

LIVE IN THE LIGHT

1 John 2:1-29

Key Verse: 2:9, 10

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.”

Gnostics were like modern intellectual hedonists. Their way of believing God was just talking a lot; they did not practice the love of God. Their bad influence to sincere Christians has been indeed great in times past and present. Gnostics' theory was not moral or ethical at all. What is more, their theory was not spiritual. They are pleasure-seeking people in their great talkativeness. St. John warns the early Christians to practice what they know of Jesus. John also teaches them that they must tightly hold on to the basic knowledge of Jesus, so that they would not be deceived by Gnostics. When we study chapter 2 prayerfully, we find that St. John urges the early Christians to practice God's love in many ways. Especially, St. John warns the early Christians not to love the world. Let's study why to love the world is so dangerous.

First, our defender, Jesus Christ (1-2).

Look at verse 1a. **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.”** In light of 1 John, in verse 1, “you will not sin,” means to be special or to be different from worldly people, especially Gnostics. Sin cuts our relationship with God. Sin is lawlessness. When people sin, they become lawless and live as lawless people. Most importantly, if they commit sin, they do not please the Righteous One, Jesus Christ. When one sins, he cannot study well. He cannot hand in homework at the right time very regularly. As a result, he gets all F's. Do you think those who got all F's would be happy or sorrowful? Likewise, sin makes people very tragic in the end. Sin ruins one's life of pilgrimage and one's holy mission while on earth. Finally, those who sin have to stand before the judgment seat of God (2Cor 5:10). St. John didn't encourage the early Christians, saying, “Take care of yourselves,” or “Have fun.” St. John said, **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.”** First and last of all, St. John really prayed that the early Christians would not live a life of sin. In the first part of verse 1, St. John called the early Christians, **“My dear children.”** Here, “children” does not necessarily mean diaper babies or pre-teens. As we see in verses 12-14, when St. John said **“my dear children,”** **“children”** included children, fathers, and young men. Surely women were also included, I believe.

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Look at verse 1b. **“But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”** St. John tells us that when we sin, we have a defender, who is Jesus Christ. How did Jesus Christ become our defender? In order to become our defender, Jesus Christ became the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. Let's read verse 2. **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”** As we studied, Jesus is a perfect God and a perfect man. He is the Son of the Holy God. But he came down to this world to make friends with sinners so as to save them from their sins and bring them back to his kingdom. Especially in verse 2, the words **“the atoning sacrifice,”** mean that he became the Lamb of God for our sins. One day, Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, saw Jesus coming toward him and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** (Jn 1:29) The Lamb of God symbolizes complete sacrifice by shedding his blood for the atonement of man's sin.

St. John told them not to sin. It sounded a little bit stern. But suddenly he says that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the world. This has deep meaning in it. In the past, Hebrew people thought that blood purifies one's sins and makes him holy before God. When St. John mentioned the atoning sacrifice, he wanted to say that even if one's sin is acquitted, nobody can cleanse his guilty conscience (Heb 9:14). For example, three years ago, there were many events that mentioned about teenage suicide in their cars. One would get into a car and turn on the gas and close the garage door. Then he first became sleepy and next he choked on carbon monoxide. In this way, they committed suicide. These kinds of events were not fully published. But there were so many teenage suicides. Once a young man studied the Bible. But he didn't live a life of faith. He lived a life of sin. One night, he jumped from the thirteenth floor of a lakeshore apartment to the ground and he died immediately. Previously, he had talked about his sufferings which came from a guilty conscience. About thirty years ago, there was a beautiful girl who came to know Jesus. But she interpreted Jesus' gospel in a humanistic way. So she could not solve her sin problem with her step-brother. A guilty conscience remained. When a very handsome and promising bridegroom appeared to her, she turned on a coal gas stove and slept. The next morning, she was found dead.

People ignore the problem of guilty conscience. Many psychoanalysts claim that there is no such thing as sin and say just forget about it. But God gave each of us a conscience. If we commit sin, our conscience is diseased and it becomes a guilty conscience. Only our defender Jesus Christ can cleanse our guilty

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conscience. Of course, Jesus Christ is our lawyer or defender before the judgment seat of the holy God. But Jesus not only saves us from our sins, but also he cleanses us from our guilty consciences so that we may live in the light. The reason why St. John mentions this is that Jesus is our Savior who cleanses our guilty consciences. We must hold on to this so that we may not be deceived by Gnostics who are equivalent to modern intellectual hedonists.

Second, live in the light (3-14).

We Christians must know and renew our thought world that we are children of God who live in the light, not in the darkness. In a Christian church, there are many kinds of Christians. There are intellectual hedonists. There are mystics who want to satisfy their emotional feelings and speak and act like ancient magic artists in oriental countries. They do all kinds of strange activities in order to feel a spiritual high.

We Christians are those who have accepted the good news of salvation that Jesus is God and we love God. Those who love God obey God. Through their obedience they come to know Jesus Christ. True Christians keep God's commandments; God's first and last commandment is to love God and to love one's neighbor. True Christians grow in the love of God and imitate the life of Jesus. Read verses 3-6. **"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."**

Many people say that the love commandment is already an old one. Actually, this is true. In Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments are commandments to love God and to love one's neighbor as himself. Yet this old commandment became a new commandment through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 13:34,35, **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** At the beginning of John's Gospel 13, Jesus began to wash his disciples' feet one by one. The top disciple, Peter, didn't understand Jesus' servanthship. So he refused, saying, **"No, you shall never wash my feet."** Jesus answered, **"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."** In this way, Jesus taught his disciples how to love one another. In this way, Jesus taught his disciples how to respect one another. In this way, Jesus taught his disciples complete joy through serving.

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Look at verses 9-10. **“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.”** These verses teach us how to know whether we are living in the light or in the darkness. Here, “light,” refers to love and “darkness” to hate. 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 (11).

Verses 12-14 are not a poem. But these verses are very poetical and rhythmical. So we can say these verses are the beautiful song of Christians or a Christian poem. However, when we read verses 12-14 very carefully, we find that John repeated the contents we have studied thus far. Let’s read verses 12-14. When we analyze these verses, St. John teaches us that we must hold on to the grace of Jesus’ forgiveness. St. John tells us that we are in the world, however we should not compromise with evil. But we must defeat evil. The thought of this passage is the same with Jesus’ prayer in John 17:15. It says, **“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”** Here we understand why God put us in the world. God wants us to be a blessing to those who are wandering in the world. God wants to evangelize them through our one-to-one Bible studies. In the last part of verse 14, we find the words, **“from the beginning.”** When we are going to overcome the world we must hold on to the truth that Jesus is in the beginning with God and Jesus is the Creator God. Jesus also gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. This main point of the gospel should be in us. Then we can overcome the world.

Third, do not love the world (15-17).

Look at verses 15-16. **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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.”** These verses mean that we must love God only, living in this world. We must carry out all our beautiful privileges and mission from God. **“Do not love the world”** sounds very harsh. But Matthew 6:24 says, **“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”** Physically speaking, when we put water in a bottle, the air in the bottle comes out. Two things cannot be in the bottle at the same time. Likewise, we cannot love God and love the world at the same time.

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Look at verse 15. **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”** In the world there are many precious things. But the most precious thing is the love of God. If we love the world or anything in the world, the love of the Father cannot dwell in our hearts. In short, by loving the world we lose the love of God in our soul. When we lose the love of God, virtually we lose everything. Our existence is nothing but flesh, which fades sooner or later.

Why should we not love the world when there are so many funs in the world? It is because the love of the world means the craving of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - which is not from the Father but from the world. These days we see so many people who are slaves of the cravings of sinful desire, slaves of the lust of their eyes and slaves of the boasting of what they have or do. When we read Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon, we find that everything under the sun that man does is meaningless (Ecc 1:2ff.). Even if it is meaningless, if we could keep on doing it forever, how nice it would be. But verse 17 says, **“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”** One physics professor gave his heart to physics. But he could not achieve as much as he wanted. Instead he contracted throat cancer. He despaired. His life seemed to have been totally meaningless. He only made his wife lonely all through his lifetime. He said to a young lady, “Don’t be a physicist’s wife.” Worldly life is like this. We must know that man is like grass and his glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever (1Pe 1:24-25).

Fourth, warning against antichrists (18-29).

Look at verse 18. **“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.”** In this verse, the words “the last hour,” are repeated two times. The last hour implies the signs of the end of the world (Mk 13:1ff.). At the signs of the end, the world is desperate and full of tragic premonition and the dreadful fear of tragic death. In this situation, antichrists arise and deceive people not to waste time in worshipping God, but to be anxious and distressed to prepare to be ready for the last days. They are indeed antichrists because they plant fear in innocent Christians. When we observe verses 18-27 very carefully, the Gnostics left and formed their own groups; they did not remain in the church. But St. John strongly urges the early Christians that they have an anointing from the Holy One and all of them know the truth (20). This verse has a deep

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meaning. Anointing is not a light word. Anointing is a most distinguished and honorable word. To the eyes of the people of the world, Christians are nothing but people who do not know how to enjoy sinful pleasure. But Biblically speaking, Christians are God's children who are anointed by the Holy Spirit. Anointing is pouring water on the head. It doesn't mean much. But when we read the Bible, first God wanted to establish the kingdom of Israel. Samuel anointed Saul with oil by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus assumed the earthly messianic ministry, God anointed Jesus; the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit was with him in the form of a dove flying all over the sky. Anointing is being sealed as a child of God. So we must remember that we are anointed people. Then we can defeat the antichrists.

Look at verse 22. **“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.”** In order to defeat the antichrist, we must believe almighty God is our Father. Jesus Christ is our Savior King. When this faith is not engraved in our hearts, there is a danger that we also may become antichrists. In verse 24, the word “remain” is repeated two times. St. John urges that Christians must remain in the Son and in the Father. This requires faithfulness. But the result is eternal life. In verses 26-27, St. John urges prayerfully that they must remember that they are anointed ones. Children of God continue or remain in Jesus so that when our Lord Jesus Christ appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming (28). May God richly bless you.