

That You May Not Sin 1 John 2:1-11

1 John 2:1-11 Introduction

- John Stott once put it like this:
 - *“Sin and the child of God are incompatible. They may occasionally meet; they cannot live together in harmony.”*
- Sin disrupts our fellowship with God.
- Fellowship with God disrupts our relationship with sin.

- The passage we will look at today explores the conflict between sin and fellowship with God.
- John reminds us that our Advocate, Jesus Christ, is there to restore us when that fellowship is broken by sin.
- John also provides us with simple, accurate tests we can use to see that we are maintaining a right standing before our heavenly Father.

God wants to enjoy fellowship with us. Stay in close fellowship with Him.

1 John 2:1-11 Outline

- Maintain a right standing. 2:1-2
- Know where you stand. 2:3-11

Maintain a right standing. 2:1-2

- 2:1 that you may not sin
- This is one of John’s primary goals in writing this epistle.
- He wants us to learn not to sin.
- Sin disrupts and destroys our fellowship with God – and that fellowship is one of the key distinguishing marks of the Christian life. See 1:3.

- 2:1 John sees Christians as all living in one gigantic family.
- The concepts and terminology he uses are linked with family-related themes.
- He speaks to his readers as “little children.”
- God is our “Father.”
- We are “brothers” and “beloved.”
- We are “children of God.”

- 2:1 We all know what a tragedy it can be when a child openly rebels against his or her parents.
- The parents may love the child deeply, but the fellowship is lost, the family ties are strained.
- When our hearts are not right before God because of sin, the fellowship, the family ties, become damaged and stretched and are at risk of being broken.

- 2:1 Therefore, John is writing to us “that we may not sin.”
- It is very important to John, the aged apostle, that this loving family bond that we have with God is kept completely intact.
- He understands the grief that sin and rebellion can cause.

- 2:1 And if anyone sins Of course John knows that we are going to sin.
- Sin is inevitable. It is not necessary, but it is inevitable.

- What's the difference?
 - Think again of children and parents.
 - Children do not have to disobey. It is not necessary that they do so. But they all do.
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- 2:1 And if anyone sins
 - Sin is not necessary, but it is inevitable.
 - Take a look back at 1:8-10.
 - We do not have to sin, but we all do.
 - Like children who disobey, we are rightly held accountable for our sin.
 - Since we all sin, and are accountable, we should be glad to have an Advocate with the Father.
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- 2:1 Advocate (*paraklētos*)
 - In ancient Greek texts, *"the paraklētos is consistently portrayed as an advocate, one who speaks on behalf of the accused (not in the professional sense we use it today, but as a friend or patron who speaks up in favour of the accused)."* Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*
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- Notice that the verse does not say, "if we are sinless, we have an Advocate with the Father."
 - It does not say, "if we are good enough, we have an Advocate with the Father."
 - It says, "if anyone sins."
 - When we sin and Satan can justly accuse us, Jesus Christ comes to our defense.
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- 2:1 Advocate (*paraklētos*)
 - In the Bible, this word is only used by John.
 - He uses it here and 4x in the Gospel, where in each case the "Helper" refers to the Holy Spirit. See John 14:16 & 26; 15:26 and 16:7.
 - The Holy Spirit is our Helper or our Advocate on earth; Jesus is our Advocate in heaven.
 - The Holy Spirit first points us to Jesus, then Jesus reunites us with the Father.
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- 2:2 propitiation (NKJV, ESV)
 - Also "the sacrifice that atones" (NLT) Or "atoning sacrifice" (NIV)
 - This means that our sins have been paid for by the sufferings of another – Jesus Christ.
 - That payment allows God to be both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
 - See Romans 3:24-26, where Paul uses a similar word – though translated the same.
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- In 4:10 John uses the same word again.
 - Here the emphasis is on the love of God the Father toward us – causing Him to send Jesus.
 - So our Advocate is not trying to maintain our innocence or deny our guilt.
 - He justifies us by confessing our guilt and taking the punishment for our sins.
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- 2:2 Unlike our human relationships which are all tainted by sin, the three Persons of the Trinity all work together.
 - The Father loves us.
 - Christ died for us and now pleads our case.
 - The Holy Spirit is with us to help us in our state of constant need.

- 2:2 In ancient pagan religions sacrifices were offered to appease arbitrary deities who seemed reluctant to forgive.
 - Not so with the God we serve.
 - The Father sends the Son out of love for us.
 - The Son, through His suffering, becomes the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.
 - How can we respond with anything but grateful obedience?
- 2:2 We should not conclude, however, that the sins of the world are forgiven simply because Jesus died for them.
 - This is sometimes the argument of Universalists – those who believe that all will ultimately be saved regardless of what they do or what they believe.
 - John rules out that option in 5:11-13.
- 2:2 Here’s a better way to understand it:
 - Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world in the sense that His death was sufficient to deal with the sins of the whole world.
 - His sacrifice, however, does not become effective unless and until people actually put their trust in Him. Faith and obedience then lead to fellowship.

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Know where you stand. 2:3-11

- One of John’s goals in writing this letter is to give us assurance regarding our faith and a right standing with God.
 - For John, assurance is not vague or elusive, not sentimental or connected with feelings.
 - Our assurance is based on tangible, observable criteria.
 - John wants us to know that we know that we know that we know God.
- So in this section John will encourage us with three tests.
 - To the extent that we see certain traits or qualities active in our lives, we may be assured that we know God.
 - If we want our assurance to grow (and who doesn’t?), then we should cultivate these qualities as evidence of our right standing with God.
- The three tests pertaining to our personal standing with God are:
 - The test of obedience (2:3-5)
 - The test of abiding (2:6-8)
 - The test of love for our brother (2:9-11)
 - In reality all three of these traits are related.
 - We might almost say they are one and the same thing – a Christ-centered life – looked at from three different angles.

The test of obedience (2:3-5):

- Underline the phrase “He who says,” in v.4.
- John likes to point out that words and actions have to be connected.
- We can underline the same phrase in 2:6 and 2:9.
- Bible teacher Colin Kruse has said it like this:

- *“Ongoing assurance that we are people who know God is dependent upon ongoing obedience to his commands.”*
- Each of us should be able to look at our own life and see ourselves growing in obedience to Christ. A response of obedience is one measure of a right standing with God.
- See what Jesus says in John 14:15, 23-24.
- See also how John summarizes the commandments in 1 John 3:23.

The test of abiding (2:6-8):

- Abiding in Christ means having a life that looks increasingly like the life of Jesus.
- This will mean obedience to what Christ called His “new commandment.”
- (It’s not really new for John or for us any more, because Jesus said it first. John is simply reminding us of it. John likes these paradoxical sayings.)
- So what commandment is he talking about?
- For that we have to go back to John 13:34-35.
- We should love one another as Jesus loved us.
- John clarifies this a bit later in 1 John 3:16.
- As genuine Christians our lives should be characterized by self-sacrificing love for one another. This is what abiding in Him looks like.

The test of love for our brother (2:9-11):

- Earlier we said that all of these traits or tests were related.
- They all really tell us what a Christ-centered life looks like from different angles.
- John has already shown us that obedience and abiding are both related to loving one another.
- Now he connects that love with our abiding in the light.
- This is much the same as simply abiding in God or abiding in Christ.
- Look back at 1:5-7.
- In order to increase our assurance, we can increase the level of our self-sacrificing love.
- Christians ought to be incapable of harboring hatred or bitterness in their hearts toward one another.
- Anyone who can do so only reveals their spiritual blindness.
- Such a person in reality doesn’t know where he or she is going.
- So again, here are the three tests pertaining to our personal standing with God:
 - The test of obedience (2:3-5)
 - The test of abiding (2:6-8)
 - The test of love for our brother (2:9-11)
- Again, all three of these traits are related.
- They are one and the same thing – a Christ-centered life – looked at from different angles.

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1 John 2:1-11 Conclusions

- So what does it take to stay in close fellowship with God?
- God is holy, so one of the main things we must do is learn to avoid sin.
- But avoiding sin is not simply a “don’t,” it’s equally a “do.”
- In other words, we can’t avoid sin and somehow stay in spiritual neutral.

- We stay in close fellowship with God by keeping our accounts with Him short.
- We do that by frequently turning to our Advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ the righteous.
- This actually takes us back to 1 John 1:9.
- Frequent confession and repentance are key elements in our ongoing fellowship with God.

- We also need to keep using the three tests we just talked about.
- Once again these were:
 - The test of obedience (2:3-5)
 - The test of abiding (2:6-8)
 - The test of love for our brother (2:9-11)
- Examining these areas frequently and seriously will keep us in a right standing before God and keep fellowship with Him close.

- Sin disrupts our fellowship with God.
- Fellowship with God disrupts our relationship with sin.
- As obedient children let’s stay close to our heavenly Father. Once again, Colin Kruse:
 - *“Ongoing assurance that we are people who know God is dependent upon ongoing obedience to his commands.”*

- And remember the words of John Stott that we quoted at the beginning:
 - *“Sin and the child of God are incompatible. They may occasionally meet; they cannot live together in harmony.”*

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