse 6, it says, and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, the lust [00:26:06] of the flesh, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, the lust of the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, the pride of life.

And if we compare it with the temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, in the way Luke tells it, we find again the three things.

First he comes and says, well, take these stones and make bread out of them. The lust of the flesh to have something to eat. And then it says that Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and their wealth, the lust of the eyes to see these things. And the third thing he said, well, throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple and God will send his angels to carry you.

What a wonderful, exciting miracle that would be, the pride of life. Well, of course, in the Lord Jesus he didn't find anything, the devil, but in us it may [00:27:06] be different.

The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

All three things are a problem for us, no matter how old we are.

But I once heard from Mr. Patterson that he said, and I think it's also something of a truth in that, that the emphasis may be to different age groups.

The lust of the flesh is a special problem for the younger ones.

On the lust of the eyes, when you are middle-aged, when you have a bit of wealth, you can do what you see. You see something and say, well, I would like to have that, like to do that, and you can do it because you are in the position of that. And then you get older and you look back on your life and there's so many things you're proud of, what you have achieved, the pride of life.

[00:28:04] But we all know that everything, all the three things, is a problem for the believer.

And this is not of the Father, but it is of the world. And the world is passing and it's lost, but either does the will of God abide for eternity. Well, dear brothers and sisters, young brothers and sisters, that does settle everything, doesn't it?

The world is passing. Do you really want to put all your energy and all your time into a thing or things that are passing? Well, there's something that abides.

He that does the will of God abides for eternity.

So we find with the young men, it is a moral seduction that is their danger and the devil, the world and the flesh are the problems mentioned.

But when we come to the children, there is a spiritual seduction for them. [00:29:02] He says, first of all, in verse 13 at the end, I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Somebody who is born again, newly converted, one of the first things he realizes is that he can say, Abba, Father, that God is his Father.

Something he realizes, that's what characterizes the little children, they've known the Father. They know God is their Father.

And now the Apostle John, when he, in verse 18 following, speaks again to the little children, he speaks about the danger of false teachers coming to seduce them.

He says, you have heard that there will be a time when the Antichrist comes in person, but there have come many Antichrists.

There's still many who are, as he says, not from us.

[00:30:04] They've been with us. They've gone out. They were not from us, and they bring wrong teachings.

They deny that Jesus is the Christ, which we may call the Jewish apostasy.

They deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. And they also deny the Father and the Son, the Christian apostasy, what is the truth of Christianity, the Father and the Son. So we may say, well, these young little children, these new believers, are they not helpless when they are attacked by these Antichristian teachers that deny these things? How can they argue with all these false teachers? Well, they should not argue with them, but they have something that helps them in this situation.

And he speaks about it when he says in verse 20, and ye have the unction from the Holy [00:31:03] One, and ye know all things.

Or in verse 27, he says, and ye have not need that any one should teach you, but as the same unction teaches you as to all things, and is to, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Probably we may wonder about such a statement. We have little children. We have persons that are newly born again, not very long, not very mature in their faith.

And the Apostle John says, ye know all things.

You have no need that anyone teach you. They would say, well, when I got saved, I had to learn a lot of things, and I needed teachers that teach me the truth of God.

Certainly you have, but that's not what John is talking about. When he says, ye know all things,

because they had the unction from the Holy One, that is the Holy Spirit, he says, because you have, even as little children, you have the Holy [00:32:03] Spirit in you, you have the capacity to understand everything.

I think it was Mr. Hole who said, they knew all things potentially, even if not in detail, but they had this potential to know everything, because they had the Spirit of God. And they don't need these wrong teachers to teach them, but they had the Spirit of God to teach them.

And so, if these little children really put their trust into the Lord and independence on the Spirit, they will realize that what comes towards them is wrong. It's not the truth of God. It doesn't mean that they were able to expound all the wrong teachings, but the Spirit of God points out to them the truth of God. They have really the capacity to know all things, to know the truth of God.

So we've seen these two things.

[00:33:04] I would like to summarize it shortly. We have seen, first of all, that if, in this Christian circle, people come and have a profession and say something, they may say, I know him.

Then John says, well, there's a test. Are you obedient to the commandments, to the Word of God? And if somebody says, well, I abide in him, and John says, there is a test if that is true, are you walking as he walked?

The same kind of walk down here.

And if somebody was there who says, well, I'm in the light, but he doesn't love his brother, he hates his brother, and John says, well, then such a person is in the darkness. He's not really a believer. That's not true. But those that really, truly are saved, those that are children, they know their sins are forgiven for his name's sake. And now they start growing in their spiritual stage.

[00:34:06] If we take the natural way, they start as little children. John begins with the fathers, but let me summarize it from the other way around. They start as little children that know the Father, that know that God is their Father. And even if there are those anti-Christian teachers who bring things towards them, they have the unction from the Holy One. They have the Holy Spirit that is teaching them, and so they have the capacity to know the truth.

Then there are the young men, those that overcome the wicked one, those that really have the Word of God abiding in them. How wonderful that is. But there is the danger of being seduced by the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These things belong to the world, not to the Father, these things that are passing and not abiding. And then there are the fathers that have known Him that is from the beginning. [00:35:02] Christ is everything to them.

And I am going to close with what I said at the beginning. There's nothing greater than that, to come to such a position where we say, well, Christ is everything for us. May the Lord use these days of conference together in going over this chapter that Christ becomes greater for us. We have started with some hymns, what the name of Jesus means to believers here. And may we leave this conference different than what we came, with a greater appreciation of the person of the Lord Jesus. Amen.