THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

WALKING IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, 1 JOHN 1:5-2:14

INTRODUCTION

- I. Howard Marshall, *At this point there is a brief pause in the thought, indicated by the writer's address to his readers as "my dear children." In the preceding verses he has had his opponents very much in mind, and has been citing the kind of things which they said, by which other members of the church might be led astray. Now he turns his attention more directly to the members of the church and issues an appeal to them.*
- William Barclay, *In this opening address, there is the yearning, affectionate tenderness of a pastor for people whom he has known for a long time in all their wayward foolishness, and whom he still loves.*
- David Walls, *Most Bible teachers agree that the first two verses of chapter 2 conclude the discussion of chapter 1. John does not change subjects until verse 3.*
- David Jackman, *In these verses, John highlights three characteristics of that sort of biblical reality. Christians know who Christ is, trust what he did, and do what he commands ... 1. Christians know who Christ is (verse 1)... 2. Christians trust what Christ did (verse 2) ... 3. Christians do what Christ commands (verses 3–6).*
- Thomas Constable, *John articulated four fundamental principles that underlie fellowship with God in order to facilitate his readers' experience of that fellowship. One must renounce sin (1:8–2:2), obey God (2:3–11), reject worldliness (2:12–17), and keep the faith (2:18–29) to live in the light of God's presence.*

THE MATTER OF SIN, OBEDIENCE AND KNOWING GOD, 1 JOHN 2:1-6

A. John's warning concerning sin (1-2)

1. Christians are not to sin (1a), ***My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.***

    a. Thomas Constable, *John's preceding comments on the inevitability of sinful behavior (vv. 6–10) could have led his readers to two conclusions: Either it is useless to strive against sin, since we can never in this life be done with it, or, if escape from sin is so easy, why dread falling into it? John proceeded to assure his readers here that he did not want them to sin at all (cf. John 5:14). This was one of his purposes in writing this epistle, and it is the third of John's five purpose statements (cf. 1:3, 4). Avoidance of sin is important, even though it is not entirely possible ... Since this letter indicates that they were mature Christians, they may have been the leaders of various house-churches in Asia Minor ... "May not sin" does not mean may never ever sin again. Sinning is inevitable for sinners, even forgiven sinners, but in every instance of temptation there is always the possibility that we will not fall (1 Cor. 10:13) ...* 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 life (Phil. 2:13).

    b. Zane Hodges, *Some of John's readers might have thought his insistence on the sinfulness of Christians somehow would discourage holiness. The opposite was John's intention ... He addressed them affectionately as an apostle with a fatherly concern ...*

    c. I. Howard Marshall, *It was possible that the readers might interpret what John had just written with its emphasis on the fact that Christians were not free from sin as a license to sin. If sin was a characteristic of Christians, and forgiveness was freely available, the readers might well have reacted like the people who asked, "Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?" (Rom. 6:1). John, therefore, had to make it quite clear that his purpose was that Christians should not sin. Unconfessed sin was incompatible with fellowship with God. John's aim, therefore, was that his readers would both recognize their sin and confess it—and also seek to live without sin. It is easy to live without sin if one denies that one's acts are really sinful. John wished that his readers would recognize the all-pervasive character of sin—and yet live without sinning.*

    d. William Barclay, *... John lays down his two great ethical principles: knowledge involves obedience, and union involves imitation. Therefore, in the Christian life, there can never be any suggestion that sin should be taken lightly.*

e. John Stott, . *The Christian may never escape the specific command of Jesus, 'Stop sinning' (John 5:14; cf. 8:11). But, on the other hand, he adds that, if anybody does sin, God has graciously made provision for his restoration. The clause is significant. It clearly indicates the author's conviction that acts of sin (the aorist hamarte implies this), as opposed to the continuous sinful habit, are possible in the Christian, which some have supposed John denies in 3:9 and 5:18.*

f. David Walls, *We see in this chapter a delicate balancing act between feeling forgiven and feeling free to sin. The apostle John says in 1:9 that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven. We have no reason to be buried with guilt because of our inability to eradicate sin in our lives. Just because Jesus is willing to forgive our sins doesn't mean we can feel free to keep on sinning. This Scripture is written so we won't sin. "Do your best not to sin," we might paraphrase, "but if you do, you have help."*

g. David Jackman, *When John Wesley left home, his mother, Susannah, is said to have written these words in the flyleaf of the Bible he was given: 'Sin will keep you from this book, but this book will keep you from sin.' The apostle John knew the power of God's Word to defend his people from the attacks of the enemy and to inspire them to holy living. That is one reason why he writes to them.*

h. F. F. Bruce, *Sin, indeed, is so thoroughly uncharacteristic of the Christian life that a life which is marked by sin cannot be called Christian, and this is a point to which John returns in chapter 3. But instead of making false claims about sinlessness, a Christian should be grateful to know that if he does commit sin, his case is not hopeless.*

2. Jesus is the Advocate when one sins (1b-2)

a. He stands up for His own (1b), ***But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.***

1) Thomas Constable, *As our Advocate (friend in court, mediator, or defense attorney), Jesus Christ pleads the cause of the sinning Christian before God the Father (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24). This ministry appears to be broader than simply aiding the sinner after he or she sins. It evidently includes pleading the sinner's cause with the Father whenever that becomes necessary, like when Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail (Luke 22:31–32). Here, however, the emphasis is on Jesus Christ's help after we have sinned. Since Jesus Christ is righteous, He is the perfect Advocate with God (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52) ... The Greek word translated Advocate is parakleton, which transliterated into English is Paraclete. It means one who gets called to the side of another to help.*

2) J. Vernon McGee, *The Holy Spirit is our Comforter down here, and Christ is our Comforter up there.*

3) Zane Hodges, *John did not want his readers to sin, but he knew that none of them was perfect and that all would need the help available from their Advocate ... There is no reason to suppose that Christ must ask God to keep a Christian from going to hell as a result of his sin. Eternal life is fully guaranteed to those who have trusted Jesus for it (John 3:16; 5:24; etc.). But the consequences of a believer's failure, his restoration, and future usefulness are all urgent matters which Jesus takes up with God when sin occurs. His own personal righteousness (He is "the Righteous One"; cf. 1 John 1:9, God is "just") is what uniquely suits Christ for His role as a Christian's Advocate after he sins.*

4) I. Howard Marshall, *We have nothing that we can plead before God to gain us forgiveness for our sins, but Jesus Christ acts as our advocate and enters his plea for us ... Jesus Christ not only has no sins of his own for which he must suffer; but as one who is not contaminated by sin he is qualified to intercede for others. He can, as it were, plead his own righteousness before God and ask that sinners be forgiven on the basis of his righteous act.*

5) William Barclay, *The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ as the one who 'always lives to make intercession' (Hebrews 7:25); and he also speaks of him as appearing 'in the presence of God on our behalf' (Hebrews 9:24) ... The tremendous thing about Jesus is that he has never lost his interest in, or his love for, men and women. We are not to think of him as having gone through his life upon the earth and his death upon the cross, and then being finished with us. He still bears his concern for us upon his heart; he still pleads for us; Jesus Christ is the prisoner's friend for all.*

6) Charles Spurgeon, *Sin may enter the heart, and fight for dominion, but it cannot sit upon the throne ... "Yes, my Father, that sinner was unrighteous, but remember that I was accepted as his substitute. I stood to keep the law for him, and gave my active obedience. I went up to the cross and bled, and so gave my passive obedience; I have covered him from head to foot with my doing and my dying ..."*

7) John Stott, *... the Holy Spirit pleads Christ's cause before a hostile world, Christ pleads our cause against our 'accuser' (Rev. 12:10) and to the Father, who loves and forgives his children ... The person who believes in Christ already 'has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life' (John 5:24; cf. 1 John 3:14; 5:12 and Rom. 8:1, 33–34). Once the sinner has been justified by God his Judge, he has entered the family of God and become related to God as his Father. If he should sin, he does not need another justification from the divine Judge. He is a child of God; he needs the Father's forgiveness. This is assured to him through the advocacy of Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, a composite expression indicating his human nature (Jesus), messianic office (Christ) and righteous character.*
8) David Walls, *The advocate speaks with extraordinary authority before the judge, however, because his defense for us is that he, the defense attorney, has already paid any price the judge could impose. The willingness of the judge to forego judgment is not based on the life of the one on trial (us), but rather on the merits of Jesus' sacrifice.*
9) David Jackman, *It is because his sinless life was laid down for us as the means by which our forgiveness was obtained that he can righteously plead his sacrifice before the righteous Father, on behalf of us, the unrighteous ... A true Christian does not make false claims about his perfection, but neither does he become careless and blasé about his behaviour, as though sin did not matter. He recognizes, with gratitude, that when he does sin his case is not hopeless. The very presence of Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, before his Father is enough to guarantee forgiveness and secure restoration.*

b. He fully paid for our sin (2), ***He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.***

1) Related verses
   a) Romans 8:34, *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
   b) 1 Timothy 2:5, *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*
   c) Hebrews 7:25, *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

2) Comments
   a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus Christ did not just make satisfaction for our sins, as a priest, though He did that. He is the satisfaction Himself, as a sacrifice (cf. Rom. 3:25). The Septuagint translators used the same Greek word translated propitiation here (hilasmos, satisfaction, cf. 4:10) to translate the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. Jesus' body was the site where God placated His wrath against sin. Verses 1:5–2:2 all have Old Testament tabernacle connotations. Jesus' death not only expiated (cancelled, dismissed, waived) our sins, but it provided cleansing from their defilement and satisfied God's wrath against sin with an acceptable offering ... In His death the Lord Jesus provided salvation that is sufficient for all ("the whole world"), though 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. "Our" refers to the sins of all believers, and the "whole world" means all humankind, not just the elect (cf. 4:14; John 1:12, 29; 3:16).*
   b) Zane Hodges, *Should any sinning believer wonder on what grounds he might secure God's mercy after he has failed, the answer is found in this verse. So adequate is Jesus Christ as God's atoning Sacrifice that the efficacy of His work extends not merely to the sins of Christians themselves, but also to the sins of the whole world. In saying this, John was clearly affirming the view that Christ genuinely died for everyone (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14–15, 19; Heb. 2:9). This does not mean, of course, that everyone will be saved. It means rather that anyone who hears the gospel can be saved if he so desires (Rev. 22:17) ... The Cross has indeed propitiated (satisfied) God and has met His righteous demands so thoroughly that His grace and mercy are abundantly available to both saved and unsaved alike.*

c) I. Howard Marshall, *He is not being asked to declare them innocent, i.e. to say that there is no evidence that they have sinned, but rather to grant them pardon for their acknowledged sins ... What he pleads on behalf of sinners is what he himself has done on their behalf.*

d) William Barclay, *Jesus is the person through whom guilt for past sin and defilement from present sin are removed. The great basic truth behind this word is that it is through Jesus Christ that our fellowship with God is first restored and then maintained ... God sent His Son to lay down His life for His sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and specially for the elect; yet at the same time the price offered was so precious, the blood was so infinite in value, that if every man that ever lived had to be redeemed Christ could have done it. It is this that makes us bold to preach the gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though still we know that the design of it is for the chosen people of God alone.*

e) John Stott, *John now proceeds to describe our righteous advocate as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, since it is this alone which qualifies him for the position. 'Our advocate does not plead that we are innocent, or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents his vicarious work as the ground of our acquittal' (Smith). 'Christ's intercession is the continual application of his death to our salvation' (Calvin) ... the Father's provision for the sinning Christian is in his Son, who possesses a threefold qualification: his righteous character, his propitiatory death and his heavenly advocacy. Each depends on the others. He could not be our advocate in heaven today if he had not died to be the propitiation for our sins; and his propitiation would not have been effective if in his life and character he had not been Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

f) David Walls, *Jesus sacrificed his life in our place. He paid the price for our sin with his death. He is our atoning sacrifice (sacrifice that pays the price and allows forgiveness) ... Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. Does this mean that everyone is saved? No, the Bible makes it clear that not everyone will be saved (Matt. 7:14; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21). But anyone who hears the gospel can be saved if he or she wants to be (Rev. 22:17).*

g) David Jackman, *Once the penalty has been paid, there cannot be any further demand for the sinner to be punished. God has himself met our debt. He came in person to do so. The cross is not the Father punishing an innocent third party, the Son, for our sins. It is God taking to himself, in the person of the Son, all the punishment that his wrath justly demands, quenching its sword, satisfying its penalty and thus atoning for our sins.*

B. The test of obedience (3-6)

1. Obedience demonstrates relationship (3), ***And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.***

a. Related verses

1] John 14:15, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

2] John 15:10, *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

b. Comments

1] Thomas Constable, *John proposed a test whereby we can measure our experiential knowledge of God (Father and Son, 1:3), that is, how well we really know Him. He said: Look at your response to God's revealed will. How well do you keep His commandments? To keep His commandments means to observe or guard (Gr. tereo) them. The opposite is throwing them away (cf. v. 4; 3:22; 5:3). In other words, we are to obey them ... our personal experiential 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.*

2] Stephen Smalley, *... to 'know' God is not a matter of correct thought-processes, but of a genuine spiritual relationship. The knowledge of God, and fellowship with him, are complementary aspects of Christian experience.*

3] Warren Wiersbe, *Obedience to God's Word is proof of our love for Him. There are three motives for obedience. We can obey because we have to, because we need to, or because we want to.*

4] David Jackman, *Grace does not abolish God's law; it internalizes it, by writing it on our hearts.*

5] I. Howard Marshall, *The evidence which we have already gathered from this Epistle suggests that John's opponents were not too concerned about sin and evil, and did not think that sin was a barrier to fellowship with God ... The sign of knowledge of God is obedience to his commands and recognition of the way of life that he expects from his people ... To know God thus involves knowledge of his character and requirements and obedience to these requirements ... In 2 John 4–6 we saw that love for God is expressed in keeping his commandments. This fact removes any suggestion that keeping the commandments is a condition of salvation or a means of securing the favor of God by our own efforts. It is rather the result of love for God, the tangible evidence of the presence of that love.*

6] Zane Hodges, *This verse is often taken as a way of knowing whether or not we are really saved. But that view flies directly into the face of all Johannine theology, according to which we are saved by believing in Christ for eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35 and passim; the references are numerous) ... The idea that a Christian can believe in Christ, without knowing whether he or she has really believed, is complete nonsense. Of course we can know whether or not we believe. That we can know this is both common sense and completely biblical [cf. John 9:35–38; 11:25–27] ... Thus the test suggested by 1 John 2:3 is not of the saving knowledge of God or of Christ, but of the experiential knowledge of God and His Son. To get this wrong, as many commentators have, is to lay the groundwork for a complete misreading of the epistle! ... As often in Johannine usage, the word "Him" might refer either to God or to Christ. For John, Jesus is so closely linked with the Father that a precise distinction between the Persons of the Godhead sometimes seems irrelevant. Fellowship is with both the Father and the Son (1:3) and to know One of Them intimately is to know the Other.*

7] William Barclay, *John is determined to lay it down quite unmistakably and without compromise that the only way in which we can show that we know God is by obedience to him, and the only way we can show that we have union with Christ is by imitation of him. Intellectual effort and emotional experience are not neglected—far from it—but they must combine to produce moral action.*

8] John Stott, *... he insists that no religious experience is valid if it does not have moral consequences (cf. Titus 1:16). It is not the person who claims to be a Christian and to know God who is presumptuous, but the person whose claim is contradicted by his conduct.*

9] John Calvin, *... he does not mean that those who wholly satisfy the Law keep His commandments (and no such instance can be found in the world), but those who strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God.*

10] David Walls, *Apparently, some people in Ephesus claimed to know God, but they made no effort to keep God's commands. The religion that came to be known as Gnosticism prided itself in knowing God through mystical enlightenment, though that knowledge had no bearing on their moral behavior. They had no understanding that sin was a barrier to their relationship with God ... Clearly, the Bible is not saying that we have to exhibit perfect obedience. First John 1:8 just told us that if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and make God out to be a liar. The issue appears to be whether or not we take God's commandments seriously and are trying to keep them. We may not keep them perfectly. We may not even have a perfectly consistent desire to keep them. But if we are truly born again, we will not live our lives in disregard for God's commands.*

2. Disobedience demonstrates the absence of knowing God (4), ***Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,***

a. Related verses

1] 1 John 1:8, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

2] John 8:44, *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

b. Comments

1] Thomas Constable, *If a person says he knows God intimately but is not obedient to the revealed will of God, he is a liar. He does not know God intimately and does not have a close relationship with God. Furthermore, God's truth does not have a controlling influence over his life (cf. 1:8, 10).*

2] Zane Hodges, *As in 1:6, someone may profess a fellowship with God which his life shows he does not possess. John was not afraid to call this kind of claim what it really is: a lie. Furthermore, it may be said of the same person that the truth is not in him. The idea is similar to the statements made earlier about false claims (1:6, 8, 10). In such a person the truth is not a dynamic, controlling influence. He is seriously out of touch with spiritual reality.*

3] I. Howard Marshall, *The writer now turns to the negative side of the matter and issues a warning to any who claim to have come to know God and yet do not keep God's commandments. As has already been suggested, the slogan "I know him" must have emanated from the same people as those who claimed fellowship with God in 1:6. John, therefore, is repeating the same point in different words. These people were indifferent to the commandments of God. John has no hesitation in stating that their claims to know God must be false and that God's truth is not in them (1:8). He has thus attacked their claims to knowledge of God by pointing to their sins of commission (1:6) and omission (the present verse).*

4] Charles Spurgeon, *By his profession of being a follower of Christ he confesses that he knows what he ought to be; yet by his actions he proves that he is not what he ought to be, and so he is bearing witness against himself, judging himself, condemning his own soul, and challenging the dread sentence of everlasting perdition. God save us from such a lie as this.*

5] F. F. Bruce, *This sentence is the converse of the preceding one. The same damning indictment is pronounced against one who falsely claims to know God as is pronounced in 1:8 against those who say they have no sin. Here we have the first of three statements introduced by "he that saith," where the introductory words serve much the same purpose as "if we say" in 1:6, 8, 10. The two others come in verses 6 and 9 of this chapter. They all underline the importance of matching profession with practice.*

3. Obedience demonstrates the presence of God's love (5a), ***but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.***

   a. Related verses
      1) 1 John 5:3, *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*
      2) John 14:23, *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*
      3) 1 John 4:12, *No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

   b. Comments
      1) Thomas Constable, *... the Christian who is careful to observe all of God's Word (not just His commandments, v. 4), gives evidence that he has come to understand and appreciate God's love for him. God's love is perfected in him in the sense that the Christian has perceived it, has responded to it, and it is having its intended effect in his or her behavior. Our love for God is in view here rather than His love for us (cf. v. 15; 4:12; 5:3). Loving God is parallel to knowing God (vv. 3–4).*
      2) Zane Hodges, *Love for Christ and obedience to His word are in no way a test of saving faith, despite the repeated claim of many that they are. Instead, they are tests of genuine, heartfelt discipleship to Jesus.*
      3) John Stott, *True love for God is expressed not in sentimental language or mystical experience but in moral obedience (cf. 5:3 and our Lord's teaching in John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10). The proof of love is loyalty ... Being a Christian consists in essence of a personal relationship to God in Christ, knowing him, loving him, and living in him as the branch lives in the vine (John 15:1ff.).*
      4) I. Howard Marshall, *... the parallel expressions in 2:15 and 5:3 strongly support the view that John is thinking primarily of our love for God rather than of the divine love which produces this response in us. One might also suggest that "love of God" stands parallel with "knowledge of God" in verses 3f ... Such love is "truly made complete." "Truly" suggests that the writer is thinking of the realities of the situation as compared with the possibly empty claims of the man who says "I love God" (4:20). "Made complete" means that the Christian's love is entire and mature ... What he puts before us here is a divine promise rather than a statement that we might proudly make on our own behalf.*

5) David Walls, *The apostle now reassures us. If we take seriously the commands of God and desire to keep them, we can be sure we know God. Then God's love is truly made complete in us ... Bible teachers disagree about the meaning of God's love. Does it mean the love of God for the Christian, or the Christian's love for God? Either interpretation is possible, and neither dramatically changes the understanding of the passage. Made complete probably means "mature," not "perfect" as some people have concluded.*
6) David Jackman, *The more we obey God's Word, the more we open the door for his love to accomplish his purpose in our lives. The test of living in the light is growing in love for God. And the ultimate proof of that is not in the heightened emotion of exciting worship (though that may well be an expression of reality) but in the daily, detailed, disciplined obedience by which our characters are being transformed into the image of the God we love.*
7) F. F. Bruce, *As our knowledge of God is to be tested by our obedience, so too is our love for Him—in fact, obedience is the full flowering of our love for Him. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). What is involved in this perfection of love is spelled out in greater detail in 1 John 4:12, 17 ff.; there too it is made plain that the love of believers for God (and for one another) is the response to His love for them.*

4. A Christlike walk pictures one who abides in Him (5b-6), ***By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.***

a. Related verses
1) 1 John 3:24, *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*
2) 1 John 4:13, *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*
3) 1 John 5:2, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.*
4) John 15:4-5, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*
5) John 15:7, *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
6) Matthew 11:29, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

b. Comments
1) Thomas Constable, *John's use of the phrase in Him is different from Paul's use of the phrase in Christ. Paul used this phrase to describe every believer's relationship to Christ because of his or her justification. The unsaved are not in Christ. However, John used in Him like Jesus did, in the Upper Room Discourse, to describe, not all believers, but the group of believers who abide in Christ (John 15:1–8). In John 15:8 Jesus said, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." He did not say: and so prove to be believers. Jesus linked obeying His commandments with abiding in His love (John 15:10) ... The term or expression abiding in Christ is a synonym for having an intimate relationship with Him, as are the terms having fellowship with God and knowing God experientially. John's point was that a believer who is abiding in God will obey God, just as Jesus Christ abode in God and gave evidence of that by obeying His Father ... The obligation of every Christian is not just to obey God's orders (vv. 4–5) but also to walk in the same manner as He walked, namely, to follow the example of His Son (v. 6).*
2) John Stott, *We cannot claim to abide in Him unless we behave like Him.*
3) John G. Mitchell, *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].*
4) Robert Yarbrough, *Johannine imitation means to follow as a disciple, a completely dedicated adherent and advocate.*

5) Zane Hodges, *It would be a mistake to equate the concept of being "in Him" as John uses it here with the Pauline concept of being "in Christ." For Paul, the words "in Christ" describe a Christian's permanent position in God's Son with all its attendant privileges. With John, the kind of relationship pictured in the vine-branch imagery describes an experience that can be ruptured (John 15:6) with a resultant loss of fellowship and fruitfulness. Thus here in 1 John, the proof that a person is enjoying this kind of experience is to be found in a life modeled after that of Jesus in obedience to His Word. In short, 2:5–6 continues to talk about the believer's fellowship with God.*
6) I. Howard Marshall, *The test of our religious experience is whether it produces a reflection of the life of Jesus in our daily life; if it fails this elementary test, it is false.*
7) Chrles Spurgeon, *"Become imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph 5:1). It is the nature of children to imitate their parents.*
8) John Stott, *We cannot claim to live in him unless we behave like him.*
9) F. F. Bruce, *We know how Christ conducted Himself. The glory which His disciples discerned in Him was "full of grace and truth," and something of these qualities will be evident in anyone who truly "abides" in Him, which is another way of denoting the experience of truly "knowing" Him (verse 4).*
10) David Jackman, *... those who truly walk with God love to obey him, because in that way they grow a little more like him each day. That is the high road called grace.*

THE TEST OF LOVE AGAINST HATE, 1 JOHN 2:7-11

- Thomas Constable, *The next few verses explain what it means to behave like Christ did.*
- David Jackman, *With these verses John concludes the evidence by which we can know we are truly walking in the light with God. Real fellowship with God is marked by increasing consciousness and confession of sin (1:6–10), and by growing likeness in character to Christ through obedience (2:1–6). Now the emphasis comes to rest on the other mark of real fellowship with God, and a great theme of this letter: genuine love for fellow Christians.*

A. The old yet new commandment of love (7-8)
1. The commandment was from the beginning (7), ***Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.***

a. Related verses
1) 2 John 5-6, *And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.*
2) Leviticus 19:18, *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*
3) 1 John 3:11, *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

b. Comments
1) Thomas Constable, *What other possible commandments did John have in mind when he wrote verses 3 and 4? He explained in this verse that he referred to no new responsibility with which his readers were unfamiliar. He referred to the old commandment that they had known about from the beginning of their experience as Christians (i.e., the command to love each other, vv. 9–11; cf. John 13:34–35). The command to love one another appears at least a dozen times in the New Testament: John 13:34; 15:9, 12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11–12; and 2 John 5.*
2) Charles Ryrie, *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.*

3) William Barclay, *John's favourite address to his people is Beloved (cf. 3:2, 3:21, 4:1, 4:7; 3 John 1, 2, 5, 11). The whole accent of his writing is love ... He had learned the lesson which every parent, every preacher, every teacher, every leader must learn: he had learned to speak the truth in love ... The commandment to love was old in the sense that it had been known for a long time; but it was new because, in Jesus Christ, love had reached a standard which it had never reached before, and it was by that standard that men and women were commanded to love.*
4) I. Howard Marshall, *The switch from the plural "commandments" (2:3f.) to the singular is because John regards all the commandments as being summed up in one. If the readers were familiar with the Gospel, they would know that Jesus had spoken of a "new" commandment (Jn. 13:34), that of mutual love (Jn. 15:12; 1 Jn. 3:23; 2 Jn. 5). Clearly this is the commandment which is meant. But although it was "new" when Jesus gave it, it had now been in circulation among Christians for some years, and it had often been heard before by the readers. In that sense it was no longer "new" but "old." The readers had had it "since the beginning," i.e. from the start of their Christian experience, in the Christian proclamation which they had heard.*
5) Charles Spurgeon, *The love of our brother is in one sense an old command, for it is the substance of the second table of the law. But the gospel sets it in a new light beneath the cross, and binds us to keep it by new and powerful obligations.*
6) John Stott, *John now applies to professing Christians his second test, which is not moral but social ... In urging them to love one another, he assures them of his own love for them. ... Brotherly love was part of the original message which had come to them. John was not now inventing it. It was not an innovation such as the heretics claimed to teach. It was as old as the gospel itself.*
7) David Walls, *The apostle now reminds us of a new/old commandment, making a potentially confusing play on words. One command is at the same time both old and new. The command is that we should love one another. This command is found in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18) as well as in the Gospels (John 15:12; 13:34) ... the same command can also be understood as a new command in the sense that there is now new evidence and new power to fulfill it. The new evidence is that Jesus has died, been buried, and risen again. We have seen the complete example he came to show us (1 Pet. 2:21), and now we have a better understanding of what love looks like than we did in Leviticus or the Gospels.*
8) David Jackman, *Perhaps the 'newness' relates to the fact that its truth is seen in him. For the only time in the history of the world that that command was lived out was in the human life of Jesus Christ, with a depth and reality no-one would otherwise have ever glimpsed or imagined. Though the command was old it was never out of date, and in Christ it was both renewed and fulfilled in the most complete way possible.*
9) F. F. Bruce, *"You shall love the Lord your God" was the authoritative summary of the Old Testament law (Deuteronomy 6:5), and when Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment of all, this was the one which He quoted, coupling with it the similar commandment of Leviticus 19:18 enjoining love to one's neighbor (Mark 12:28 ff.). These words of Jesus were embedded from the earliest days in the apostles' witness. "The whole law," says Paul, "is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14; cf. Romans 13:8–10).*

2. In several ways it is a new commandment (8), ***At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.***

a. Related verses
1) John 13:34, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*
2) Romans 13:12, *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*
3) Ephesians 5:8, *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*
4) 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, *But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.*

b. Comments

1) Thomas Constable, *With the Incarnation the light of God had entered the world more brightly than ever before (Heb. 1:1–3). The old commandment is new in that it belongs to the new era that Jesus had inaugurated (John 14:6) ... The new commandment is true (Gr. alethes, revealed) in Christ and in Christians in this sense: Jesus Christ's obedience to His Father demonstrated it first, and Christians' obedience to God is demonstrating it now. Christian love is truth manifested, both in Jesus who modeled it, and in His disciples who follow His example ... This true light (the gospel of Christ) was dispelling the darkness of sin, and it would continue to do so until the final increase of that light results in the complete annihilation of darkness ... Now it was important in a new sense, due to Christ's coming as the Light of the World (John 13:34–35).*
2) Zane Hodges, *His point was that the command to love (which Jesus and His followers exhibit) belongs to the new Age of righteousness which has begun to dawn. It does not belong to the old Age of darkness which was passing away. Christ's Incarnation brought a light into the world which can never be extinguished. The love He manifested and taught His disciples to manifest is a characteristic of the Age to come. It is the darkness of the present world and all its hatred which is destined to disappear forever (cf. 1 John 2:17a) ... The new Age has dawned and its true character can now be defined in terms of the special revelation God has made of Himself in His Son. And above all, that revelation is a revelation of divine love.*
3) Warren Wiersbe, *Perhaps the greatest thing about Jesus' love was the way it touched even the lives of His enemies. He looked with loving pity on the religious leaders who in their spiritual blindness accused Him of being in league with Satan (Matt. 12:24). When the mob came to arrest Him, He could have called on the armies of heaven for protection, but He yielded to His enemies. And then He died for them—for His enemies! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, italics added). But Jesus died not only for His friends, but also for His foes! And as they crucified Him, He prayed for them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" ... In His life, in His teachings, and in His death, Jesus is the perfect Example of this new commandment, "Love one another." And this is what helps to make the commandment "new." In Christ we have a new illustration of the old truth that God is love and that the life of love is the life of joy and victory.*
4) I. Howard Marshall, *The newness of the commandment lies in the fact that it is being fulfilled in a way that had not happened previously. To put it differently, the darkness of the old age, in which men did not love in this sort of way, is disappearing, and the light of the new age, in which Christian love is shown, is already shining.*
5) William Barclay, *To John, as we have seen, truth was not only something to be grasped with the mind; it was something to be done. What he means is that the commandment to love one another is the highest truth; in Jesus Christ, we can see that commandment in all the glory of its fullness; in him, that commandment is true; and in Christians we can see it, not in the fullness of its truth, but coming true. For John, Christianity is progress in love.*
6) Charles Spurgeon, *Children of light may for a time walk in the darkness of sorrow; but from the darkness of untruthfulness, ignorance, sin, and unbelief they have been delivered. In these respects the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. Moral darkness is contrary to their newborn nature: they cannot endure it.*
7) John Stott, *The idea of love in general was not new, but Jesus Christ invested it in several ways with a richer and deeper meaning. First, it was new in the emphasis he gave it, bringing the love commands of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 together and declaring that the whole teaching of the Law and the Prophets hung upon them. Secondly, it was new in the quality he gave it. A disciple was to love others not just as he loved himself but in the same measure as Christ had loved him, with selfless self-sacrifice even unto death. Thirdly, it was new in the extent he gave it, showing in the parable of the Good Samaritan that the 'neighbour' we must love is anyone who needs our compassion and help, irrespective of race and rank, and includes our 'enemy' (cf. Matt. 5:44). It was also, fourthly, to continue new by our fresh apprehension of it ...*
8) David Walls, *The new power is the Holy Spirit indwelling true believers, helping them to live out the commands of Scripture. In addition, the church has now gathered together to help stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Through the love Christians can show for one another, we demonstrate to the world that the light which Jesus brought into the world continues to shine in the darkness.*

9) David Jackman, *... the real surprise comes in the next two words, and you. That is staggering. We may wonderingly accept that the command to love was seen to be fulfilled in Jesus—but in us? Yes, that is what genuine Christianity, according to John, is all about. For with the coming of Christ the new age has dawned, with its new covenant, in which God puts his laws in our minds and writes them on our hearts (Heb. 8:10, quoting Je. 31:33). The Christ who perfectly fulfilled that law has made available to us his divine resources of power to live that way also. As he was its embodiment and therefore our example, so we are to receive and reflect that light, as members of the new kingdom (verse 8b). Already the darkness is passing away, and that process will continue, until eventually, with the completion of God's purposes, the darkness will be eradicated and perfect light will rule.*

10) F. F. Bruce, *This aspect of the "new commandment" will be insisted upon repeatedly in this epistle, and indeed it is implied here, where John tells his readers that the substance of this commandment has come "true [perfectly] in him [i.e. in Christ] and [in measure] in you." But here it is "a new commandment" because it is the characteristic commandment of the new age. Christ, the Light of the world, came to dispel the darkness of sin and ignorance and to inaugurate the era of light and love. ... Thanks to the victory of Christ, the outcome of the conflict between light and darkness is a foregone conclusion, but the conflict is still going on. Hence the tension of Christian life in the present world, a tension reflected throughout this epistle, not to say throughout the whole New Testament.*

B. Hatred can not withstand love (9-11)

1. The one who hates his brother is in darkness (9), ***Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.***

a. Related verses

1) 1 John 4:20, *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*
2) 1 John 3:14, *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

b. Comments

1) Thomas Constable, *This verse contains a concrete example of what John had been talking about. It is another claim to intimate fellowship with God that a person's behavior reveals as false (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6). Hatred of other Christians is a sure sign that one is not walking with God in close fellowship ... In this letter the community of Christians is in view, so John meant a brother Christian, rather than an unsaved neighbor.*
2) Zane Hodges, *John was warning his readers against a spiritual danger that is all too real (cf. 1:8, 10). And he was affirming that a Christian who can hate his fellow Christian has not genuinely escaped from the darkness of this present passing Age. To put it another way, he has much to learn about God and cannot legitimately claim an intimate knowledge of Christ. If he really knew Christ as he ought, he would love his brother.*
3) Warren Wiersbe, *... it is impossible to be in fellowship with the Father and out of fellowship with another Christian at the same time.*
4) I. Howard Marshall, *His concept of love is caring for the needs of others, even to the point of self-sacrifice. If I am unwilling to do that for somebody in need, I love myself more than him; I am not being merely neutral, but am actually hating him ... John's comment is a shocking one, for here and elsewhere he is deliberately awakening us to the need for radical love if we claim to follow Jesus.*
5) William Barclay, *The first thing which strikes us about this passage is the way in which John sees personal relationships in terms of black and white. When it comes to our neighbours, it is a case of either love or hate; as John sees it, there is no such thing as neutrality in personal relationships.*
6) John Stott, *The true Christian, who knows God and walks in the light, both obeys God and loves his brother. The genuineness of his faith is seen in his right relation to both God and his fellow human beings.*

7) David Walls, *The imagery of light and darkness continues, stating that a person cannot walk in light and darkness at the same time. If he hates his brother, he walks in darkness. If he loves his brother, he walks in light. This is not claiming that we need to be fond of every other Christian or emotionally bonded to all believers. Love (agape) can be understood as the steady direction of the will for the good of another. We are not commanded to "feel" a certain way toward others, but only to "act" properly toward them. Understood this way, when we act properly toward our Christian brothers, out of a desire to be obedient to God, we love them.*
8) David Jackman, *Again the emphasis is on love, not knowledge. Anyone may claim to be in the light, or to know God, and it is easy to mistake intellectual understanding for spiritual reality. But true spirituality must infallibly express itself in love ... If we are thankful to God for the way in which he has shone his light into our lives, how can we but be thankful for every one of our fellow Christians, who has had a similar experience of grace? We must determine to do everything we can to channel more of God's love into their lives by our active love towards them.*
9) F. F. Bruce, *The twin commandments of love to God and love to one's neighbor are like two sides of a coin; the one is essential to the other. So the claim to live "in the light," to enjoy fellowship with the God of light, must be tested by a man's treatment of his brother. The word "treatment" should be emphasized because, as John makes clear later, it is not a matter of sentimental feelings and language, familiar in certain brands of pietism, but of loving "in deed and in truth" (3:18).*

2. The one who loves his brother is in the light (10), ***Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.***

a. Related verses
1) John 11:10, *But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*
2) Proverbs 4:19, *The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.*

b. Comments
1) Thomas Constable, *The cause of stumbling in this verse is hatred in the heart. Hatred causes the hater to stumble in his or her walk with God (cf. John 11:9).*
2) Zane Hodges, *Hatred is a kind of internal "stumbling block" which can lead to disastrous spiritual falls. But the calamities to which hatred leads are avoided by one who loves his brother.*
3) I. Howard Marshall, *He is concerned with action, not with words which may not correspond to reality. In any case, the man who loves his brothers does not go around telling everybody that he does. Such people live in the light; they are in no danger of wandering off into the darkness ... There is nothing in him to make him stumble ... To stumble is to fall into sin or apostasy. The person who loves his brother is not going to succumb to temptation because he has his principles right and will not be deflected from them by the attractions of a self-centered existence; he recognizes temptation for what it is and says "No" to it.*
4) William Barclay, *... if we love other people, there is nothing in us which causes us to stumble. That is to say, love enables us to make progress in the spiritual life, and hatred makes progress impossible. When we think of it, that is perfectly obvious. If God is love and if the new commandment of Christ is love, then love brings us nearer to one another and to God, and hatred separates us from one another and from God. We ought always to remember that those who have in their hearts hatred, resentment and the unforgiving spirit can never grow up in the spiritual life.*
5) Charles Spurgeon, *A loving spirit, kind, generous, forgiving, unselfish, seeking the good of others—this is one of the best proofs that our natural darkness has gone and that true spiritual light is within us. Some persons think very much of the doctrine of Christ, but very little of the Spirit of Christ. Let such remember that it is written, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him" (Rom 8:9). If we do not know what it is to love, then we do not in the scriptural sense know what it is to live; we are dead.*
6) David Jackman, *The more a Christian gets wrapped up in himself, concentrating on the cultivation of his own character, or the preservation of his own virtue, the less clearly will he see the light. He has become self-centred and it will not be long before self-love takes over. And the greatest enemy of real love is self-love. That is the root of hatred.*

7) John Stott, *Love and hatred are set in opposition to each other with no alternative, just as we are said to be either in the light or in the darkness, and there is no twilight. The first part of the contrast is simple. What follows shows, however, that our love and hatred not only reveal whether we are already in the light or in the darkness, but actually contribute towards the light or the darkness in which we already are. Thus, of the loving Christian who abides in the light it may be said that there is nothing in him (or perhaps 'in it') to make him stumble (en auto could refer either to the person or to the light in which he lives). The light shines on our path, so that we can see clearly and so walk properly. If we love people, we see how to avoid sinning against them.*
8) Robert S. Candlish, *A selfish religionist is sure to become either morbid or stupid. It is by sympathy and brotherhood that the fire of personal Christianity is fanned.*
9) F. F. Bruce, *John characteristically sees life in terms of black and white; intermediate greys have no existence for him. So there is no middle course between love and hatred, and by hatred he does not necessarily mean positive animosity but mere lack of love. Lack of love (including that form of it which postpones an act of charity to a more convenient season) can blind a man's spiritual vision as effectively as the prejudice arising from hatred does, so that he is tripped up by all kinds of moral obstacles that lie in life's way, and is disabled from forming ethical decisions which are crystal clear to his brother whose love of heart and hand maintains him in fellowship with God, in whose light he sees light.*

3. The one who hates his bother is blind (11), ***But whoever 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.***

a. Thomas Constable, *The hater's sin affects him in three ways: (1) It places him in the darkness, outside of God's fellowship. (2) It leads to aimless activity in which he is in great spiritual danger and in which there is the possibility of a fall (cf. John 9:41). (3) It also results in mental confusion (cf. John 12:35). The Christian who hates his brother loses his sense of spiritual direction in life, either partially or totally. No course of life is more dangerous for a Christian than one that includes hatred toward another believer.*
b. David Smith, *The penalty of living in the darkness is not merely that one does not see, but that one goes blind.*
c. Zane Hodges, *... a person walks around in the darkness and he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him (cf. v. 9). A Christian who harbors hatred for a fellow Christian has lost all real sense of direction. Like a man wandering aimlessly in the dark, he faces potentially grave dangers.*
d. Warren Wiersbe, *A blind man—a person who is walking in darkness—can never find his way! The only atmosphere that is conducive to spiritual growth is the atmosphere of spiritual light—of love. Just as the fruits and flowers need sunshine, so God's people need love if they are going to grow.*
e. I. Howard Marshall, *Having chosen to live in the darkness, he now finds that his eyes can no longer see the light; in other words, having yielded to sin, he finds that his heart has become so hardened that he cannot respond to the call of God and he falls into further sin. This is the divinely permitted result of sin (Jn. 12:40).*
f. William Barclay, *When people have hatred in their hearts, their powers of judgment are obscured; they cannot see an issue clearly. It is not uncommon to see people opposing a good proposal simply because they dislike, or have quarrelled with, the person who made it. Again and again, progress in some plans for a church or a group is held up because of personal animosities. No one who has a heart filled with hatred is fit to give a verdict on anything, and being dominated by hatred prevents people from finding a right direction in life ... Love enables us to walk in the light; hatred leaves us in the dark, even if we do not realize that it is so.*
g. Charles Spurgeon, *Hatred is darkness, love is light; the revengeful man is an heir of eternal midnight. Let us purge ourselves from all anger, malice, and envy, for these are evils of the darkest dye.*
h. John Stott, *The person with hatred in his heart, however, because he is in the darkness, also walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him (11; cf. Prov. 4:19). Hatred distorts our perspective. We do not first misjudge people and then hate them as a result; our view of them is already jaundiced by our hatred. It is love which sees straight, thinks clearly and makes us balanced in our outlook, judgments and conduct. Cf. John 8:12; 11:9–10; 12:35.*

i. David Jackman, *Light and love go together. If we love people, we take care to avoid sinning against them, or causing them to stumble. We want to encourage them and build them up. But lack of love distorts our perspective and blinds our vision. We begin to feel at home in the darkness. We become used to groping our way through life, constantly stumbling and being ensnared by all kinds of problems. Such people are often unaware of how dark it is and how short-sighted they have become ... The light that is ignored soon ceases to strike us. The conscience that is habitually silenced soon ceases to speak. If we lack love, we are in the darkness.*

SUMMARY

- Thomas Constable, *John argued that intimate fellowship with God is possible only when a person has renounced sin in his or her life (1:5–2:2) and is obedient to God (2:3–11).*
- I. Howard Marshall, *It is not just the absence of sin which characterizes the true Christian; it is also the positive presence of love. Too often we think of Christian maturity in terms of freedom from sin. Provided that we think of sins of omission rather than commission, that is fair enough. But John wants us to see that spiritual life is characterized by positive acts of love, and that such love will be seen in the fellowship of the church as well as in our attitude to other people generally.*
- F. F. Bruce, *John has more to say about divine love later in this epistle. Here he is content to anticipate his fuller exposition of the subject by insisting that religious profession must be tested by the presence or absence of love in action. Before he proceeds to a further stage of his argument, he rounds off his statement of the new commandment with two paragraphs of encouragement and warning.*

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND WARNINGS, 1 JOHN 2:12-27

A. Spiritual encouragement (12-14)
   1. Introduction
      - Thomas Constable, *John began this section of his letter by affirming the spiritual competence of his readers. He reminded them of their spiritual blessings in order to motivate them to cultivate intimate fellowship with God.*
      - I. Howard Marshall, *... verses 12–14 are intended to assure the readers of their Christian status; they are based partly on teaching already given earlier in the Epistle, and they provide the basis for the command in verses 15–17.*
      - John Stott, *His purpose in writing is as much to confirm the right assurance of genuine Christians as to rob the counterfeit of their false assurance ... He is indicating not their physical ages, as some have thought, but stages in their spiritual development, for God's family, like every human family, has members of differing maturity.*
      - William Barclay, *... he says that in every case their best defence is to remember what they are and what has been done for them. No matter who they are, their sins have been forgiven; no matter who they are, they know the one who is from the beginning; no matter who they are, they have the strength which can face and overcome the evil one ... When John says I am writing, he is thinking of what he is at the moment writing and of what he still has to say; when he says I have written, he is thinking of what has already been written and his readers have already read. The sense would then be that the whole letter—the part already written, the part being written and the part still to come—is all designed to remind Christians of who and whose they are and of what has been done for them.*
      - There are numerous opinions on how to understand this passage. I intend to address them in the context of the exegetical outline.

2. John is speaking to his *little children* (12)***, I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.***

   a. Related verses
      1) Luke 24:47, *and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*
      2) Acts 10:43, *To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*
      3) Acts 13:38, *Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,*

   b. Comments
      1) David Jackman, *... because dear children is John's favourite phrase for addressing the whole congregation in the letter, it seems to me preferable to take the dear children to mean every reader ... We can be God's dear children only because our sins have been forgiven, and that has happened on account of his name.*
      2) I. Howard Marshall, *John, then, addresses his readers as children, just as he does elsewhere in the Epistle, to express their need of instruction and their state of dependence upon God and upon teachers such as himself. They are people whose sins have been forgiven ... The act of forgiveness is expressed by a perfect tense; John is thinking of the conversion of his readers, whereas in 1:9 his thought was more of the continual forgiveness for which the Christian daily prays. If John is thinking here of new converts, the appropriateness of this statement is manifest. The experience of forgiveness is the center of the Christian experience of conversion.*
      3) Warren Wiersbe, *... "little children" (1 John 2:12) refers to all believers. Literally, this word means "born ones." All Christians have been born into God's family through faith in Jesus Christ, and their sins have been forgiven. The very fact that one is in God's family, sharing His nature, ought to discourage him from becoming friendly with the world. To be friendly with the world is treachery! "Friendship with the world is enmity with God … whosoever therefore will be [wants to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (cf. James 4:4) ... But something else is true: we begin as little children—born ones—but we must not stay that way! Only as a Christian grows spiritually does he overcome the world.*
      4) Charles Spurgeon, *The forgiveness of sins is not a matter of degrees or of growth. It is done in an instant and done forever, never to be reversed. The child of God who was born only yesterday is not as completely sanctified as he will be; he is not as completely instructed as he will be; he is not as completely conformed to the image of Christ as he will be; but he is as completely pardoned as the full-grown saint ... Your sins are not forgiven because of anything you are or hope to be, nor because of anything that you have done or have suffered. You are forgiven for Christ's name's sake, and all the saints of God can say the same. This is a sure ground of hope. There is no quicksand, but a solid rock is under our foot. If the pardon had been granted for our own work's sake, it might have been reversed upon our disobedience. But since sin is pardoned for Christ's sake, the pardon is irreversible, since there is no change in Christ.*
      5) John Stott, *These are the earliest conscious experiences of newborn Christians. They rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins through Christ and in their consequent fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit within them makes them aware of their filial relationship to God and causes them to cry 'Abba! Father!' (Rom. 8:15–16; Gal. 4:6).*
      6) F. F. Bruce, *The children, then, have made a good beginning by knowing that through Christ their sins have been forgiven and that God is their Father, and with proper guidance and care they may advance from there.*
      7) Thomas Constable, *It may be that John used these three stages of life to describe qualities typical of each age group that ought to characterize all believers. I think he was addressing the children (newer believers), fathers (mature believers), and young men (less mature but not new believers) among his readers in terms of their spiritual development. Forgiveness is one of the first things that a new believer appreciates about his or her salvation.*

3. John reminded them of foundational truths (13a-b)
   a. You fathers know Him (13a), ***I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.***

      1) Related verse, 1 John 1:1, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—*
      2) Comments
         a) Thomas Constable, *The fathers had experienced fellowship with God through Jesus Christ (cf. 2:3–11). A father connotes someone who has had some fellowship with Christ (cf. John 1:1), not Christians who had led others to faith and were therefore their spiritual fathers.*
         b) Zane Hodges, *As "fathers," they had an experience that touches eternity past, since they have known Him who is from the beginning. In the light of 2:3–6, this implies they have truly experienced fellowship with God. (Here again [cf. v. 3] the word "Him" could refer to either the Father or the Son; the distinction was not important to John. His readers knew both.)*
         c) Warren Wiersbe, *The "fathers," of course, are mature believers who have an intimate personal knowledge of God. Because they know God, they know the dangers of the world. No Christian who has experienced the joys and wonders of fellowship with God, and of service for God, will want to live on the substitute pleasures this world offers.*
         d) I. Howard Marshall, *The description of a group of older Christians as "fathers" is unparalleled in the New Testament; when the word is not being used literally (e.g. Eph. 6:4), it refers to ancestors or older men who are now dead (e.g. 2 Pet. 3:4). We can, however, see its use as a title of respect to an older generation in Acts 7:2; 22:1. Elsewhere such people are simply called "elders" or "older men." It is possible that a group of church leaders is meant (see above), but probably the writer is thinking simply of the mature Christian experience of older people. They know (literally, have come to know) the One who is from the beginning.*
         e) William Barclay, *The fathers have the mature wisdom which Christian experience can bring ... All Christians are like fathers, like full-grown, responsible adults, who can think and learn their way deeper and deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ ... we come to see that the blessings of each group are the blessings of all the groups and that we can all find ourselves included in all of them.*
         f) Charles Spurgeon, *These men know what they know, for they have thought over the gospel, studied it, considered it, and having so considered it have embraced it with full intensity of conviction. Usually we mean by "fathers" men who have become developed in grace, mature in character, decided in conviction, clear in statement, and accurate in judgment ... These can discern between things that differ, and are not deceived by the philosophies that allure the ignorant. They know the voice of the Shepherd, and they will not follow a stranger ... I trust I know many doctrines, many precepts and many teachings, but more and more my knowledge gathers about my Lord, even as the bees swarm around their queen. May it come to this with us all: "I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2).*
         g) John Stott, *The fathers, to whom John now addresses himself, are the spiritually adult in the congregation. Their first flush of ecstasy in receiving forgiveness and fellowship with the Father was an experience of long ago. Even the battles of the young men, to which he will next refer, are past. The fathers have progressed into a deep communion with God. Both times he addresses them, John uses identical words: you have known him who is from the beginning. The verb is the same as that used of the little children. All Christians, mature and immature, have come to know (egnokate) God. But their knowledge of him ripens with the years. The children know him as 'the Father' (13c); the fathers have come to know him as him who is from the beginning, which is probably a reference, not to the Logos (though see 1:1; John 1:1), but to the immutable, eternal God who does not change (as humans change) with advancing years, but who is for ever the same. Time hurries on, but in all generations they find a refuge in him who from everlasting to everlasting is God (Ps. 90:1–2; cf. Mal. 3:6). They are already consciously living in eternity.*

h) David Jackman, *The mark of maturity (fathers) is seen as a deepening of that knowledge. Twice John says he writes to them because you have known him who is from the beginning (verses 13a and 14a). This description of Christ takes us back to the opening verse of the letter and the prologue to the gospel as it underlines the pre-existence and eternal deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ever since these leaders of the churches first responded to the gospel they have known that Jesus is God and that this is what enables him to accomplish the work of salvation (see 4:14). Their continuance in the light depends upon holding firm to their knowledge that Jesus is nothing less than God, whatever the false teachers may claim. When their churches are told that Jesus is the human son of Joseph, that the Spirit of Christ came upon him at his baptism and left him before his passion, and that therefore his blood is not that of the Son of God, the 'fathers' know better. They are to hold firm to the Word made flesh through whom all things were made, by whom all things hold together, who is the only light of mankind. There is no route to Christian maturity other than a deepening knowledge of Christ, and those who know him love him.*

b. You young men overcome Satan (13b), ***I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.***

1) Related verses
   a) Ephesians 6:10, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*
   b) 1 John 5:5, *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

2) Comments
   a) Thomas Constable, *The spiritually young men among the readers had known some victory over their spiritual adversary, Satan (cf. 2:15–23).*
   b) Warren Wiersbe, *The "young men," then, are not yet fully mature; but they are maturing, for they use the Word of God effectively. The Word is the only weapon that will defeat Satan (Eph. 6:17).*
   c) William Barclay, *John looks on the struggle with temptation as a personal struggle. He does not speak in the abstract of conquering evil; he speaks of conquering the evil one. He sees evil as a personal power which seeks to seduce us from God.*
   d) Charles Spurgeon, *These young men are not babes. They have been in Christ too long for that. They are no longer novices, to whom the Lord's house is strange. They have been born unto God probably now for years. The things they hoped for at first they have to a large extent realized; they know now what once they could not understand. They are not now confined to milk diet; they can eat meat and digest it well. They have discernment, having had their senses exercised by use, so that they are not so liable to be misled as they were in their infancy ... These young men are born to fight; they are the militia of the church, they have to contend for her faith, and to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. They should do so, for they are strong. This is their lot, and the Lord help them to fulfill their calling.*

4. John remembered their walks of faith (13c-14)
   a. You children know the Father (13c), ***I write to you, children, because you know the Father.***
      1) Related verse, John 14:7, *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*
      2) Comments
         a) In verses 12-13b, John used the present tense, *I am writing to you.* In verses 13c-14, John used the aorist (past) tense, *I have written.* Charles Spurgeon, *I suppose that John alludes to his Gospel when he says, "I have written," and now, a little later, he writes his epistle and says "I write"—giving in each case the same teaching. Men's natures are still the same, men's spiritual conflicts and dangers are still the same, and hence the same truth is suitable, not only from day to day, but from century to century. There is but one food for soul hunger, and but one help in spiritual danger. The true teacher evermore comes to men with the same truth, because men continue to have the same dangers, necessities, sorrows, and hopes.*
         b) William Barclay, *In verse 12, the Greek word is teknia, and in verse 13 paidia; teknia indicates a child young in age, and paidia a child young in experience and, therefore, in need of training and discipline.*

c) There appears to be repetition yet distinction in the two sets. Consider the comments of Thomas Constable, *In the first series of three (vv. 12–13b) we have the minimal spiritual experience for each stage of spiritual growth. In the second series of three (vv. 13c-14), we have the more advanced spiritual experience for each stage. John then proceeded to point out other characteristics of his readers again by using the same three stages of life to illustrate their progress. Perhaps John repeated the cycle of descriptions in order to assure his readers that he was aware of their growth and strength in the faith. This would have encouraged them.*

d) Thomas Constable, *The spiritually little children (Gr. teknion, born ones) know that God has forgiven their sins. But children (Gr. 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 ...*

b. You fathers know the Father and the Son (14a), ***I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.***

1) Thomas Constable, *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.*
2) Zane Hodges, *In calling them fathers again, John simply repeated the attainment mentioned earlier without changing it.*
3) Warren Wiersbe, *The "fathers," of course, are mature believers who have an intimate personal knowledge of God. Because they know God, they know the dangers of the world. No Christian who has experienced the joys and wonders of fellowship with God, and of service for God, will want to live on the substitute pleasures this world offers.*
4) F. F. Bruce, *The fathers have attained a ripe and intimate acquaintance with the eternal God (whatever "from the beginning" may mean elsewhere in these epistles, it can denote nothing less than God's eternity here).*

c. You young men are grounded in the Word (14b), ***I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.***

1) Thomas Constable, *John initially said the young men had defeated 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.*
2) Zane Hodges, *Then viewing them once more as young men, the writer implied growth in strength. In verse 13, he had simply spoken of victory over Satan. Now he wrote, You are strong, and the Word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*
3) Warren Wiersbe, *The "young men" are the conquerors: they have overcome the wicked one, Satan, who is the prince of this world system. How did they overcome him? Through the Word of God! "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you" (1 John 2:14).*
4) I. Howard Marshall, *As young men, they are now explicitly said to be strong, and the reason for their strength is given: the word of God lives in them. This is a positive expression of what was denied in the case of merely nominal believers in 1:8; 2:4. Reception of God's word is a source of spiritual strength which goes beyond the force of mere teaching. If we are right in seeing a reference to the Father and the Son in the two earlier statements in the verse, we may well be tempted to associate the power of the Word of God with the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) in an implicit reference to the three Persons of the Trinity. It is by this personal, subjective power that the objective victory of Jesus over the evil one becomes a reality for believers.*
5) Charles Spurgeon, *Satan is an old hand at studying human nature: he has been near six thousand years watching and tempting men and women, and therefore he is full of cunning. But he is not omniscient, and therefore it may be that he thinks such and such a person is so little in grace that perhaps he is not in grace at all, so he lets him alone. But as soon as it is certain that the man is of the royal seed, then the devil is at him.*

6) John Stott, *In between the children and the fathers are the young men, busily involved in the battle of Christian living. The Christian life, then, is not just enjoying the forgiveness and the fellowship of God, but fighting the enemy. The forgiveness of past sins must be followed by deliverance from sin's present power, justification by sanctification. So in both messages to the young men it is asserted that they have overcome (NEB 'mastered') the evil one. Their conflict has become a conquest ... A hint is given as to the secret of the young men's victory. You are strong, he says, and your strength is due to the fact that the word of God lives in you (14b). They have grasped the Christian revelation. They are seeking to conform their lives to its ethical demands, for 'How can a young man keep his way pure?' Only 'by living according to your word' (Ps. 119:9; cf. v. 11). Alternatively, the reference may be to their overcoming of the antichrists' false teaching, which was diabolical (cf. 4:1–4; 5:4–5).*
7) David Jackman, *Here the emphasis is on victory over Satan which characterizes the beginning of real Christian experience and discipleship. To know that we have been rescued from the devil's grip, and that he has no more power over us, is part of the glorious assurance that God wants to give to even his newest children.*
8) F. F. Bruce, *... it is the young men who receive chief attention—as is indicated perhaps even by their being placed last in each of the two drafts. They are the believers who have reached a stage of spiritual development where they are expected to bear the burden and heat of the day. They are the church's first line of defense against attack, whether that attack takes the form of overt persecution or of subtle undermining of Christian faith and life. The young men whom John addresses have shown themselves worthy of his commendation. They "have overcome the evil one," as he assures them twice, and thus they have proved that they "are strong," endued with spiritual power, and that "the word of God abides" in them. In all the main Johannine writings—Gospel, First Epistle and Revelation alike—the theme of overcoming is present, and in all three it is through Christ, the supreme Overcomer, that His people overcome.*

5. Summary
- Thomas Constable, *John strengthened the sense of progress in these verses in the following way: He used present tense verbs in the first set of sentences (vv. 12–13b), which emphasize ongoing action. Then he used aorist tense verbs, in the second set (vv. 13c-14), which imply a state of greater spiritual maturity ... In this section of verses John was not saying that his readers were all immature or all mature. He was acknowledging their spiritual state and their progress in order to encourage them to press on to know the Lord better and to pursue more intimate fellowship with Him ... in the verses just considered (vv. 12–14), John did not say he was writing to test his readers' salvation. He said that he was writing to them because they were genuine believers. John challenged his readers with tests of fellowship rather than with tests of regeneration.*
- John Stott, *It is significant that in each of these six messages the verb is in the perfect tense, which indicates the present consequence of a past event. John is laying emphasis on the assured standing into which every Christian has come, whatever his stage of spiritual development.*
- Zane Hodges, *By repeating the three categories under which he here addressed his audience, John suggested not only that they possessed spiritual attainments worthy of being called children, fathers, and young men, but also that they possessed these attainments in ample measure.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *A Christian stays away from the world because of what the world is (a satanic system that hates and opposes Christ), because of what the world does to us (attracts us to live on sinful substitutes), and because of what he (the Christian) is—a child of God.*
- I. Howard Marshall, *It is good to remember that in the last analysis our salvation depends on the promise and power of God, so that we can boldly declare that we have peace with God and that we know whom we have believed. John's statements here are meant to awaken such confidence among his readers (cf. 5:13), but the importance of Christian assurance is one of the notes in this Epistle which has aroused surprisingly little echo among expositors.*
- Charles Spurgeon, *Once more, in Christ Jesus we have entirely overcome the wicked one already. The enemy we have to contend with is a vanquished foe—our Lord and Master met him and destroyed him. Our Lord overthrew him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and therefore Satan does not have the power of death any longer. The keys of death and of hell are at the girdle of Christ. Let us take courage and abide steadfast in the faith, for we have in our Lord Jesus overcome the wicked one. We are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us.*

B. A spiritual warning (15-17)

1. Introduction
   - Thomas Constable, *Having encouraged the readers with affirmations that their spiritual condition was very good (2:12–14), John turned next to the enemies that they must face: the world (2:15–17) and the antichrists (2:18–27).*
   - Zane Hodges, *The writer was not dissatisfied with the spiritual state of his readers. Much less did he question or doubt their salvation, as some expositors of this epistle imply. On the contrary, his readers may even be viewed as having matured in the faith. John wrote precisely because their present state was so good. But he wished to warn them about dangers which always exist, no matter how far one has advanced in his Christian walk.*
   - I. Howard Marshall, *The set of statements about the Christian standing of the readers is followed somewhat abruptly by an important warning. It is worth stressing that the warning is directed to the loyal members of the church, whose spiritual status is unquestioned, rather than to those known by John to be in real spiritual danger.*
   - John Stott, *John turns now from a description of the church to a description of the world, and to instruction about the church's attitude to it. In so doing he changes from affirmations about the Christians' standing to warnings about their behaviour ... Christian people have entered into a great inheritance in the forgiveness of sins, fellowship with God and the conquest of the evil one, but their temptations have not come to an end.*
   - Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The author is convinced that his readers have fellowship with God. He forcefully reassures them that they are in a state of grace. At the same time, however, he is aware of the temptations they are still exposed to from the world.*

2. Don't love the world (15), ***Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.***

   a. Related verses
      1) Romans 12:2, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
      2) James 4:4, *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

   b. Comments
      1) Thomas Constable, *The world (kosmos) represents the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that excludes God (cf. John 14:30; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:20). In this context it does not refer to the world of creation or the world of humanity in general, which God loves (John 3:16).*
      2) William Barclay, *The world in this passage does not mean the world in general, for God loved the world which he had made; it means the world which, in fact, had forsaken the God who made it.* 2)Charles Ryrie, *The world is that organized system which acts as a rival to God.*
      3) Warren Wiersbe, *This "world" named here as our enemy is an invisible spiritual system opposed to God and Christ ... The world," in the Bible, is Satan's system for opposing the work of Christ on earth ... The world," then, is not a natural habitat for a believer. The believer's citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20, NASB), and all his effective resources for living on earth come from his Father in heaven.*
      4) I. Howard Marshall, *John is thinking of the attractions of a life lived in opposition to the commandments of God, one in which God's laws for the use of the world and the things in it are disobeyed. "Worldliness" means "disobedience to God's rule of life," and its presence is to be discerned by asking, "What is God's will?" and not by making a human list of taboos ... John's command is grounded in the fact that love for the world and love for the Father are incompatible. This follows clearly from what we have said. To love the world, in John's sense, is to love what is opposed to God by definition.*
      5) Charles Spurgeon, *Where the love of the father is, there cannot be the love of the world. There is no room in us for two loves. The love of the world is essentially idolatry, and God will not be worshiped side by side with idols. You cannot send your heart at the same time in two opposite ways—toward evil and toward good. You must make a choice between the two.*

6) John Stott, *Viewed as people, the world must be loved. Viewed as an evil system, organized under the dominion of Satan and not of God, it is not to be loved. If we are engrossed in the outlook and pursuits of the world which rejects Christ, it is evident that we have no love for the Father. 'Friendship with the world is hatred towards God' (Jas 4:4).*
7) David Jackman, *John wants us to look to Christ and see that he is the one whom we are to be like, for only in him can we find our real freedom. It will help us to understand this if we can grasp what is involved in 'loving the world.'*
8) F. F. Bruce, *Worldliness does not reside in "things," but it does certainly reside in our concentration on "things." If our affections, instead of being set on what is of permanent importance, are set on passing things that the heart desires and the eye delights in, or things that encourage us to have a good conceit of ourselves, we are fearfully impoverished.*

2. Worldly things are not from God (16), ***For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.***

a. Related verses
1) Romans 13:14, *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*
2) Ephesians 2:3, *among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*
3) 1 Peter 4:2, *so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*
4) 2 Peter 2:18, *For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.*
5) Ecclesiastes 5:11, *When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?*

b. Comments
1) Thomas Constable, *John summarized the appeal of the world system as three-fold. Here is a picture of the infernal trinity, the three faces of the world, the three sources of worldly temptation (cf. Gen. 3; Matt. 4). Lusts are cravings or desires, and in the context they are evil because they are not in harmony with God's will ... The lust of the flesh is the 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. The lust of the eyes is the desire to have something apart from the will of God. Whatever is appealing to our senses, but is not properly ours to desire or obtain, falls under this category. The pride of life is the desire to be something apart from the will of God. It refers to boastful pretension in earthly matters ... The first desire appeals mainly to the body, the second appeals to the soul (mind or intellect), and the third to the spirit. Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the flesh in modern western civilization is illicit sex (hedonism, idolizing pleasure). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the eyes is excessive buying (materialism, idolizing possessions). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the pride of life is trying to control people, circumstances, history, or even God (egoism, idolizing power).*
2) Kenneth Grayston, *... lust of the flesh means such desires as are prompted by the internal pressures of our human nature. The lust of the eyes means the desire aroused in us by external objects or persons. The pride of life indicates the arrogance that comes from possessions or power.*
3) Zane Hodges, *... the lust of the flesh as "every illicit physical activity that appeals to people's sinful hearts," the lust of the eyes "whatever is visually appealing but not proper to desire or obtain," and the pride of life "the vain display of earthly life … (arrogance, pretentiousness, or boasting about self, possessions, or accomplishments) ... Christians ought to have nothing to do with such worldly perspectives as these.*
4) Warren Wiersbe, *John points out that the world system uses three devices to trap Christians: the lust (desire) of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). These same devices trapped Eve back in the Garden: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit" (Gen. 3:6).*

5) I. Howard Marshall, *John now proceeds to explain more fully why love for the world is incompatible with love for God. It is because everything in the world is not from God but from the world itself. Its origin lies in the world, viewed as a system organized in opposition to God. The things in the world share in the character of the world ... anything in the world can become a source of sinful desire, even though it is good in itself. John is here expressing what used to be called "total depravity," by which is meant not that the world is as bad as it can possibly be but that its badness is universal ... when I begin to desire more than other people, to covet whatever I see, to boast of what I have, and to claim that I am self-sufficient, then my desires have become perverse and sinful, and I stand condemned. John's teaching stands as a timeless warning against materialism.*
6) William Barclay, *... he sets out three sins which are typical of the world. (1) There is the flesh's desire ... To be subject to physical desire is to judge everything in this world by purely material standards. It is to live a life dominated by the senses. It is to be gluttonous in eating habits, soft in luxury, slavish in pleasure, lustful and lax in morals, selfish in the use of possessions, heedless of all the spiritual values and extravagant in the gratification of material desires ... (2) There is the eye's desire ... It is the spirit which believes that happiness is to be found in the things that money can buy and the eye can see; it has no values other than the material ... (3) There is life's empty pride ... a continual boasting about things which he does not possess, and all his life is spent in an attempt to impress everyone he meets with his own non-existent importance.*
7) David Jackman, *In verse 16 John defines more clearly for us what he means by the things that are in the world. It is obvious that he is not thinking about 'things' in themselves, such as money or possessions, which are morally neutral. Rather he is talking about our personal attitudes towards these things. The 'worldly' characteristics of which the verse speaks are in fact reactions going on inside us, as we contemplate the environment outside. That is very true to Scripture's teaching concerning the fundamental roots of mankind's problems. You could put a human being in the most perfect, favourable and natural environment and he will spoil and defile it. The reason is not because of deficiencies in the environment but because of what is going on inside him.*
8) David Walls, *We might paraphrase this whole passage: "Do not embrace the world's ways or goods. When you do, it squeezes out your love for God. When you live for 'getting your own way,' and for 'getting everything you want,' and for 'looking good compared to others,' you are not living for God but for the world. This is foolish because it suffocates your relationship with God, and in the end, it will all go up in smoke anyway."*

3. The world is temporary but the things of God last forever (17), ***And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.***

a. Related verse, 1 Corinthians 7:31, *and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.*
b. Comments
1) Thomas Constable, *Another reason that we should not pursue the lusts of the world is that this system, along with its desires, is in the process of passing out of existence. Actually we are living in what John called the last hour of the world's existence (v. 18). The world is only temporary and fleeting (cf. 1 Peter) ... Since all Christians will live forever (John 10:28), John was not saying that we attain eternal life by our obedience. However, we can also abide (i.e., enjoy an intimate relationship with God and abundantly experience God's eternal life) now, not just after death, when we obey God.*
2) Zane Hodges, *... the life lived in God's fellowship, rejecting the sinful things of this passing world, is a life that has no real ending. A person whose character and personality are shaped by obedience to God will not be affected by the passing away of the world and its vain desires. It is a Johannine way of saying, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."*
3) I. Howard Marshall, *Now comes the climax to John's appeal. It is foolish to desire the world because the world and its desires are passing away. John has already reminded his readers that the era of darkness is coming to an end (2:8), and Paul also stated that "this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31) ... Permanence belongs to the person who does the will of God. He will remain standing amid the storms of judgment (Mt. 7:21, 24–27) ... even now the world is in process of dissolution; men are blind if they do not realize what is going on before their very eyes (cf. Lk. 12:54–56). For John it is indeed already "the last hour" (2:18).*

4) William Barclay, *Those who attach themselves to the world's aims and the world's ways are giving their lives to things which literally have no future. All these things are passing away, and none of them has any permanency. But those who have taken God as the centre of their lives have given themselves to the things which last forever. The people of this world are doomed to disappointment; the people of God are assured of lasting joy.*
5) Charles Spurgeon, *Obedience to the will of God is the pathway to perpetual honor and everlasting joy. Everything else is transient, fleeting, and soon passes away, but the one who does the will of God has entered into the eternal regions, and he has himself become one of those who remain forever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation, and from your eternal union to Christ.*
6) John Stott, *The same choice between God and the world, or more particularly between the lust of the world and the will of God, still confronts Christians. We shall more readily obey the command 'do not love the world' if we remember that while the world and its desires are transient, God's will and those who do it are alike eternal (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18).*
7) David Jackman, *Not only do the world's attractions fail to satisfy, but they cannot last. All of these desires feed on their own fulfilment, but ultimately none of them will remain. So why should those who are heirs of the eternal world concentrate their interests and ambitions on something that is so fleeting and unreliable? We need to realize the brittleness of this world. Even before death, people who have lived this way are often convinced of the emptiness and uselessness of their lives, and sometimes profoundly frightened ...*

c. Summary
1) Thomas Constable, *Resisting the appeal of the world is difficult for every believer. John urged his readers, in view of its attractiveness, to understand the avenues of its temptation and to remember four things: (1) Love for the world indicates lack of love for God (v. 15). (2) It results in consequences that are not what our loving heavenly Father desires for our welfare (v. 17). (3) It lasts only a short time (v. 17). And (4) it prevents intimate fellowship with God (v. 15).*
2) David Jackman, *All that Satan can offer is desires which will never be satisfied. God has a perfect will that will never be thwarted. The followers of the world share the condemnation and death of its system. The children of God share his eternal life. The challenge that we each face is whether the guiding principle of our life is doing and getting what we want, or obeying God's will and following his purposes. That is the difference between heaven and hell.*