

John wants us to know that we have eternal life and in this lesson he provides us with two more evidences that we know Jesus Christ as our Savior: obedience to God's commandments and our love for one another.

¹ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ² And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

These two verses complete the thought that John was discussing at the end of the previous chapter concerning sin.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” - After establishing the truth that sin will be a fact of life as long as we are in this flesh, John wants us to know that our goal should be to avoid sinning. Even with our propensity to sin we should not surrender to the flesh and allow it to have its way.

“And if any man sin, we have an advocate [intercessor; helper] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” - Whenever we sin, we should remember that Jesus Christ is our intercessor between us and the Father. The Greek word for “advocate” is the same word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14-16, where it is rendered as “comforter.” Christ intercedes on our behalf before the Father through His blood to obtain forgiveness for our sins.

“And he is the propitiation [appeasement; to satisfy the requirements] for our sins” - Instead of our sins incurring the wrath of God, Jesus Christ appeases or satisfies the wrath of God because He paid our sin debt on the cross. **Col. 2:14** “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*”

“and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” - Christ has appeased the wrath of God not only for those of us who have already come to Him in faith, but also for anyone in the world who will do so as well.

³ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” - John gives us another evidence that we belong to God: we keep His commandments. John isn't saying that we keep God's commandments perfectly because a few verses prior he told us that we are engaging in self-deception and lies if we think or say that we do not sin (1 John 1:8, 10). What John is saying is that if we belong to God we will endeavor to keep His commandments. Lost people typically do not care about God's commandments and they are certainly not a way of life for them to keep His commandments.

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” - Anyone whose life does not show a pattern of keeping God's commandments and yet claims to know God is living a lie. John is not saying that making the false claim makes the person a liar, but that being a liar causes the person to make the false claim. This principle is one that John uses throughout this letter: *a person's actions demonstrate what he/she is*. A man is not a liar because he lies, nor is a man a thief because he steals. He lies because he is a liar and he steals because he is a thief. John says that a man that does not know Christ will claim to know Him because he is a liar. Why is he a liar? Because the truth is not in him.

⁵ But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

“But whoso keepeth [observe; to attend to] his word, in him verily [truly] is the love of God perfected [completed; accomplished]” - If someone is paying attention to God's word so that he may obey it, that is evidence that God's love has accomplished a work in his heart. The Holy Spirit has gone beyond merely dealing with his heart to having drawn him to Christ. The Spirit has transformed the person's heart and made him a new creature in Christ. **2 Cor. 5:17** “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*”

“hereby know we that we are in him” - This evidence is another reason we can know that we belong to God.

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” - Someone that abides in Christ (John 15:4-10) should exhibit the same characteristics that Christ did when He was on this earth. Christ obeyed His Father and anyone who abides in Christ will also walk in the same manner by obeying the Father. *A person's actions demonstrate what he/she is*.

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

Commentators do not agree on what this “new commandment” that John speaks of is. Some think it is the obedience to God's commandments that he speaks of in the previous verses. Others think it is the love for one another that John speaks of in the next verses.

John speaks of a new commandment in **2 John 5-6** where he specifically tells us that the new commandment is love: “⁵ *And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.* ⁶ *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.*” There John says that we show love to the Lord by walking in His commandments, and the one that we've heard from the beginning of the gospel is the commandment that we should love one another.

In our passage the “new commandment” is most likely loving one another because of both the similar statement in 2 John as well as the fact that love for our brother is the topic that John discusses next. The command to love was not a new one since God had commanded it in the OT. **Lev 19:18** “*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*”

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

“Again, a new commandment I write unto you” - God had commanded love for our neighbor under the law, but through Christ that command gains a new emphasis. Instead of merely not doing harm against your neighbor, Christ advocates a love for others that is willing to lay down one’s life for them. Jesus called it a “new commandment.” **John 13:34** *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”* Christ loved us enough that He laid down His life for us and we ought to love one another with that same love.

“which thing is true in him and in you” - Again, John is saying that the same things that are true of Christ should be true of us. In this case he is talking about walking in the same light that Christ has in Him.

“because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” - As children of God, the darkness of our old sinful life is past and the light of Jesus Christ is now shining in our life. John is laying the foundation to show us another evidence of our salvation: loving our brother.

⁹ He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰ He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now” - Someone who claims to know Christ (“in the light”) and yet hates his brother is proving that he is not actually in the light, but is in darkness. Being “in the light” (saved) makes a difference in a person’s life.

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light” - The evidence that a person is abiding in the light is that he loves his brother.

“and there is none occasion of stumbling [snare; obstacle to trip over] in him” - Hatred is an obstacle to our spiritual growth. If we love our brother then we will be free of any hindrances that Satan would throw in our way to impede the Holy Spirit’s work in growing us spiritually.

“But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness” - Hatred of a brother is evidence that the light of Jesus Christ has never shined in a person’s life and the pattern of his life reflects that fact because he continues to walk in darkness.

“and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” - This person who hates his brother doesn’t realize where hatred will take him for he has no spiritual light to guide him. This could be a temporary situation for a Christian who has allowed the flesh to take control, but for a lost person it is a continual condition that can only be remedied by faith in Jesus Christ.

¹² I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. ¹³ I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. ¹⁴ I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Commentators generally agree that John is addressing three groups at different levels of spiritual maturity. Because these groups are apparently genuine believers, John’s purpose here seems to be one of encouragement since he doesn’t want his readers to doubt their salvation but to have more confidence in it. **1 John 5:13** *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

The “little children” are new believers who are just beginning their spiritual journey. The “fathers” refer to Christians who are mature in their faith after many years of growing in Christ. The “young men” are those who are not as spiritually mature as the fathers but have grown past the “new believer” stage.

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” - New believers have not yet grown much in their faith and know little beyond the fact that their sins have been forgiven. Having their sins forgiven is only the first step in growing spiritually in Christ.

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning” - Fathers are mature in their faith and have developed a deep relationship with Christ (“him that is from the beginning”).

“I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one” - Young men have grown enough in their faith that they are able to resist the temptations of Satan through the power of God.

“I write unto you, little children [an older child], because ye have known the Father” - The Greek word for “little children” indicates an older child who has matured somewhat. John seems to be addressing young believers who have grown to the level that they are starting to develop a deepening relationship with God the Father.

“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning” - This statement to the fathers is the same as the first one in v. 13. John apparently wants to emphasize the statement by repeating it.

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” - These believers have become strong in their faith because they have incorporated the word of God into their lives and thus through God’s strength they have resisted and overcome Satan’s temptations.