

## First John Chapter 2 – John Karmelich

1. If you study the book of First John carefully, you may notice that the word "know" appears about 50 times in this short five-chapter book. John's purpose for writing this epistle is so we can know for sure we're saved and what exactly that does mean. As we get into the second chapter of this epistle, I'm going to focus on the word "know" and talk about exactly what it is John wants us to know as we study this epistle. If you want to "know" the who, what, when, where and why's of this epistle, please go back to my first lesson as I spent some time discussing those issues. Also I said in the first lesson that John tends to write in "growing circles". That doesn't mean John used circular reasoning, it just means that John tends to return to issues he's already brought up in this book and expand upon them. That's why it's hard to give an outline of this book, as John loves to return to the same issues over and over again with expanded arguments on those issues.
  - a) OK, if John wants us to know something, what is it he wants us to know? That Christians are saved if we believe Jesus died for every sin we've ever committed or ever will commit. If that's all there is to this epistle, it'd be a lot shorter than what we see it as: five chapters on the topic of knowing about our salvation. The main focus of this epistle is about ways we, as Christians can know for sure we're saved and spend eternity with God.
  - b) Let me put this another way: Ever have moments of doubts that God is real and we're not wasting time focusing upon our obedience to His commandments for our lives? Welcome to the club. We all experience moments like that. One of the main reasons John wrote this epistle is to teach Christians how we can know for sure we're saved, and also do what it is God's will for our lives. My point is if we have those moments of doubts, this epistle is a great one to study not for evidence that Jesus really existed, but to learn what God wants us to know (there's the word again) in order to be obedient to how He wants us to live.
2. That leads me back to Chapter 2 of this letter. In this chapter we get about a half dozen examples of things God wants us know as believers to see whether or not we're doing His will. Let me try to summarize those things here in the introduction and then I'll start on my usual verse-by-verse commentary through all of the verses. OK, here's the chapter summary:
  - a) The first thing we're told that when a Christian sins, remember that Jesus is our "defense attorney" in heaven. That just means that God the Father had Jesus sacrifice Himself for as full payment for our sins, God's now "satisfied" with that payment, even for sins we've committed after we've accepted Jesus' full payment of our sins.
  - b) The second thing we're taught is if we claim we believe in Jesus but never do what it is He commands us to do, that's evidence we're not saved. That evidence is our lives should be changed based on that belief. The point is if we're using our lives to make a difference for His kingdom by being a good witness for Him, or as we lead others closer to Him, that's evidence of our salvation. Jesus commanded for us is to put other's needs as priority over our own needs. In summary, the way we know we're saved if we put our lives where we claim our faith is. Which leads me to the third point:
  - c) John reminds us that Jesus gave us a new commandment. That commandment isn't new in the sense it wasn't part of the Old Testament. To this day religious Jewish people twice a day recite a prayer called the "Shema" which essentially says to love God as much as one can and love one's neighbor as one's self. What's new is that Jesus showed us by example how to love others. He taught his disciples first hand how they're to love others more than we love our self and what's new is the example He gave of His own life. That just means we're to put other's needs as priority over our own. That's how we obey that command.
    - i) John then gives an example of this concept: He effectively says, if we hate another believer in Jesus, then we're not obeying Jesus "new" command for our lives. This is not about "sinning" by having a bad day, it's about our lifestyle as a Christian.

- d) From here, John focuses on how we know we're Christians by "age". The essential point is for example, older Christians should have lived long enough to recall the evidence in our own lives of how we should live as by putting others needs as priority over our own. He compliments "young men" (as in young in their faith, not their actual age) as overcoming the "evil one" as they've realized there is more to life than to just live for this life only. It's the idea they realize God exists and His purpose for our lives is make a difference for Him based on how we act. Finally John compliments "little children" as in the new believers as they realize God exists and has a purpose for their lives.
  - e) After that John comes back to addressing all believers and gives us another way we know we are saved. It is if we love making a difference for God more than we love any and all things of this world, then we know we're saved. So are you saying we're not saved if we are watching a television program? Of course not. The point is where's our heart? If God told you to give up either, that television show or some commitment we've made to Him, which would we choose? It's another reminder that time is the most valuable thing we own and we need to consider how we're using the time God's given us to live.
  - f) Speaking of being focused on time, John (not me, the writer of this letter) also focuses on that same issue here. He reminds us of "the" and other "antichrists". I've got good news: this is not a prophecy lesson as much as it is a reminder of how to live as Christians. The point is John only gives a brief mention of a future "The" Antichrist, which as most of us know is one of the "losing players" of the end time scenario whenever that will play out.
    - i) Instead, John focuses on "a" antichrist. Which is John's way of describing people who refuse to accept the idea that Jesus is God and deny the relationship between God the Father and God the Son as the only way of salvation. The short version is John's describing any person who denies that Jesus is God. We don't tend to think of any nonbeliever as "a" antichrist, but that's John's intent. Just remember that the term "antichrist" refers to anyone who opposes who Jesus was, is, and what He did for us by paying the complete price for our sins as God.
3. Putting this all together, what John wants us to know, is we are saved because Jesus is in heaven as our "defense attorney" for the sins we've committed. This is to realize the game is fixed, as we can't sin enough as Christians to lose our salvation. Then he reminds us what we're supposed to do with our salvation: Rely upon God's power so we can love others just as Jesus expressed love to His disciples. Then John reminds us that as we get older we grow in that love and grow in our ability to share that love with others. Finally John gives us the reminder that there is opposition (unsaved people) to us using our lives to make that difference for Jesus, but the power we have within us as Christians is greater than the power that is in those who are against believing Jesus is both fully God and fully human.
- a) I believe that's a pretty good summary of why one becomes a Christian and what one has to know about living the Christian live in one paragraph. Therefore, we can now start on the details of the verse-by-verse commentary.
4. Verse 1: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
- a) John starts by calling all the readers of this letter "my dear children". Remember that John at the time of this letter is an older man. He's also at a point in his life where he's the last of the original disciples and even Paul died years earlier. Therefore he sees all believers as those who've come after him. That's why he refers to all of us as children. It's not because we're actually children, but because John can literally say he's been at it longer than any of us reading this letter "back then" or to state the obvious, reading it today.
  - b) John states one of the purposes of this letter in that first sentence: That we don't sin. If we all believe Jesus paid the full price of every sin we've committed or will commit, why does John want us not to sin? The answer is as Christians, behavior matters. Why is that?

- i) The issue is being a good witness for Jesus. If we can't lose our salvation if we sin too much, the purpose of avoiding sin is it makes us a bad witness for Jesus. Let's face it, if we steal, murder, fail to worship God or even rest in Him, people will not see us as Christian believers. That's why sin is to be avoided as much as possible.
- c) Of course none of us are perfect, which leads us to John's next point. He says that when we do sin, we have someone who speaks in our defense: Jesus. Ever wonder what Jesus is doing all day in heaven? He's our "defense attorney". Think of heaven as a courtroom where Satan is saying about saved people individually and collectively, "we're not worth saving, look how imperfect believers are and look how much they sin". Jesus is not there claiming we're innocent. In effect our defense attorney is saying, guilty as charged and in fact they're worse than that!" However, our defense attorney then says, since I've already paid the price for their sins, they (us) are free to spend eternity in heaven.
  - i) Stop and consider the idea of God Himself paying the price for our sins. What if God said, "you, angel #2743, go the earth and pay the price for everyone's sin." If that were the case, then God wouldn't be fair to "angel #2743" as God made that angel suffer on our behalf. But if God Himself paid the price, then it shows how much God loves us because He himself paying the price for our sins. Whether we realize it or not, groups like the Jehovah Witnesses or Mormon's who deny Jesus as being fully God as well as fully human, are part of the "antichrists" mentioned in the opening introduction.
  - ii) Switching perspective for the moment, I admit I've always wondered why Satan bothers to accuse us of sin if he understands the "game is fixed"? Before Jesus did pay the price for sin, I'm convinced he did all he could to prevent that event from happening. I'm convinced he was behind the efforts to wipe out the Jewish nation before that event. Even since that event, there needs to be a Jewish remnant living in the land of Israel for Jesus to return to. That's why he works to wipe out Israel from being a nation when that occurs. Still, if Satan knows he's going to lose in the end, why bother? I think part of it is he's convinced he can "beat the system" if he tries hard enough. There's also a theory (just that) that Satan wants to present to God all the condemned souls and bargain with God with those souls. However, if such people refused to trust in God in their lives, that bargain won't work. What I came to the conclusion is that Satan does exist, he does fight God's will, and we as Christians don't have to fear him, as God's power is greater than his.
  - iii) Let me close by reminding all of us if we don't think Satan is real, trying opposing him for awhile by preaching the Gospel to someone and watch what happens. I'm convinced those who fight hard for Jesus deal with "battle scars" from those fights.
  - iv) OK, enough about what life in heaven could be about now, let's get back to what John's saying and how that affects our lives here and now.
- d) John refers to Jesus here as the "righteous one" as our defense attorney. It's John's way of saying, God is right and Jesus has the right to plead our eternal forgiveness as He paid the price for our sins. I know I'm stating the basic's here, but it's important we remember that fact as we get into the rest of the chapter of what we have to "know" about Jesus.
- e) All of that leads perfectly into Verse 2. So you don't have to turn back the page, I'll repeat it here: "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."
  - i) I know I'm "preaching to the choir" here about Jesus being the complete sacrifice for all our sins, so I won't beat that point to death any more.
  - ii) The question I have is, what did John mean by the sins of the whole world? Didn't John realize many or most people reject the idea of Jesus as God paying for all our sins? If you don't believe me, ask most people why their saved and they'll say that they believe their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds so they deserve heaven.

- iii) To state the obvious again, to believe our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds isn't the Gospel message. What John meant by the "whole world" is the idea that Jesus not only died for the sins of those of us who trust in that fact, but for all people in the future willing to trust in that fact.
- iv) One can also interpret this idea another way. Consider the fact we don't see angels going around the world saying, "You reject Jesus? Off to hell you go right now!"
  - a) My point is God allows nonbelievers to live out their lives however long it is on this planet despite the fact they have or will reject Jesus. That's how He's paid the price even for those who reject the Gospel message. To state the obvious a little more, none of us know who is or isn't saved, so we pray for all people and witness to all as believers in Jesus.

5. Verse 3: We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. <sup>4</sup> The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

- a) Remember the theme of this lesson is about how do we know if we're saved. Now notice in Verse 3 it says we can know we're saved if (big "if") we obey His commands. If we see a person go to church every Sunday, but never lives as God commands they live then that is evidence the person isn't saved. My point is behavior matters to born again Christians. Remember the issue isn't whether or not we are saved, but how do we know for sure if we are or aren't saved. The answer is to look at our behavior. Are we making an effort to live by God's commands for our lives? Do we honor God as God? Do we avoid for example: stealing or adultery, or take time to rest in Him? That's the evidence to see whether or not someone is a Christian. The issue isn't being perfect in this life. The issue is the evidence of our salvation.
- b) I'm convinced that when we get to heaven, we're all going to be shocked by who made it and who didn't make it to heaven. I'm convinced we'll see people who we may have seen in church get rejected not because they went to church, but because they've never changed their lifestyles based on that trust in Jesus. We'll also meet those we never thought would be saved, who lived their lives by their trust that Jesus died for all of their sins and their behavior reflected that belief.
- c) All of that preaching effectively about Verse 4 leads me to Verse 5. The question is how do we know if we have God's love within us? Again, the answer is we obey what God is demanding of us, to be obedient to Him. The evidence of our salvation is our obedience. I'm not claiming to be perfect or demand perfection, but if we're ever in doubt about our salvation, then check our behavior. As I said in the last lesson, the issue isn't what would Jesus do, the issue is what would Jesus want us to do at this moment. If we learn to think that way and care about pleasing God, that's the evidence of our salvation. If we think that way, God's love grow in us, which is why John will bring up in a few verses the idea of Christians of different ages and how they should act based on what they know of Jesus at that stage of their Christian life.
- d) Now we get to the tougher verse, Verse 6: It says that if we claim to live with the idea of Jesus guiding our lives, we have to live as He lived. It is not literal in that we each have to die by dying on a cross or we each have to go from place to place preaching salvation as He did. While some Christians are called to be evangelists, and others are called to make a difference for Him in other ways, we're all called to make a difference for Him in some way or another. That's how we live as Jesus lived.
  - i) As I love to point out every now and then, the greatest way to use your life is to do what it is you're good at doing or just enjoy doing and find a way to use that talent to make a difference for Jesus. Even if we can't do that right now, work toward it as a goal so we all can use our lives for His glory.

- e) In summary of John's point here, we can know we're saved if we're making the effort to live, as God demands we live, by being obedient to His commandments for our lives. If we're using our lives to make a difference for Him we can know (there's that word again) that God is dwelling within us and He is using our lives for His glory! That's the point.
6. Verse 7: Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.
- a) To explain verse 7, we need to understand a little what John meant by "old and new". The idea is that the way people know we are Christians is by our love for one another. That's what Jesus said is the way people will know (there's that word again!) we're saved. Recall that John wrote in his gospel (John 13:35), that we Christians are to show love for another by putting other's needs ahead of our own. My point is simply it is both an old command and a new command from John's perspective. Let me explain that better:
- i) It's "old" in that it is considered part of the Jewish religions greatest command that we are love others as ourselves. (Based on Leviticus 19:18 and quotes by Jesus as being part of the greatest commandment in Matthew 19:19).
- ii) It's "new" in that we read how Jesus lived and put others needs ahead of his own as a model of how we're to love as God desires we love. I'm not saying we'll ever be as good as Jesus. I'm saying that by God's power living within us as Christians we have the power to put other's needs as priority over our own needs. It's new in the sense that when we trust Jesus as the complete payment for our sins, we know we are saved because the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us, and provides for us the power to live as God desires we live.
- iii) Let me try the "new" aspect one more way: Not sure what we're supposed to do in any situation? Ask for God to guide us. We don't pray directly to the Holy Spirit because His job is to bring glory to God the Father through our lives. However we can ask Him to guide us so we can make that difference.
- b) What I'm getting at is John's reminding us of the "old and new" command Jesus gave us to put the needs of others as priority over our own needs. All of that leads to the important question of why: Because we as Christians have the truth of God's love for others, within us because as believers God's Spirit lives within us. We don't have to obtain anything as to obey this commandment as we've already "obtained it". I admit at times it's hard to put others ahead of our self, because our natural inclination is just to take care of ourselves.
- i) An example might be good here. If we have kids at home, we often put the needs of our children over our own needs. If we're single or have grown kids, we have more "leisure time" than others. The question of course, is what are we doing with that time? Are there things we can do to help others, or are we just sitting at home every night just "entertaining ourselves"? Yes there are times we're too tired to do things. What I've discovered is when we make the effort to get involved for His kingdom it gives us more energy than well, "sitting home feeling sorry for our self". Again it's back to discovering things we enjoy doing anyway, and finding a way to combine that "thing" for God's glory. That's what inspires me to make the time to write and hopefully you can think of your own example of how you can use your time to make a difference for His kingdom.
- c) You may think that this little speech I just gave wanders us away from the text, but in fact it describes it perfectly. The last part of Verse 8 says, "because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining". The true light is God taking up residence within us as believers in Jesus as to make a difference for Him. The "darkness" is the reminder that no matter how long we get to live, this life is only temporary. Therefore, John's giving us his reminder that since our time here is limited, why not use it for God's glory?

7. Verse 9: Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.
- <sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.
- <sup>11</sup>But 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.
- a) Remember why John's writing this letter, so that we can know for sure we're saved. One way we can know for sure is about our attitude over fellow believers in Jesus. If we hold on to hatred toward someone who as best we can tell is a fellow believer in Jesus as God, then that would give us doubts about our salvation.
  - b) Let me explain that another way. Are there people I know in church, who I struggle with? Of course, welcome to life. However, there is a big difference between hating that person and not showing love to them. In such cases, I pray for God to help me with my struggles to be a better witness to that person. God does not say, "Go help only those we really like and ignore the rest". It's about having His love work through us so we can show that love to all people and especially those who as best we can tell, also believe Jesus died for every sin they ever have or ever will commit.
  - c) I've told the story before about a person who borrowed a good sum of money from me a few decades ago now. Do I still hold a grudge? No. I prayed for him for a long time. If I saw him today, I'd say, "Hello, how've you been" and that's that. If he asked for my help, I may help him but I've also learned he's not trustworthy and sometimes "tough love" is better than giving people what they want. One of my strongest childhood memories has to do with my father refusing to help a cousin of mine struggling with drugs at that time as my father knew giving him money wouldn't help him. My point here is that showing love for others is not always about giving them what they want, but making the effort to put other's needs ahead of our own and making the best decision of what to do in tough situations as to help others and show love to others around us.
  - d) That last point relates well to these verses. John's main point is we can tell we're believers if we're willing to put others needs ahead of our own. In tough situations we have to rely upon God's guidance as how to best help that person, but the point is if we do care about them, we'll make the effort to help them and put their needs ahead of our own. I'm not saying for example we have to give away all we own to every stranger who asks of us. I am saying we need to have a heart for others and helping as we can which is why we're called to "give of ourselves" and put the needs of others as priority over our own needs.
  - e) All of that lecturing about caring for others leads me to Verse 11. John's saying that if we don't care for others, whether we realize it or not, we're walking in "darkness". That word is describing being in a situation so dark, we have to feel our way around as to learn what is next to us. It's John's word-picture of saying, if all we care about in life is taking care of ourselves or even our own families, again, we're walking in that type of darkness. No I'm not asking for a check although I always covet the prayers of my readers. However if we claim we believe Jesus died for our sins, then we would naturally want to share that type of love with others and care about others. That's the type of "love" that God wants us to live with. The blindingly dark "darkness" John is describes here are those times when it's "all about me" and we don't care about anyone but ourselves.
    - i) Time for more disclaimers. Yes there are times when we are sick and we do have to put our own needs first. One of the toughest things for many Christians to do is let others serve us as we are called to serve others. One of the best ways to express God's love to others is during tough times letting others minister to us as well.
    - ii) There are also times when if one of our children were sick, we'd put our family's needs ahead of the needs of others. I've learned that when we tell others the truth about why we can't help others at that moment, they understand because most of us have been in those types of situations. All I'm saying is if we have an attitude of putting others first, people will pick up on the fact we have God's love in us.

8. Verse 12: I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. <sup>13</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. <sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.
- a) Verses 12-14 are usually written out in poetry fashion. John breaks up his letter as if he's writing to people of different age groups reading his letter. I believe the main point here is no matter where we are in one's Christian maturity level, may none of us fail to honor Jesus as God. It's like saying if we only know "this much" in our relationship with God the father and God the Son, may we honor them based on what we do know and as we do continue to grow in that relationship. With that said, let's go over some of the details:
  - b) In Verse 12, John starts by making a comment to "dear children". John started this epistle by calling all believers children. I don't think it refers here specifically to children, but to those of us new in our faith or only have the basic's down. To state the obvious, the basics are we believe that Jesus was and still is fully human and fully God at the same time. He died for our sins and we can't earn our salvation based on our trust in that belief. Because of that belief John says in that first sentence we are forgiven of all our sins.
    - i) One of the great traits of new believers is the peace they start to feel when it dawns on them there is nothing they can do to earn their way into heaven. Yes behavior matters and we'll get to that. Before we discuss our behavior, having that sense of peace knowing that you can't mess up enough to lose our salvation or realizing the fact God is guiding our lives gives us a wonderful sense of peace that can't happen by letting go of worries about anything that truly matters for all of eternity.
  - c) That concept leads perfectly to Verse 13. When John refers to "fathers", I believe it can be either men or women who've lived as Christians long enough to realize that God will not abandon us no matter what we're going through in our lives. It's the idea of being mature enough to realize that no matter what we're going through, no matter what we're dealing with, no matter how good or how bad our life is going at the moment, God's guiding us the whole time to make us into the type of person He wants us to be. I like to describe the Christian life as "God taking up residence inside of us" and as we let Him, He guides our lives the way He wants it to go, through good and bad times.
    - i) That leads me back to Verse 13. John is not referring to literal fathers, but those of us who've lived the Christian life long enough to realize God's always there, He is always guiding us and always wants us to grow closer in a relationship with Him.
  - d) Verse 13 then refers to "young men who have overcome the evil one". Again I don't think John is specifically writing to men, but it's referring to those in the "prime of life" who've given their lives to Jesus and realize He's in charge of their lives.
    - i) The sermons I've heard on "young men" here like to mention the fact that when it comes to warfare, it's always the young men who do the real fighting as it's at that age, when one is in the best physical condition. Does that mean only "dark forces" only attack the strongest of us? I know I still battle my own demons and I've now lived long enough where I don't consider myself a young man anymore. What is being said here is as Christians grow in their faith past the point where they only understand the basic's, they've overcome those forces that desire to draw us away from God's desire for our lives.
    - ii) As we get into the last part of the chapter, we're going to discuss people and forces that want to draw us away from Jesus. That includes everything from cults to any thing that gets our focus off of God and onto the world. The point is a sign of our Christian maturity is we're always interested in being pleasing to God based solely on how we live our lives. That's how we overcome "the evil one".

- e) At this point, John then focuses on little children. It would be like someone who thinks, "I don't know my bible well, and I don't understand how to be a mature Christian. But I do know God is real, He exists and He loves me and cares for me."
  - i) One of the points being made here is that we are not "more forgiven" as we grow in our relationship with God. We've been fully forgiven from the beginning of our relationship with Him. What grows is our understanding of that relationship. As we reach young adulthood (in terms that we've now spent a good amount of time trusting in Jesus to guide our lives), we've overcome Satan's desire to spend our time on things that don't matter for eternity. For example, if you've taken the time to read this far in a bible lesson, that's a sign you care about pleasing God. No I'm not saying we're going to be perfect. I'm just saying the way to tell that we're more mature in our faith than when we first believed, is we do care about pleasing God by how we live out our lives. Then as we get older, we look back and realize how God's been guiding our lives the whole time. That's the maturity pattern John is trying to describe in these verses.
  - ii) If we grasp the fact we're maturing as we spend time drawing close to God, then you've got the essence of the pattern John's writing in these verses. OK, we sort of get that. Now what? That leads us perfectly to the next verse.

9. 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

- a) A good question to ask ourselves every now and then is how much do we really love God based on the way we live? Before you nod your head and say yes, ask, "Do I love to pray or read my bible more than I like to "veg out" in front of the television? Do I enjoy music that praises God more than I love secular music? Before one says, "that's works, and we don't have to work to earn our salvation". The issue isn't our salvation. It's about looking at the evidence of our lives about whether or not we care about God more than the things that won't last for eternity. Are there areas of my life where I struggle this way? Yes and if we're honest, I suspect most of us would say the same thing.
- b) Let's face it if "the world" (things that are not eternal) aren't appealing, none of us would be attracted to it in the first place. I'm not saying it's a sin to engage in an activity that in itself isn't "Christian" or religious. I'm saying that if we have a heart for God, then a sign of our maturity is we care more about pleasing Him than we do our own interests. This is about how Christians are supposed to live their lives, with our thoughts focused regularly on how we can be pleasing to God with our lives.
- c) It's probably time we back up for a moment and ask why is all of this necessary? Recall that the theme of this lesson is about how do we know for sure we're saved? One way is as we mature as believers we care less and less about things that don't matter eternally as we focus more and more on our relationship with God. Does that mean I can never do a thing that isn't pleasing to God? Of course not. The issue is about considering how we do spend our time and are we growing in our faith by considering the use of our time so we can grow closer in our relationship with Him. Remember that when we use our time as to help others, that's a sign that we know we're saved, because we're now putting the other's needs as a priority over our own needs.
  - i) To give an example, I recall recently having a discussion with some men who like to spend time coaching children in sports. What they enjoy isn't winning games as much as it is seeing children grow in their maturity, as they understand what's the right way to do things in life as well as in the games they play. My point is doing a thing for God is not always as obvious as a church event or time with Him. It's also working with others to help them grow as to learn how to properly act.



- d) That cute little speech does lead me back to these verses. John reminds us in those verses how this world "is passing away". We're attracted by what we see and hear and it easily turns us away from God. I heard an analogy from a pastor named Jon Curson I want to share here: He said, "what if an American football team, only had three plays: A run up the middle, a sweep to the left and a screen pass to the right?" If that we're the case, the defense of any team could easily stop that team as they know the three plays. I state that because in effect, demonic forces only have a few "plays" that they've been using since Adam and Eve to get us to turn from God. Those three "plays" are effectively, to make us doubt what God has promised us about eternal life, to appeal to our human nature what this world has to offer if we spend time on things that don't matter for eternity or if we "build up our ego" by stating how great we are based on the power we have as believers.
- i) My point is the temptations to turn from God fall into the same patterns that have existed since the Garden of Eden. To say it another way, "The devil only has three plays in his football playbook". When we grow as believers and recognize what is his "three plays" (avoiding God's laws of how to live, the appeal of what the world has to offer, and thinking we're superior to others based on what we've done with our lives or who we think we are), then we can mature as we realize what it is that draws us away from God in the first place.
- ii) Again, I'm not saying I don't have my faults. I'm saying a way we know we have been saved and growing in our faith in God, is we recognize what it is that draws us away from God and overcome temptation as we realize what's bad for us.
- iii) To use one more example, we teach a child not to run in the street as a car can hurt him or her. We as mature Christians can realize if we spend too much time doing things that draw us away from God, we begin to think, "Wait a minute something is not right with my life right now. I need to take inventory of myself and go draw closer to God as He's in charge of my life." That type of maturity of realizing God is always in charge of our lives is John's point as he describes the temptations that can always tempt us to away from God at any given moment in our lives.
- e) John's final reminder in these verses is to try to remember that things that don't matter for eternity will fade away soon enough. It's the realization we won't live forever here as our true home is in heaven. The point is when we're tempted to do something that we know isn't pleasing to God, the way we can turn from that temptation is we realize that concept is not only not pleasing to God, but whatever it is, it won't last forever.
10. 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. <sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.
- a) I am well aware that for many Christians, when the topic of prophecy or the Antichrist comes up, they immediately stop reading or turn to something else. I also know many other Christians that are overly obsessed with prophecy and "see the devil everywhere". Remember that the same John who wrote this book also wrote Revelation, so the topic of prophecy is no "stranger" to John. Next realize that John's the only bible writer who does refer to "the" antichrist" by that title. If you go through the bible, there are lots of ways he is described and "antichrist" is only one of those titles.
- b) Now the good news. For those of you who hate the topic of "the" antichrist, these verses do not focus on that topic. We're a few books "to the left" of Revelation and there's a lot to say in that book on that topic. The topic in these verses is on "a" antichrist. That simply is referring to anyone who opposes the gospel message. It's not just cults, but all people who are not interested in doing God's will for their lives whether they realize it or not, falls in that category of "a" antichrist. Remember that the prefix "anti" means to being opposed to Christ or anyone offering anything "instead" of Christ. OK, enough "anti" lecturing here.

- c) All of that leads to a quick lecture on the term "last hour". Let's be honest, it's now been about 2,000 years since John wrote this letter. How can it still be "the last hour" if all that time has past since this has been written? While that term is a good literal translation of the original Greek words, it's not the best paraphrase of what John meant. John had no idea when Jesus was going to return. John has now lived a long life since the time he had spent those three years with Jesus. Yet even though John is old, I believe he considers all of life from the time Jesus rose from the dead to whenever He returns to be "the last hour" even if it describes a 2,000 year time period and counting.
- d) Think of that concept this way: If Jesus had returned 100 years ago, none of us would be in heaven with Him as His kingdom would be "full" before we were born. This is about the fact that heaven will not have an infinite number of people but a finite. The return of Jesus makes that finite number hit home. My point is John sees human history as all the time leading up to the point where Jesus paid the price for our sins and "the last hour" is all the time between Jesus first and second coming.
- e) OK, it's now been 2,000 years more or less. How do we know Jesus is still returning? A good way to know that is there are hundreds of predictions in the Old Testament that tie to the events of Jesus first coming. There are twice as many predictions about what will happen when He returns. The point is if we believe the Old Testament was completed before the New was written, the evidence is there that whoever inspired that book has a complete history of mankind from beginning to end and can accurately predict what will happen in the future. If we can trust the bible "so far", we can trust the future. If that isn't enough to convince you, consider how Israel is a country again after 2,000 years and life is just happening to be lining up well for Jesus return soon.
- f) I promised this wouldn't be a prophecy lesson so my apology for slipping into that mode. Let's get back to the text: John's main point here is during this 2,000 year last-hour period of time, there are people throughout all that time period who have made a commitment to Jesus and turned away from it. I just heard pastor John MacArthur talk about a childhood friend who went to seminary with him. After his friend finished, he then built a Buddha shrine in his home. My point and John the writer's point is we shouldn't be shocked by the fact that some people do turn away from God.
  - i) That leads us back to the purpose of this lesson: To tell how we know we're saved. We see others walk away from Jesus and think that may be for them, but that's not what God's called me to do. We see the evidence in the bible of history written in advance, we know some basic archeological evidence about the history of the bible and we're convinced that all of this is real. Others are not convinced with all of the evidence and turn away. My point is we know we're saved if we stick with it even when others have turned away from God.
  - ii) To put this another way, it's not our job to fix all people. We pray for those we care about, but we have to realize that not all who're called to salvation choose it. That is why I love the fact that one of Jesus 12 disciples turned on Him. That reminds us that not everyone who's called by God makes the choice to stick it out. If someone that close to Jesus can walk away, so can others who we thought were saved.
  - iii) The point is a way we can know for sure we're saved is we stick it out even when we see others turn away from God. We can't put a gun to people's heads and say, "turn to Jesus or I'll kill you". We encourage others through prayer and based on how we live by putting the needs of others first. That attraction of our lifestyle is what draws people closer to God, but it's God Himself that changes the hearts of people, not our words. Therefore we always pray for others that they're hearts be open to the Gospel and that they use their lives to make a difference for Jesus as they grow in their faith. In finishing on these verses, the idea is that when we see people turn from God, it's evidence He's real as He predicted it would occur.

11. Verse 20: But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. <sup>21</sup> I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.
- a) As I stated in the introduction, John likes to write in "growing circles" as he returns to the same issues over and over again, each time expanding upon ideas he's already presented. I say that here as there is a heavy emphasis here on knowing the truth that Jesus is God. Again, recall the purpose of this book, to know for sure we're saved, when we go through our moments of doubts, First John is a great book to remind us by the evidence of how we live that we are saved. It's here to give us assurance that all of "this" is worth the trouble.
  - b) With that stated, Verse 20 starts with "an anointing from the Holy One". As you may or may not know Pentecostal churches have a field day with that concept. There are many a Christian church that falsely believe you're not really saved, until say oil is poured on you by an elder in that church or an elder physically lays hands on you. What is just as bad is when they say you don't have the Holy Spirit living in you unless "something like that" is occurring or has occurred in your life. What John is trying to reassure us here is that if we do believe Jesus died for all our sins, then we have (done deal) received the "anointing of the Holy One" whether we realize it or not. The point is if we've made that commitment and live out our lives based on that commitment, then we have been separated from the world for eternal salvation. That's the anointing John's describing here, not any sort of ritual that one may have in a church or through any other organization.
  - c) If you have doubts about that, notice the next part of Verse 20 says, "we know the truth". The truth is we're saved based on our trust in Jesus and the fact we've dedicated our life to serving Him. That the "truth" and not any sort of man-made ritual one can go through.
  - d) That leads to Verses 21 and 22. John's essentially saying that the truth is Jesus is God and He came to earth as a human and is to this day resurrected as fully human and fully God. The reason John's pounding that point is that there has been and always will be people in our midst who deny that fact. That's why John calls those who deny that liars in Verse 22. John had an advantage that none of us had: three years personally trained by Jesus. He's also had a lifetime since then to contemplate what Jesus did and how He's fulfilled what's written about Him centuries beforehand. As I love to state every now and then, I am sure every aspect of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection is predicted in the Old Testament.
  - e) Stop and consider what would it take if a person you knew for years is really God? Even if that person did miracles or could tell your future, we might say that person has a great gift, but how can we be convinced He is actually the creator of the universe Himself? It's the fact of the resurrection and a lifetime of communicating with Jesus after that I'm sure that convinced John that Jesus was truly God Himself.
  - f) All of that leads me back to the last few verses. The reason John calls people who deny all of that antichrists, are those people who go against all that John saw and realized over his life. It's kind of strange to consider that a person who maybe served you lunch or sat next to somewhere is an "antichrist" as we tend to think of a devilish person when we use that word. However, John's describing anyone and everyone who deny the combination of Jesus and God the Father as being one in essence. To deny Jesus is God is the same thing in John's mind as denying God's existence and that's the point of these verses.
  - g) In summary, what John's trying to do here is reassure the believer that what we do believe in is true: That Jesus is both fully human and fully God. To know Jesus means that we do know the Father. When we use our lives making a difference for Jesus by doing what He commands us to do, we can know for sure we are pleasing to God. Yes nonbelievers do exist all around us, but we can be sure that Jesus is God based on the evidence we have. Therefore, we have eternal life simply by believing Jesus is God's son as the bible teaches.

12. Verse 24: See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup> And this is what he promised us--even eternal life.
- a) I mentioned earlier in this lesson about a man who got his college degree from a Christian seminary and then built a Buddhist shrine in his home. I also know the story about a man who was a prominent evangelist who worked with Billy Graham in his early career. After that, he spent his life writing books denying Jesus is God. My point is there will always be "church people" who turn away from God. Realize from His all-knowing perspective, such people were never saved. What we can discern from our "stuck in time" perspective that such people may have signs they were saved at one time, but turned from their faith for one reason or another.
  - b) As I love to lecture, I hold the view of "once saved, always saved". Let me expand upon it by saying that we must hold that view all our lives. If we hold the view that Jesus is God, and later in life sincerely turn from that view, I doubt such a person is saved. So does that mean if we have a bad day or week, we lose our salvation? No, this is about our heart. If we truly believe all our lives Jesus is God and died for our sins, then no matter how much we sin we can go to our graves being assured of our eternal life. Those who turn from that belief or were never fully convinced in the first place are the people I described earlier.
  - c) Again, think about Judas. He saw all of Jesus miracles, and still committed suicide before Jesus rose from the dead. I'd argue Judas was never saved as he denied the fact that Jesus is God and probably believed Jesus was some harmless philosopher who had powers.
  - d) The "knowing" here is that we're eternally saved as long as we believe Jesus is God.
13. Verse 26: I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. <sup>27</sup> As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit -- just as it has taught you, remain in him.
- a) Recall that earlier in this lesson I discussed the fact that God's "anointing" is not about any person say, laying hands on us or pouring oil on our heads. It's our accepting the fact of Jesus as both God and fully human that saves us, and not by any ritual. What John fears is how false teachers can easily lead people astray. Cults and groups that deny Jesus is fully God and fully human are all around us. That was true in John's day as well.
  - b) So what's the motivation of such groups? Why do people work so hard to deny Jesus as being fully God and fully human? Part of it is they're convinced they're right. I'm equally convinced that there are demonic forces behind such cults who's motivation is to prevent people from being saved. Remember that Satan is well aware of the fact that his time to rule over this world is limited. Neither he or us know that time frame, but he's aware that there are only an unknown "x" number of believers that are saved. Therefore he is doing all he can to slow down that final number from occurring. That's why he's making such a major effort to make us either ineffective witnesses for Jesus or get us to turn away from our belief in Jesus as God. John's point is we have motivation to stay close to Jesus as that is the best way to use our lives just as demonic forces have their own motivation for us to turn our lives away from God. That's the idea here.
  - c) In summary, what we can know is we're saved if we spend the rest of our lives trusting in Jesus as God and paying the price for our sins and there will always be people around us who deny that fact and want us to turn from that belief. That's the underlying idea here.
14. Verse 28: And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. <sup>29</sup> If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.
- a) John wraps this up to remind us to "continue" in Him. That simply means to continue to use our lives to make a difference for Jesus. That's the greatest purpose we can have for our lives. Yes, it's been 2,000 years, but we must live as today could be our last day to live as death can happen or Jesus returns. We're assured of our salvation by living like that.

- b) I could go on for more pages describing the fact that we still have to plan for our future if today is not our last day to live. We still have to decide what's best for our lives and those we care about around us. I'm well aware it could be another 1,000 years before the world as we know it ends, but since none of us will be around then, what we can do is use what God has given us, our time to make a difference for Him as that's the greatest purpose we can have with our lives. Yes we believe Jesus is God, and yes we all know people who'll go to their graves denying that fact. However, we can't fix others, only do what's best for our own lives and be a good witness for Jesus as we live out the rest of our lives.
  - c) With that positive ending in mind, time to close in prayer.
15. Heavenly Father, we are grateful that You didn't send Jesus to return, say 100 years ago, as then we have an opportunity to use our lives for Your glory and be a witness for You. We ask You do lead us down the path in life that You desire we go. We are grateful we are anointed in the fact we are chosen to be with You forever. Out of appreciation for that anointing, may You guide our lives and the decisions we make so that You may be glorified in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.