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1 John 2

II. Relationship of the believer to sin (1 John 1:5—2:6)

- (3) We have an Advocate when we do sin (2:1-2)

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you **may not sin**. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous**;

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

1 My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you might not sin. Yet if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus, the Messiah, one who is righteous.

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

- John gives a disclaimer so that his original readers would not misconstrue his previous words and think that it was pointless for them to strive against sin

- These things (1:5-10) were not written to either excuse or encourage sin; instead, they were written so that they may not sin at all

- Even though believers should vigorously fight against sin, it can and does occur in the lives of believers

- "...little children" - *teknia*, a family term of endearment; further evidence that John is writing to believers (one would never call unbelievers by this title) (Cf. 2:7,12,13,18,28; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21)

- *Let me remind you that 1 John is a "family" epistle; it emphasizes the relationship of the family of God.* [J.V. McGee]

- "...I am writing these things" - refers back to what John said in 1:5-10 (Cf. 1:4; 2:26; 5:13), where John focused on both the appropriate and inappropriate responses of a believers mouth and heart to God's character

- "...may not sin" - *hamartanō*, aorist active subjunctive, doesn't mean that we will never sin again because sin is inevitable for sinners, even forgiven sinners, but in every instance of temptation there is always the possibility that we will not fall (Cf. 1 Cor 10:13)
- In 1:8 John makes it clear that our sin nature is a reality, and at the least an occasional fact in the life of a believer; but 1:9 makes it clear that there is always forgiveness for confessed sin
- God's desire for the believer is that they do not sin, but if sin is inevitable for us, it's not because God has decreed that we must sin. All the resources necessary for victory over sin are available to us, and those resources are never withdrawn.
- John addresses this because of the issue of our fellowship with the Lord (1:3) and the fact that sin can break that fellowship (1:6). He wants to make it clear that God has not created a system where *must* break fellowship with Him through sin.
- John makes it clear that the believer doesn't have to sin. When a believer sins, it's by choice.
- God wants us to be holy as He is holy, not just holy enough to muddle through life without making major blunders. Only He can give us the desire and the ability to pursue holiness as a goal in our life (Phil 2:13).
- "...if" - third class condition, the condition of assumed probability, meaning that for the sake of argument, it's assumed that his readers will commit sin
- "...Advocate" - *paraklētos*, God's desire is that we don't sin at all, but if we do, there is a provision made for us; Jesus used this word 4x to describe the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
- An "Advocate" is a defense lawyer, who advocates (pleads our case) to God the Father (Cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24). Our Advocate does not plead with the Father to keep us saved; rather, He intercedes before the Father that our "faith should not fail" (Cf. Luke 22:31-33).
- A defense lawyer argues for his client's innocence, but our Advocate admits our guilt, then enters a plea on our behalf
- We often think that our sin sets God *against* us, but God's love for us was so great that in it, He went to the ultimate measure to make us able to stand in the midst of His holiness. Through Jesus, God is *for* us, even when we're guilty sinners.
- "...Jesus Christ the righteous" - means that Jesus is fully qualified to serve as our Advocate, because He was sinlessly perfect

The Heavenly Courtroom

We stand as the accused in the heavenly court, before our righteous Judge, God the Father. The charges against us are read, then our Advocate stands up to answer the

charges: "The defendant is guilty your honor. In fact, he is even worse than what he is accused of, and now makes full and complete confession before You."

The gavel slams, and the Judge asks, "What should his sentence be?" Our Advocate answers, "His sentence shall be death; he deserves the full wrath of this righteous court." The prosecutor, Satan, urges the Judge to deal out the harshest sentence possible. Throw the book at him!

But then, our Advocate asks to approach the bench, where He tells the Judge, "Father, this one belongs to Me. I paid his price. I have already paid in full the penalty for this man's sins."

The gavel sounds again and the Judge says, "Guilty as charged! Penalty satisfied! You are free to go." The prosecutor goes crazy. No jail time? No probation? This is injustice!

"No!" the Judge shouts. "The penalty has been paid in full by My Son. There are no charges remaining to place him on probation for."

Then the Judge turns to our Advocate, and says, "Son, you said this one belongs to You. I release him into Your care. Case closed!"

2 and He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also **for the sins of the whole world.**

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those* of the whole world.

2 It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's.

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

— "...propitiation" - *hilasmos*, satisfaction of divine wrath (Cf. 4:10; Rom 3:25). The LXX used this same Greek word to translate the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

— The Mercy Seat (*hilasmos*) was where the blood was placed to placate God's wrath against sin; Jesus' body is what God used to placate (*hilasmos*) His wrath against sin for every person who ever lived

— Propitiation presupposes that God is angry at us because of sin. God, as He looks at the sinful human race, is angry because of sin (John 3:36). Without propitiation, I am a candidate for God's wrath.

— In propitiation, the wrath of God against sin has been satisfied, so that His anger is diverted from me because it was taken on by Christ on the Cross

— God had a problem: He is holy, so He hates sin, can't be in its presence. But at the same time, He is also love. He loves us too much to see us fall into His wrath. So God had to punish sin, but He loves us too much to see us punished, so what does He do?

- The answer is that God's two natures are reconciled in propitiation. When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, He was paying for our sins in His body. This satisfied God's holiness, and it also satisfied God's love because if we accept what He did for us, He doesn't have to pour out His wrath on us for our sin.
- Propitiation reconciles the two natures of God, and in propitiation, because of what Jesus did, the wrath of God has been pacified, appeased and placated.
- "...for *the sins of the whole world*" - *holou tou kosmou*, literally "the whole world" contrasting "our/ours" (believers) with all of mankind, not just the "elect" or "all kinds of people"
- This demonstrates unlimited atonement, as opposed to Calvinism's "limited atonement." Jesus satisfied God's wrath for the entire world, yet the entire world is not saved and in fellowship with God.
- His death provided salvation that is sufficient for all ("the whole world") but it is efficient (or effective, efficacious) only for those who trust in Him (2 Cor 5:14-15,19; Heb 2:9; Rev 22:17). In other words, Christ's death made eternal life *available* for all, but not *automatic* for all.
- This is because atonement does not equal forgiveness. On the Day of Atonement in the OT (Lev 16:34), the sin of all Israel was atoned for, but yet not all Israel was saved.
- God has taken care of the sin problem, so sin need not be a barrier between God and man if man will receive the propitiation that God has provided in Jesus
- Jesus didn't just *make* satisfaction for our sins, as a priest, He *is* the satisfaction of our sins, as a sacrifice.

In 1:8—2:2, John reminded his readers that fellowship with God is possible only when we deal with the sin in our lives. This is true of believers (1:8—2:1) and unbelievers (2:2). He articulated four principles that underlie fellowship with God:

1. Renounce sin (1:8—2:2)
2. Obey God (2:3-11)
3. Reject worldliness (2:12-17)
4. Keep the faith (2:18-29)

(4) Knowing God is evidenced through obedience (2:3-6)

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

3 This is how we can be sure that we have come to know him: if we continually keep his commandments.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

- "By this" - John gives us a test whereby we can measure our experiential knowledge of God; it's a test of how well we really, intimately "know" Him
- The test is: look at your response to His revealed will. How well are you doing at keeping His commandments? The test is not *saving* knowledge of Christ, but of *experiential* knowledge of God and His Son.
- His point is that our personal, experiential, intimate knowledge of God will affect the way we live, and the way we live, obediently or disobediently, will reveal how well we really know God
- In other words, to "know" God and to have fellowship with Him is not a matter of correct thought processes or head knowledge, but of a genuine spiritual relationship
- This verse is often taken as a way of knowing whether a person is genuinely saved. The explanation given is that although salvation is by faith, one cannot know whether their faith is real unless that person keeps His commandments.. However, this view conflicts with Scripture in many ways:
 1. A person is saved by believing in Christ for eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35; etc.)
 2. The idea that a Christian can believe in Christ, without knowing whether he or she has really believed, is nonsense
 - When Jesus asked Martha if she believes, neither of them adopt a "wait and see" mentality (John 11:25-26). Martha's reply, which was accepted by Jesus, was a strong affirmation of her belief (v27). Since belief is a conviction that something is true, when we believe, we know we have believed.
- This verse is not talking about a saving knowledge of Christ, but a fellowship/intimate knowledge. All believers "know" Christ at a fundamental level, but not all know Him at the level of intimacy, communion, and fellowship that John refers to here.
- "...we know" - *ginōskō*, to know intimately; much more than simply "head knowledge" it is an intimate, deep knowledge and experience with someone or something (Cf. Gen 4:1)
- While "fellowship" is the theme of John, he only uses the word (*koinōnia*) 4x (1:3 [2x]; 1:6,7)
- "know" (*ginōskō*, experiential, intimate knowledge) is a more common synonym that John uses to describe fellowship with God (24x: 2:3,4,5,13 [2x],14,18,29; 3:1 [2x],6,16,19,20,24; 4:2,6 [2x],7,8,16; 5:2,20)
- John uses *eidō* (intellectual knowledge) 15x: 2:11,20,21 [2x],29; 3:2,5,14,15; 5:13,15 [2x],18,19,20
- "...that we have come to know" - *ginōskō*, refers to the intimate fellowship with Him, as described in 1:1—2:2
- "...if we keep His commandments" - just as a claim to fellowship with God is false if a believer "walks in darkness" (Cf. 1:6-7), so too does a disobedient lifestyle prove any claim to fellowship with Him as untrue

- "keep" - *tereo*, to observe or guard; it's the opposite of "throwing them away" or disregarding them
- This verse is often interpreted as a way of knowing whether or not we're really saved, but that view disregards all of John's theology and teaching in his Gospel and epistles, which state clearly that we are saved by believing in Jesus Christ for eternal life
- To John, the idea that a person can believe in Christ without really knowing whether or not they are saved, is complete nonsense

- 4 The one who says, "**I have come to know Him**," and **does not keep His commandments**, is a liar, and **the truth is not in him**;
- 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, **is a liar**, and the truth is not in him;
- 4 The person who says, "I have come to know him," but does not continually keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth has no place in that person.
- 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
- But someone may claim such knowledge/fellowship with God, without the obedience that goes with it. In that case, that person is making a false claim.
- "...I have come to know" - *ginōskō*, come to know Him intimately, through fellowship with Him (Cf. 1:1—2:2)
- "...does not keep His commandments" - the believer who does not obey God's commands does not know God experientially (has no fellowship with Him), no matter what he may claim verbally (Cf. 1:6)
- "...[he] is a liar" - if ones life is not marked by obedience then his claim to fellowship with God can be challenged (is a lie) (Cf. 1:6)
- "...the truth is not in us" - God's truth, as Scripture reveals it, does not have a full hold on us...it is not controlling our thinking if we say that we have no sin (see notes on 1:8)
- The "truth" in this context, what God's Word says about obedience to His commands as a prerequisite for fellowship with Him

- 5 but **whoever follows His word**, in him **the love of God has truly been perfected**. By this we **know** that we are **in Him**:

- 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:
- 5 But whoever continually keeps his commandments is the kind of person in whom God's love has truly been perfected. This is how we can be sure that we are in union with God:
- 5 But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

- "...whoever follows His word" - the believer who is careful to observe all of God's Word, not just His commandments
- "...the love of God has truly been perfected" - that believer gives evidence that he has come to understand and appreciate God's love for him
- God's love is perfected (*teleioō*, brought to full measure or maturity) in that believer in the sense that he has perceived it, responded to it, and it is having the intended effect on his behavior (Cf. 4:12)
- When a believer moves beyond just obeying God and desires to please God in everything he does, God's love in them has reached its desired effect
- "...know" - *ginōskō*, we have intimate, experiential knowledge that we are in fellowship/abiding "in Him"
- "...in Him" - John's use of this phrase differs from Paul's use of it. Paul used it to describe a believer's relationship to Christ because of justification. The unsaved cannot be "in Christ."
- John used the phrase the way Jesus used it in the Upper Room Discourse, to describe not all believers (like Paul), but to describe the group of believers (branches) who abide/remain in Christ. It describes the abiding "Teacher/disciple" relationship.

6 the one who says that he **remains** in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.

6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

6 The one who says that he abides in him must live the same way he himself lived.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

- The claim that someone abides/remains in Christ can be verified only by a Christlike lifestyle

- "...remains" - *menō*, to "abide"; as described by Christ in John 15, the sole condition and only means for a believer to bear fruit for God (Cf. 2:10,14,24,27,28; 3:6,14,15,17,24; 4:12,13,16)

— The Greek word *menō* is used 41x in 21 chapters of John's Gospel, and used 24x in 5 chapters of 1 John. In John's Gospel it was used primarily in John 15:1-10, where it is mentioned 12x, to believers only.

— It describes, in both the Gospel and John's epistles, the life of discipleship

- The obligation of every believer is not to just obey God's commands (v4-5), but to also walk in the same manner as Jesus walked, which means to follow the example of the Son

— To walk as He walked is something we cannot accomplish in our own strength. It is supernatural. It is impossible for a man to imitate Christ without divine enablement. the next few verses describe how to do this...

III. Necessity of loving the brethren (1 John 2:7-11)

(1) Old and new commands (2:7-8)

(A) Old command (2:7)

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an **old commandment** which you have had from the beginning; the **old commandment** is the word which you have heard.

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing to you a new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning. This old commandment is the word you have heard.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

- John now explains v6 and what it means to follow Christ's example. The first thing John says is that he's not giving them any new commandment that Jesus hasn't already articulated.

- "...old commandment" - John's readers would have known about this commandment he's about to reveal "from the beginning": the command to love one another (v9-11; Cf. John 13:34-35)

— This command appears at least a dozen times in the NT (John 13:34; 15:9,12,17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11-12; 2 John 5)

The life of Christ was one of self-sacrificing love; therefore, the proof of imitating him is exhibited in love. Love is that which seeks the highest good in the one loved; and since the highest good is the will of God, love is doing the will of God. [Ryrie]

(B) New command (2:8)

8 On the other hand, I am writing a **new** commandment to you, which **is true** in Him and in you, because **the darkness is passing away** and the true Light is already shining.

8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

8 On the other hand, I am writing to you a new commandment that is truly in him and in you. For the darkness is fading away, and the true light is already shining.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

- "...new" - *kainos*, fresh; with the Incarnation, the light of God had entered the world more brightly than before

- In what sense is “love one another” a new commandment? It was given by God at Sinai 1500 years earlier (Lev 19:18). The Greeks had two different words for “new”:
- There are two Greek words translated “new”: *neos*, new in time; latest model; and *kainos*, new in quality, recent, fresh, but not something completely unique or different
- So what is the difference? Jesus said these same words in John 13:34-35. The last section of the v34 says: “just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” The nuance, the “fresh take” that Jesus brings to it: the command is not to love your neighbor *as yourself*, it is to love your neighbor *as I have loved you*.
- Having experienced unconditional *agapē* love from God, now we are to dispense that love to other people. Thus, His love for us is now to become the model by which we love other people.
- This new command was not written in a Law book or simply spoken...it was modeled/lived out by Jesus Christ Himself
- We know that we're walking with the Lord when we begin to love unlovable people unconditionally, because it's not us trying to love them through our own power, but rather Jesus loving them through us.
- "...is true" - *alethes*, revealed; the new commandment is "revealed" by the fact that Jesus Christ demonstrated it first, and a believer who obeys God reveals it now
- "...the darkness is passing away" - since the world's morality is at odds with God, darkness describes its moral condition
- John is saying that the old, moral situation of the world is only temporary; it has already started to "pass away" and the new reality that will replace it is "already shining"

John 13:34-35:

34 **I am giving you a new [kainos] commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

35 **By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."**

Christ was the perfect example. He never showed hatred or malice. He hated sin and disobedience, but He never hated the people who committed such sins. He was patient with Peter's impulsiveness, Thomas's unbelief, and even Judas's treachery. Even at the Cross, He prayed for those that crucified Him: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

(2) Evidence of fellowship with God is a love for the brethren (2:9-11)

9 The **one who says** that he is in the Light and **yet hates** his brother or sister is in the darkness until now.

9 The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

9 The person who says that he is in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

- "...one who says" - another "claim" to intimate fellowship (not justification) with Christ (Cf. 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6)

— The claim that this verse refers to "professing" believers is without evidence. If John were thinking of a "professing" (unsaved) person hating a "true Christian" he would not have written this verse the way he did.

— The correct way to say that would be, "He who hates a (not "his") brother" because the word "his" is misleading

— The context is the Lord's command to "love one another" (Cf. John 13:34), the love for Christians for other Christians

— The apostle acknowledges the sad reality that some believers have feelings of hostility and animosity toward other believers. The claim of such a person as having fellowship with God is disproved by his "hatred" of another Christian.

- Hatred (not loving) another Christian is a sure sign that one is not walking with the Lord in intimate fellowship

— It is preposterous to claim that a Christian who "hates" another Christian must not be a Christian at all. John clearly regarded both the "hater" and the "hatee" in this case as believers.

- "...hates" - *miseō*, when "hate" is used in the Bible, it's used in a comparative sense (Cf. Matt 6:24; 24:10; Luke 14:26; 16:13; Cf. Deut 21:15-17; 2 Sam 19:7; Prov 13:24; Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:12)

— In this case, a failure to show love (*agapē*) to a fellow believer, you "hate" them

10 The one who loves his brother *and* sister remains in the Light, and there is nothing in him to cause **stumbling**.

10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

10 The person who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no reason for him to stumble.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

- By contrast, the Christian who loves his brother (fellow Christian) is not only in the light, but also abides there. By doing this, they are walking in Christ's footsteps.

— This person also does not have anything in their life that causes them to "stumble" or be trapped or ensnared in sin

- "...stumbling" - *skandalon*, the cause of stumbling in context is hatred (lack of *agapē*) in our heart toward other believers
- John uses the Greek word *proskoptō* (translated "stumble") in John 11:9. By comparing the definitions between the two Greek words, *skandalon* is a "movable trap or snare" whereas *proskoptō* is the action of stumbling/tripping over something.
- So *skandalon* is the object that is tripped over or that ensnares someone, and *proskoptō* is the action of tripping or being ensnared
- Considering that *skandalon* is the object one trips on, its meaning in this verse is that if we "abide" in the Light (Christ), we won't have any entrapments or stumbling blocks (*skandalon*) in our way to cause us to stumble.

11 But the one who hates his brother or sister is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

11 But the person who hates his brother is in the darkness and lives in the darkness. He does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

- The sin of the "hater" affects him in three ways:

1. "...is in the darkness" - outside of fellowship with God
2. "...walks in the darkness" - it leads to aimless activity, where he is in spiritual danger and has the possibility of a fall (Cf. John 9:41)
 - The penalty for walking/living in the darkness is not merely that one does not see, but that one goes blind
3. "...does not know where he is going" - results in mental/spiritual confusion (Cf. John 12:35, see notes there)

— The believer who does not love (*agapē*) his fellow believer (thus "hates" him), loses a sense of spiritual direction. It seems that no course of life is more dangerous for a believer than one that includes "hated" toward another believer.

IV. Necessity of not loving the world (1 John 2:12-17)

- (1) Family commended for past victories (2:12-14)
 - (A) First cycle (2:12-13b)
 - (a) Children: forgiveness (2:12)

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you on account of His name.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

- Verses 12-14 clearly demonstrate that John does not regard his readers as "false professors" or "professors but not possessors" of eternal life. Reading this epistle as providing "tests" to determine one's eternal salvation is to completely and utterly misread this epistle.

- "...little children" - *teknia*, used as a family term of endearment elsewhere in 1 John, but here (due to the context) it's likely that he uses the term to describe either "young children" or new/infant believers.

- "...because" - *hoti*, can be used either in a causal or a declarative sense

— A "causal" sense would mean that John was writing to them because the stated condition might become true of them

— A "declarative" sense would mean that John was writing to them because the stated condition was true of them

— John may have intended both meanings, but the "causal" meaning seems a bit stronger

- "...your sins have been forgiven" - the spiritual "children" among John's readers knew the forgiveness of their heavenly Father (1:5—2:2). Forgiveness is often one of the first things a new believer appreciates about their new-found salvation.

- "...on account of His name" - their forgiveness is predicated on the efficacy of Christ's name

(b) Fathers: know God (2:13a)

(c) Young men: overcome the evil one (2:13b)

(B) Second cycle (2:13c-14)

(a) Children: know the Father (2:13c)

13 I am writing to you, **fathers**, **because** you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men**, **because** you have **overcome** the evil one. I have written to you, **children**, **because you know the Father**.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, because you have overcome the evil one.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

- "...fathers" - a more mature believer, who have experienced close intimate fellowship with Jesus
- "...because" [2x] - *hoti*, see notes on v12
- "...young men" - young, growing, abiding believers (v14) who hadn't yet reached "maturity" but are differentiated from "little children" (v12)
- They experienced victory over Satan (v14)
- "...overcome" - *nenikēkate*, perfect tense, which suggests a past once-and-for-all victory over Satan (at the time of the reader's faith in Christ)
- "...children" - *paidion*, "taught ones" (not *teknia*, little children); in v12 their "sins were forgiven"; now they have "known the Father"
- "...you know the Father" - *ginōskō*, perfect tense, conveying a situation that results from what has been accomplished, once-and-for-all, in the past
- Every time John employs the perfect tense, it means "to come to know"; it implies advancement beyond infancy in these "children"

John now proceeds to point out other characteristics of his readers again, this time using the same three stages of spiritual life (little children, young men, and fathers), but this time he articulates other descriptions of their walk with Christ, possibly to highlight their spiritual growth.

(b) Fathers: know God (2:14a)

(c) Young men: strong, word of God lives in you, overcome Satan (2:14b)

14 I have written to you, **fathers**, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

14 I have written to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. I have written to you, young people, because you are strong and because God's word remains in you and you have overcome the evil one.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

- "...fathers" - in both instances (v13 and v14) John says the same thing: "you know Him who has been from the beginning"
- "...young men" - in v13 John says that they "have overcome the wicked one"; in v14 he says they "are strong," "the word of God abides in them," and "they have overcome the evil one"

In the first series of three (v12-13b) we have the minimal spiritual experience for each stage of spiritual growth. In the second series of three (v13c-14), we have the more advanced spiritual experience for each stage. The spiritually little children (*teknon*, born ones) know that God has forgiven their sins. But children (*paidion*, taught ones) can advance to know the Father more intimately. John implied that the new Christians among his readership had advanced from just appreciating that God had forgiven their sins. They had been taught and had learned to know God the Father to some extent in their experience.

Both statements about fathers are identical, because there can be no variation here. When one knows Christ, the only thing that one can do in order to advance is to get to know Him better.

John initially said the young men had overcome the evil one, but he said nothing of their condition after gaining the victory. They could have become weak and vulnerable. However the second statement about them adds that they are strong and that God's Word continues to abide in them. This is a more robust spiritual condition. They had grown strong by abiding in God's Word.

John strengthened the sense of progress in these verses in the following way by using present tense verbs in the first set of sentences (v12-13b), which emphasize ongoing action. Then he used aorist tense verbs in the second set (v13c-14), which imply a state of greater spiritual maturity.

(2) World system described (2:15-17)

(A) Command to not love this world (2:15a)

(B) First reason for not loving the world: deviodance of God's love (2:15b)

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the **world**. **If** anyone loves the world, **the love of the Father is not in him**.

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

15 Stop loving the world and the things that are in the world. If anyone persists in loving the world, the Father's love is not in him.

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

- After encouraging his readers with affirmations of their spiritual growth (v12-14), John now changes topics to address the enemies that they must face: the world (v15-17) and

antichrists (v18-27).

— John wanted to warn his readers of these dangers that will face these believers as they seek more intimate fellowship with God. He did this to enable them to prepare for and overcome these obstacles, with God's help.

- "Do not" - *mē*, present active imperative verb, meaning to stop doing something or don't be in the habit of doing it

- "...world" [2x] - *kosmos*, John used *kosmos* in at least three ways in this epistle:

1. To refer to planet earth, the physical world (Cf. Acts 17:24)

2. To denote humankind, the human world; all people, everywhere, for all time (Cf. John 3:16)

3. The world "system"; the profoundly seductive moral and spiritual system, run by Satan, designed to draw humanity away from God

— In this verse, it refers to (3), the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that completely excludes God (Cf. John 14:30; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:2; 2 Peter 2:20)

— It's the organized system that acts as a rival to God [Ryrie]. It is a moral and spiritual system specifically designed to draw people away from God. It's seductive and appeals to all people, believers and unbelievers, and calls for our affection, participation, and loyalty (Cf. John 3:16-19; James 4:4).

— The Father is in opposition to the world (v15); Christ is in opposition to Satan (3:8; 4:2-3; Heb 2:14-15); the Spirit is in opposition to the flesh (Gal 5:16,25; Rom 8:12-13)

- "...If" - third class condition, which is the condition of assumed probability; it is uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely. It states what results will happen if at any time in the future the condition is met.

- "...the love of the Father is not in him" - if a Christian loves the things of the world, he does not by definition love God

— This doesn't mean that God does not love this believer, but that God's love is not working in and through those who love the world. it is impossible to love both God and the world at the same time.

— "in him" - a controlling influence (Cf. 1:8; 2:4)

(C) Description of the world (2:16)

(a) Lust of the flesh (2:16a)

(b) Lust of the eyes (2:16b)

(c) Pride of life (2:16c)

16 For **all that is in the world**, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

16 For everything that is in the world—the desire for fleshly gratification, the desire for possessions, and worldly arrogance—is not from the Father but is from the world.

16 For 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.

- "...all that is in the world" - summarized under three categories; taken together, they are the totality of the allurements of the godless world system:

1. "...lust of the flesh" - a desire to *do* something apart from the will of God; it includes all corrupt bodily desires and every sinful activity that appeals to the sinful hearts of people. It appeals to the *body*.
 - Manifested most often in illicit sexual behavior, fornication, lust, adultery, pornography, and idolizing pleasure
2. "...lust of the eyes" - the desire to *have* something apart from the will of God; something that is appealing to our senses but is not properly ours to desire or obtain. It appeals to the *mind*.
 - Manifested through materialism, idolizing possessions, excessive buying/debt
3. "...boastful pride of life" - the desire to *be* something apart from the will of God. It appeals to the *soul*.
 - Manifested in attempts to control people, circumstances, history, or even God Himself; boasting about self, possessions, or accomplishment; arrogance, pretentiousness
 - It's a perverse attitude of mind, making us forget our dependence upon God and leading to self-glorification. It prevent one from paying attention to others.
 - It is reflected in whatever status symbol is important to me and seems to define my identity. It's the desire to make myself look larger so that others will feel smaller.

- "...lust" [2x] - *epithymia*, evil desire (as opposed to *pathos*, ungovernable desire); passions, cravings, or desires that are evil because they are not in harmony with God's will

The World - 1 John 2:15-17 —> The solution: flee (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22)

The Flesh - Rom 7:18-24 —> The solution: deny (Rom 6:12-13; 8:13)

The Devil - 1 Peter 5:8 —> The solution: resist (1 Peter 5:9; Cf. Eph 6:10-17)

(D) Second reason for not loving the world: the world is temporary (2:17)

17 The world is passing away and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God continues to *live* forever.

17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

17 And the world and its desires are fading away, but the person who does God's will remains forever.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

- Another reason for not pursuing the lusts of the world (other than loving the world hinders fellowship with God [v15] and the temptations of the world are outside of God's will for us [v16]) is that the world system, along with its desires/temptations, are passing out of existence

— When the world system no longer exists as an entity, none of its illicit experiences will exist either. The lusts of the world's sinful gratifications are every bit as transient as the system they reflect.

— The believer who does not succumb to these temptations/desires instead does the will of God, who will continue to live on past the passing away of this world and its lusts

— John is not saying that those who obey will attain eternal life, however he is saying that an abiding believer can enjoy an intimate relationship with God and abundantly experience God's eternal life now/today, not just after death, when we are obedient

- Resisting the appeal of the world system is difficult for every believer, so John urges his readers to remember four things:

1. Love for the world indicates lack of love for God (v15)
2. It results in consequences that are not what our loving heavenly Father desires for our welfare (v17)
3. It lasts only a short time (v17)
4. It prevents intimate fellowship with God (v15)

V. Warnings against false teachers (1 John 2:18-29)

(1) Antichrists described (2:18-23)

(A) Antichrist versus Antichrists (2:18)

18 Children, it is the **last hour**; and just as **you** heard that **antichrist** is coming, even now **many antichrists** have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

18 Little children, it is the last hour. Just as you heard that an antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour.

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

- "Children" - *paidion*, describes a child who learns; this emphasizes the fact that John needed his readers to learn what he was about to reveal to them

- "...last hour" - not only is the world system and its lusts passing away (v17), but we're in the "last hour" of their existence

- Throughout the NT, the time between the Incarnation until the Rapture is referred to as the "last days" or "last hour"
- Though "hour" can refer to a portion of a day (John 1:39; 4:6; 11:9), it also is used in reference to an undetermined length of time (John 2:4; 4:21,23; 5:25,28; 16:25)
- "...you" - John's believing audience
- "...antichrist" - *antichristos*, the Antichrist; the "man of lawlessness" prophesied and described throughout the Bible, who will come upon the world stage before the start of the Tribulation period
- "...many antichrists" - people who exalt themselves against God; not *the* Antichrist, but precursors to the "man of sin"
- The same "false prophets" described in 4:1. These "teachers of error" are precursors of the supreme human deceiver, the Antichrist.

(B) Antichrists identified through apostasy (2:19)

19 **They** went out from **us**, but **they** were not *really* of **us**; for if **they** had been of **us**, **they** would have remained with **us**; but **they** went out, so that it would be evident that **they** all are not of **us**.

19 They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

19 They left us, but they were not part of us, for if they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. Their leaving made it clear that none of them was really part of us.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

- "They" [6x] - the unsaved antichrists/false teachers

— These "antichrists" (v18) who were opposing Christ went out from among John's original audience. They were likely members of local house-churches, then left due to doctrinal differences.

- "...us" [5x] - John and his believing audience; contrasts with "you" in v20

— The separation of these people from the apostles and their teaching illustrated their doctrinal separation from them

(C) Antichrists identified through unsound doctrine (2:20-23)

(a) They contradicted the truth (2:20-21)

20 But **you** have an **anointing** from the **Holy One**, and you all know.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

20 You have an anointing from the Holy One and know all things.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

- "...you" - John's believing audience, who remained and did not go out from them (v19)
- "...anointing" - *chrisma*, designates something for sacred use
- "...Holy One" - Holy Spirit; John referred to the Holy Spirit as the anointing (John 14–16), and he ascribed to Him a teaching role

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because lies don't come from truth.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

- The presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer enables them to perceive the truth of the gospel and to distinguish between truth and error (John 14:26; 16:13)

- It is clear that John is not writing to test whether his readers were genuinely saved or not

(b) They deny Christ as Messiah (2:22-23)

22 Who is the liar except the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

22 Who is a liar but the person who denies that Jesus is the Messiah? The person who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist.

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

- The antichrists lie because they deny the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son, and our Savior (Cf. John 11:25-27)

- John knew, better than anyone, that belief that Jesus is the Christ is saving belief. The person who denies this truth is a liar who subverts the very basis on which anyone is saved.

- Believing that Jesus is the Christ means to believe that He is the One who guarantees eternal life to every believer

- The lie that John had in mind involved the denial that John's readers had eternal life (Cf. v25). If Jesus is not the Christ, then the readers' assurance of salvation was a mirage, and if their assurance collapsed, so too would their fellowship with God.

- There were many false doctrines floating around and impacting John's original audience that John is countering here:

- Gnostics - believed anything material was sinful, and therefore Jesus could not have been God's Son (because of His Incarnation). They considered Jesus and Christ as two distinct entities.
- Docetists - taught that Jesus was not truly a man, therefore He could not be our Savior
- Cerinthus - a gnostic teacher who believed that Jesus was not fully God, but that God only came upon Him at His baptism and later departed from Him at His crucifixion

— Each of these false teachers claimed to have the truth from God, but John pointed out that since the Father and Son are one, a person cannot deny the Son without also denying the Father (Cf. Matt 10:32-33; Mark 8:38; John 12:44-45; 14:10-11)

23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who **confesses the Son** has the Father also.

23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. The person who acknowledges the Son also has the Father.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

- The claim that the denier of the Son does not have the Father either means that neither the Father nor the Son has anything to do with the activities of the false teachers/antichrists

- Some teach that this verse means that if a believer turns and denies the Son, they were either never saved or lost their salvation

— However, this would contradict 2 Tim 2:13: If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

— It's better to understand the first part of v23 in context: John is countering the false teaching of these "antichrists," each of whom in some way deny the truth of who Jesus is (see note on v22)

— As applied to John's believing audience, John's point is that whomever denies the Son does not have an abiding relationship with the Father. This describes all unbelievers, as well as those believers who are not abiding in God.

- The second half of the verse is the positive corollary to the first part:

- "...confesses the Son" - the opposite of "denying the Son" which results in the Father abiding in the confessor

— "Confession" is not the gospel; it is nowhere given as a condition for salvation. Instead, it is a command for the believer and offers deliverance from the consequences of being a secret, non-confessing believer

- A non-abiding believer may not confess Christ, even though belief in Him is present. Denying Christ and confessing Christ deal with giving personal testimony to one's faith in Him. It does not determine salvation/justification, thus denying Christ cannot result in a loss of salvation, nor can confessing Him obtain it.
- If John meant that no genuine Christian can deny the Son, the corollary is that every genuine Christian must confess the Son. That would make public confession of Christ a condition for salvation in addition to trusting in Him, but this lacks biblical support.

(2) Antidote for the Antichrists: abide in the truth (2:24-29)

(A) Abide in the truth (2:24-26)

- 24 *As for you, see that* what you heard from the beginning remains in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.
- 24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.
- 24 What you have heard from the beginning must abide in you. If what you have heard from the beginning abides in you, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father.
- 24** Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

- John calls on his readers to abide in true apostolic doctrine and belief about the truth of Jesus Christ, which in turn will enable them to remain in fellowship with God and be victorious over these false teachers/antichrists

- He urges them to not reject the truth that they originally believed, which resulted in their salvation/justification. Such faithfulness enables the believer to continue abiding in fellowship with God.
- John's encouragement that his readers really did know God and His truth would have been encouraging to them and strengthen them in their resistance of false teachers/antichrists

- 25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.
- 25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.
- 25 The message that the Son himself declared to us is eternal life.
- 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.
- Some of the false teachers/antichrists were teaching that a believer's eternal salvation remained in question, even for those who placed their faith in Christ
- John clearly says here that it is not. Their salvation is secure because it rests on God's promise.

26 These things I have written to **you** concerning those who are *trying to deceive you*.

26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

26 I have written to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

- The false teachers/antichrists taught a doctrine of salvation different from the one that John's readers "had heard from the beginning" (v24)

— They denied the Jesus was the Christ (v22), and that eternal life was available through Christ alone (v25)

- "These things" - refers back to what John said in v18-25 (Cf. 1:4; 2:1; 5:13)

- "...you" [2x] - John's believing audience

- "...those" - the unsaved false teachers/antichrists

(B) Receive the Spirit' s illuminating Ministry (2:27)

27 And as *for* you, the **anointing** which you received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His **anointingteaches you about all things**, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you remain in Him.

27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

27 The anointing you received from God abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you this. Instead, because God's anointing teaches you about everything and is true and not a lie, abide in him, as he taught you to do.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

- This verse describes the illumination ministry of the Holy Spirit

- "...anointing" [2x] - designates something for sacred use (Cf. v20); describes the Holy Spirit's indwelling of all believers

— One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to guide believers into all truth and teach (illuminate) to them what God has revealed in His Word (John 14:26; 16:13)

— Consequently, they were not dependent on teachers, especially the false teachers

— John is encouraging his readers to use/take advantage of the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit to properly understand God's Word, rather than relying on these false teachers/antichrists, who were teaching false doctrine

- Some have taught (incorrectly) that Christians should not rely on human teachers, but instead rely on the Holy Spirit to teach them. But this is not what John is saying. God has given human teachers as a gift to His church (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28; Cf. Rom 12:7).

- John wanted his readers to remember that the Holy Spirit was the true Teacher, the ultimate source of illumination, knowledge, and understanding. He was not ruling out secondary human teachers through whom the Holy Spirit works in teaching.
- John didn't want his readers to rely on human teachers as the ultimate source for their learning, which was an attitude that the false teachers were promoting
- Since immature believers need human teachers (Heb 5:12), John's readers were evidently fairly mature in their faith
- "...teaches you about all things" - the on-going teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is always consistent with what the Spirit has already taught.
- This means that whatever the Spirit has previously taught will never be negated or denied by anything He continues to teach
- Whatever "revisions" the antichrists were teaching could be rejected if what they taught contradicted what the Spirit had already taught them

(C) Incentives to abide in the truth (2:28-29)

a) The incentive of His coming (2:28)

28 Now, little children, remain in Him, so that **when He appears**, we may have **confidence** and not draw back from Him in **shame** at His coming.

28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

28 Even now, little children, abide in him. Then, when he appears, we will have confidence and will not turn away from him in shame when he comes.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

- "Now" - John now begins a section of Scripture that uses Jesus Christ as the standard, and how believers reflect their abiding fellowship with Him by:

- Manifesting practical righteousness to others since Jesus Christ is righteous (2:29)
- Purifying themselves with the hope of His appearing and being like Christ since He is pure (3:2-3)
- Living victoriously over sin by abiding in Christ since Christ came to take away our sins and in Him there is no sin (3:4-6)
- "...little children" - *teknia*, a family term of endearment; further evidence that John is writing to believers (one would never call believers by this title) (Cf. 2:1,7,12,13,18; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21)
- "...remain" - *menō*, abide, the secret to a believer bearing fruit (Cf. John 15:4-5)
- Why does John command his believing readers to abide in Christ?
 - So that they would not lose their salvation? No.
 - So that they would know or prove that they are saved? No.

- So that when He appears, we [John includes himself with his readers] may have confidence [having abided in Christ and been faithful and fruitful for Him] and not draw back ["be ashamed," the opposite of confidence] before Him [at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Cf. 1 Cor 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10]
- "...when He appears" - a reference to the Rapture; this is a reference to the imminence of the Rapture (Cf. 1 Cor 1:8; 4:5; 15:51-52; 16:22; Phil 3:20; 4:5; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Thess 1:10-12; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-9; Rev 3:11; 22:7,12,17,20)
- "...confidence" - *parresia*, freedom or boldness of speech that comes from a clear conscience
- Believers who walk in fellowship with God now will not be embarrassed or ashamed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The entire body of this epistle explains how this confidence can be obtained.
- "...shame" - even though John wrote to believers, he is clear that it was still possible for them to feel ashamed in the presence of Christ, and in particular at His judgment seat

There is nothing that will affect your life as much as the knowledge that you are going to stand in the presence of Christ and give an account of your works. [J.V. McGee]

We must work on from hour to hour with our eye upon the audit, that we may not be ashamed of the record which will be found in the volume of the book. [Spurgeon]

Even though eternal salvation is an entirely free gift which can never be lost, the New Testament makes plain that the believer must give an account of his or her Christian life in the presence of Christ (Cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12). As is shown by the texts just cited, as well as by 1 Cor 3:11-15, this judgment is not merely a review of our good deeds, but a comprehensive review that embraces both 'good and bad' (2 Cor 5:10). Therefore, shame is decidedly possible at the Judgment Seat. This is all the more true since Christians at that time will have their eternal bodies. Thus sin will no longer inhibit appropriate regret and embarrassment about those things in one's earthly life that did not please the Lord. [Zane C. Hodges]

(b) Incentive of the believer's identity (2:29)

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that **everyone who practices righteousness also has been born of Him.**

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

29 Since you know that he is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been fathered by God.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

– "...everyone who practices righteousness also has been born of Him" - when believers abide in Christ and bear fruit through the power of the Holy Spirit, others then will know that they are born of God

— A born again person can be recognized as such if he manifests Christian righteousness

- This verse begins a passage that uses Jesus Christ as the standard and how believers reflect their abiding fellowship with Him by:

- Manifesting practical righteousness to others, since Jesus Christ is righteous (2:29)
- Purifying themselves with the hope of His appearing and being like Christ, since He is pure (3:2-3)
- Living victoriously over sin by abiding in Christ, since Christ came to take away our sins and in Him there is no sin (3:4-6)

- We cannot make this verse say more than it says. It does not say that whoever does not do righteousness is not born of Him. He is not talking here about how to decide if a person is saved.

— If a person believes, they are saved. If we know that a person believes, we know that they are saved.

— Here, John is concerned with the deduction we can make if we know that God is righteous. If that is known, it follows that one who reproduces His righteous nature is manifesting that nature and can rightly be perceived as born of Him.

— Progressing in the second tense of our salvation is normal, but not inevitable, for a believer. Such behavior identifies one as a believer, but the lack of such behavior does not identify someone as an unbeliever.

— Non-Christians can exhibit righteous behavior, and Christians can exhibit unrighteous behavior. Thus, we cannot judge a person's salvation by their behavior.