

# FIRST JOHN

## Chapter 2

*Christ Our Advocate*

**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. 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.**

**2:1-2** Being a part of God’s fellowship does not imply moral perfection, but gives us the incentive to bring our sins to the one who “speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” No one is excluded from receiving God’s grace, from the light and life of fellowship with God; it is for the “whole world.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

**2:1** *little children.* John, the aged apostle, often used this expression of endearment (vv. 12–13, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; the term in 2:18 translates a different Greek word). (CSB)

A reference given by the one who proclaimed the Word of life to them, by which they were brought to the faith and given new birth. John later refers to them as “children of God” because all Christians are “born of God” (3:9). (TLSB)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful”: “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Ps 32:5). He is “faithful.” God is trustworthy, worthy of trust (1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Tim 2:13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*I am writing* – What he has told them orally he gives them here in writing. (Stoekhardt)

*may not sin* – Christians are informed about their reconciliation through Christ, not that they should make light of sin, but rather that they should avoid all sin. Christians should not willingly, deliberately sin or yield to sin. They must never seek the enjoyment of sin. (Stoekhardt)

Christians are both sinners and saints at the same time. John is writing to enlighten, strengthen, and build up the saints so they may say no to sin. (TLSB)

*if anyone does sin* – But so that Christians may not misunderstand him, he immediately adds: “If anyone sins.” Even though a Christian with all his heart renounces sin, he cannot entirely avoid to be tricked into sin before he is aware of it. This is due to the weakness of his flesh and blood. (Stoekhardt)

*we have an advocate.* One Greek word underlies this phrase, which refers to someone who speaks in court in behalf of a defendant (see note on Jn 14:16). (CSB)

Jesus is the mediator between God and man. As such, Jesus is our defender, our intercessor, who constantly presents evidence in God’s court of justice in favor of our pardon. “This is the worship that He approves above all other worship, that He be called upon in all afflictions” (AC XXI 3). Luther; “He is righteous and unstained. He is without sin. Whatever righteousness I have, this my Comforter has, He

who cries out for me to the Father: ‘Spare him, and he has been spared! Forgive him! Help him!’ The righteousness of Jesus Christ is standing on our side. For the righteousness of God in Him is ours.” (AE 30:236). Luther: “This text should be written with golden letters and should be painted in the heart. Therefore you should get understanding and say: ‘Christ, I know Thee alone as the Advocate, the Comforter, and the Mediator; and I do not doubt that Thou are such a Person for me but cling firmly to this with my heart and believe’” (AE 30:236). (TLSB)

Jesus Christ is our attorney at the highest court of justice. He is in heaven with the Father to make intercession for us. This is His ongoing business at the throne of God. He causes the Father to look, not upon our sin, but at His own perfect atonement. (Stoeckhardt)

“One who speaks to the Father in our defense”: (advocate *paraklētos*). Used in John’s Gospel (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) for the Holy Spirit. One who is “called to our side” to help us, as we might have a legal counselor. He pleads our case to the Father. “You disowned the Holy and Righteous One” (Acts 3:14). The same idea is expressed in Rom 8:33–34 and Heb 7:25: He is able for he is “the Righteous One.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*the righteous*. In God’s court the defender must be, and is, sinless. (CSB)

**2:2** *propitiation for our sins*. God’s holiness demands punishment for man’s sin. God, therefore, out of love (4:10; Jn 3:16), sent his Son to make substitutionary atonement for the believer’s sin. In this way the Father’s wrath is propitiated (satisfied, appeased); his wrath against the Christian’s sin has been turned away and directed toward Christ. (CSB)

“Atoning sacrifice for our sins”: (*hilasmos*). In the NT only here and in 1 Jn 4:10. It denotes a sacrifice offered to meet and satisfy the just wrath of God for the sins of the whole world; an offering offered by God himself when he “gave his one and only Son” (Jn 3:16); and an offering of the Son when he gave himself willingly. “He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself “ (Heb 7:27). The offering was of a united will and a united love of the Father and the Son (Jn 17:1). It was not a pagan sacrifice, where a vengeful pagan god reluctantly is forced to forgive by a reluctant human sacrifice. It was a sacrifice freely and lovingly given to atone for our sins (1 in 4:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

There Christ steps in as the means of appeasement and by His expiatory sacrifice brings about a favorable change in God. But we should note that John asserts that Christ not only once was, but that He is, the propitiation, the means of appeasing for our sins. (Stoeckhardt)

Satisfaction for the demands of God’s Law. Jesus satisfied God’s demands for perfect obedience and perfect payment for sins. Through His life and death on the cross, Jesus became the means of forgiveness, the way of reconciling man to God. (TLSB)

*for the sins of the whole world*. † Forgiveness through Christ’s atoning sacrifice is not limited to one particular group only; it has worldwide application (see Jn 1:29). It must, however, be received by faith (see Jn 3:16). Thus this verse does not teach universalism (that all people ultimately will be saved), but that Christ died for the sins of all mankind. (CSB)

His intercession consists in this that He points God to His scarred hands and feet, which once and for all time were pierced on the cross for the sins of the whole world. (Stoeckhardt)

Jesus made complete satisfaction for the sins of all mankind from the beginning of the world to the Last Day (objective justification). Jesus came that “He might taste death for everyone” (Heb 2:9) – even for those who reject Him, “denying the Master who bought them (2 Pt 2:1). These verses repudiate the false teaching of a “limited atonement” (that Christ did not atone for all mankind, but only for the elect). Luther: “He does not sit at the right hand of the Father to terrify us, but He is the expiation....Christ, who does not spurn a contrite and humble heart, wants to be the Lord and Author of life, not sin.” (TLSB)

**2:3** Forty-two times 1 John uses two Greek verbs normally translated “know.” One of these verbs is related to the name of the Gnostics, the heretical sect that claimed to have a special knowledge (Greek *gnosis*) of God (see Introduction: Gnosticism). (CSB)

keep his *commandments*. Does not mean that only those who never disobey (1:8–9) know God, but simply refers to those whose lives are generally characterized by obedience. (CSB)

Only those who know Jesus through faith keep His commandments. His Commandments are not burdensome because Christ’s teaching (John 13:34) is based on the Gospel, not on condemnation. The Law never provided the power to fulfill the commandments, but Christ gives His Commandments in view of God’s mercy. He builds on forgiveness, which motivates us. (TLSB)

**2:4-5** When one’s living does not flow from love, it disapproves all claims of knowing Jesus, who is God’s very expression of love and truth. (TLSB)

**2:5** *in him truly the love of God is perfected*. Means either that God’s love for the believer is made complete when it moves the believer to acts of obedience (see 4:12), or that our love for God (CSB)

The love of God reaches its goal in us only when we love others as Christ has loved us. This means that we forgive them when they sin against us and pray for them when they sin, so they may be forgiven. (TLSB)

*in him*. Spiritual union with God (see Jn 17:21).

**2:6** *abides* - We are brought into Christ by God’s work of faith in us when we are “born of God” by water and the Word of Christ. We remain in Christ also by God’s grace as we trust His Word daily. (TLSB)

*walk in the same way* - Walking and living in Christ’s way means always speaking and living the truth in love and forgiving everyone. (TLSB)

**2:1–6** Only true children who know Jesus as their Savior can truly walk as Jesus walked and love one another as Jesus has loved them. If anyone claims to know Jesus and does not love as Jesus loves, he is a liar. When we are guilty of not loving as Jesus loved us, we have One who defends us before God’s throne and petitions our pardon for the sake of His own blood—Jesus the Righteous One. Through His endless love and forgiveness, we have salvation and have come to know Him. In Him, we love our fellow Christians. • Father, strengthen me in my own salvation, that I might be empowered to keep Your commands and love everyone as Christ has loved me. Amen. (TLSB)

*The New Commandment*

**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. 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. 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 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. 12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. 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.

**2:7–8** *new command.* See Jn 13:34–35. The Biblical command to love was old (see Lev 19:18; also Mt 22:39–40). But its newness is seen in: (1) the new and dramatic illustration of divine love on the cross; (2) Christ's exposition of the OT law (see Mt 5), which seemed new to Christ's hearers; and (3) the daily experience of believers as they grow in love for each other. (CSB)

**2:7** *beloved.* Like “dear children,” a favorite term of John's (used ten times in two letters: here; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; 3Jn 1–2, 5, 11). (CSB)

**NO NEW COMMANDMENT** - This is the same commandment they have known since they were born of God, the same commandment God's people have always had through the enduring Word of God “from the beginning” - to love one another. (TLSB)

*since the beginning.* The beginning of their Christian experience, when they first heard the gospel. (CSB)

**2:8** *a new commandment* - Our Lord's love for us has made the old commandment to “love your neighbor” (Lv. 19:18) new and powerful. (TLSB)

*true in him* - This new commandment is true in Jesus and in those who believe in Him. The beloved child, born of God, loves his brother because the love of Christ is at work in him. (TLSB)

*true light.* Used in the NT only here and in Jn 1:9, this phrase refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world (Jn 8:12), and to its saving effects in the lives of believers. (CSB)

Since Christ's death and resurrection, the old age of this corrupted world is running out. As the darkness passes, it does so in the light of His Gospel, which shines through His Word and Sacrament to a world lost in darkness of this old age. (TLSB)

**2:9–10** *hates ... loves.* In the Bible hatred and love as moral qualities are not primarily emotions, but attitudes expressed in actions (see 3:15–16). (CSB)

“Hate” and “love” are a common word pair in human language. They are difficult emotions for sinners to handle. God calls us to love good and hate evil (cf. Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). Popular sayings such as “Hate the sin, but love the sinner” try to express this thought, though the Scripture surprisingly warns, “You (God) hate all evildoers” (Ps. 5:4-6). God is somehow able to hate the evildoer while also longing for his salvation (John 3:16; 2 Pt. 3:9). Among Christian brethren, hatred cannot prevail, because they share genuine love for the same heavenly Father. (TLSB)

**2:9** *brother.* Fellow believer. (CSB)

**2:10** *stumbling.* Into sin. (CSB)

**2:11** To hate a brother is to walk in darkness and become unable to see the truth. (TLSB)

**2:12–14** *I write to you ... because.* By extended repetition in these verses, John assures his readers that, in spite of the rigorous tests contained in the letter, he is confident of their salvation. (CSB)

*dear children ... fathers ... young men.* As elsewhere in this letter, “dear children” probably refers to all John’s readers, including fathers and young men. The terms “fathers” and “young men” may, however, describe two different levels of spiritual maturity. Some hold that all three terms refer to levels of spiritual maturity. (CSB)

**2:12** *his name’s sake.* Jesus (CSB)

**2:13–14** *him who is from the beginning.* (CSB)

**2:13** *fathers* - The more mature, teachers and leaders among them. (TLSB)

*know him* - They were the first to know Christ. (TLSB)

*young men* - The less mature who have no less overcome Satan through faith in Christ because they have been given spiritual victory and strength in Him. (TLSB)

*children* - All who are born of God are given to know God as their Father, Jesus as their Savior, and the Spirit as their Comforter. (TLSB)

**2:7–14** Jesus has shown us the love of God on the cross. This is the love the Law commanded but we could never fulfill. But more than that, it is the love that the Gospel imparts to those who love their brother and abide in the light so that there is in them nothing that would cause them to fall away from faith in Christ. The old commandment, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lv 19:18), condemns us all, since we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. The new commandment, “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12), is rooted in Jesus’ work, which frees us from guilt. His atonement for our sins empowers us to love as He loves. • Grant, Lord, that we trust in You and Your love, that we may always love our neighbor. Amen. (TLSB)

*Do Not 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. 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. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.**

**2:15** *the world.* Not the world of people (Jn 3:16) or the created world (Jn 17:24), but the world, or realm, of sin (v. 16; Jas 4:4), which is controlled by Satan and organized against God and righteousness. (CSB)

Affection for and the choosing of the sinful things of this world and this earthly life. (TLSB)

*love of the Father.* Love for the Father. (CSB)

Those in whom God dwells love not the world that is passing away but the kingdom that is coming and the things of God. (TLSB)

**2:16** *desires...the desires...pride of life* - The sinful human nature always seeks selfish things and is tempted to covet, abuse, and control all things. It finds false security in wealth and is proud of accumulated possessions that show off that wealth. (TLSB)

*not from the Father* - God is not the source of sin, sinful desires, or works of sin. Luther: "First, the lust of the flesh must be overcome, and this is done more easily. Second, and this is more difficult, the lust of the eyes, for it cannot be deserted all at once, like the first, but it falls gradually. Finally, the most difficult is the pride of life. It, too, is born of victory over vices. Therefore this is not overcome, though it be left desolate or fail, unless it perish altogether because of its iniquity. It is the most harmful kind of vice which unjustly divides between God's glory and self-confusion" (AE 10:429). (TLSB)

**2:17** *abides forever* - Lives forever with God in spirit now and on the Last Day by the resurrection of the body. (TLSB)

**2:15–17** Do not cling to this world and its desires; it will soon be over. Cling to Christ and live forever! Our sinful flesh and the world entice and tempt us with their glittering promises of wealth, power, popularity, and pleasure. But all that glitters is not gold, and none of it provides for forgiveness, peace, and contentment. Christ alone provides and offers forgiveness, peace, and contentment. • Father in heaven, do not let the desires of our sinful, selfish flesh reign over us. Fix our eyes on Your Son, our Savior, that we may ever believe in Him. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *Warning Against Antichrists*

**18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us[e]—eternal life. 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.**

**2:18** *last hour.* With other NT writers, John viewed the whole period beginning with Christ's first coming as the last days (see Ac 2:17; 2Ti 3:1; Heb 1:2; 1Pe 1:20). They understood this to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Christ. The word "last" in "last days," "last times" and "last hour" also expresses a sense of urgency and imminence. The Christian is to be alert, waiting for the return of Christ (Mt 25:1–13). (CSB)

The time prior to Christ's second coming (cf. Acts 2:17), which has been and will be filled with the appearance of many false teachers who speak their falsehoods by the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). The appearance of these false teachers, whom John calls "many antichrists," sets the stage for the coming

of “the Antichrist,” who will arise from within Christendom (1 Thess. 2:1-1). Once he rises, then all will be fulfilled that Christ prophesied must take place before He appears on the Last Day. (TLSB)

*have heard* - Jesus warned us about false shepherds, false prophets, and the one from whom all falsehood originates - the father of lies, the devil. (TLSB)

*the antichrist ... many antichrists.* John assumed his readers knew that a great enemy of God and his people will arise before Christ’s return. That person is called “antichrist” (v. 18), “the man of lawlessness” and “the beast” (Rev 13:1–10). But prior to him, there will be many antichrists. These are characterized by the following: (1) They deny the incarnation (4:2; 2Jn 7) and that Jesus is the divine Christ (v. 22); (2) they deny the Father (v. 22); (3) they do not have the Father (v. 23); (4) they are liars (v. 22) and deceivers (2Jn 7); (5) they are many (v. 18); (6) in John’s day they left the church because they had nothing in common with believers (v. 19). The antichrists referred to in John’s letter were the early Gnostics. The “anti” in antichrist means “against” (cf. 2Th 2:4; Rev 13:6–7). (CSB)

Literally, “instead of Christ” or “in place of Christ.” There are as many different antichrists as there are different ways of opposing Christ. John is refuting one of these false versions of Christ in this letter. (TLSB)

**2:19** *they* - The antichrists, the false teachers John mentions also in vs. 26. (TLSB)

*went out from us* - The false teachers could not abide in the apostles’ teaching, the doctrine of Christ, so they left the Christian Church (cf 2 John 7-11). (TLSB)

*they were not of us* - Not everyone who claims to be a Christian really is a Christian. When disagreements over doctrine arise and there is a division, those who cling to Christ’s Word and teaching prove themselves to be genuine believers. Those who dispute Christ’s teaching and attempt to alter it prove themselves to be false followers of the Lord. The apostle would rebuke them and put them out of the Christian fellowship, if they had not left of their own accord. The fact that they were willing to leave rather than confess the true teaching of Christ shows that they were not true Christians. (TLSB)

**2:20-25** There is one God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. Because there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:5-6), it is necessary for salvation to believe what God’s Word teaches concerning the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. One cannot have the Father without holding to the Son and also to the Spirit. (TLSB)

**2:20** *anointed.* The Holy Spirit (see v. 27; Ac 10:38). (CSB)

As the Son of God, Jesus was born of God from all eternity. He is God’s Chosen One and was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His Baptism. So, each believer is anointed with the Holy Spirit at Baptism and is born of God. (TLSB)

*Holy One.* Either Jesus Christ (Mk 1:24; Jn 6:69; Ac 2:27; 3:14; 22:14) or the Father (2Ki 19:22; Job 6:10). (CSB)

**2:21** Because believers know the truth, they will be able to recognize the lies of the false teachers. (TLSB)

**2:22** *who is the liar* - See John 8:44. These teachers spoke by the spirit of the Antichrist; ultimately, the voice of the devil. (TLSB)

*Jesus is the Christ.* The man Jesus is the divine Christ. (CSB)

Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ was born, lived, died, bodily rose, and physically ascended to the right hand of God the Father as the Son of Man and the Son of God. (TLSB)

**2:23** *No one who denies the Son has the Father.* One cannot have the Father except through the Son and by the Spirit. (TLSB)

*confesses the Son.* Those who believe in Jesus and confess Him before the world display that they are born of God and of the one true faith. They have fellowship with God and with one another through the Son. (TLSB)

**2:24** Every Christian should abide in the Word of God. We must never advance beyond, but continue to grow in, the foundational truths of Christ crucified for the sins of the world and raised for our salvation. (TLSB)

**2:25** *us* - All who believe in Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

**2:27** The Holy Spirit remains in believers. (TLSB)

Those baptized into Christ have received the Holy Spirit through God's Word. They have no need for false teachers, who deny God the Father by denying His Son. The Spirit who accompanied Jesus is the same Spirit who remains in us. He always reminds us of our Lord's words to us. (TLSB)

*teaches you.* The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (what is commonly called illumination) does not involve revelation of new truth or the explanation of all difficult passages of Scripture to our satisfaction. Rather, it is the development of the capacity to appreciate and appropriate God's truth already revealed—making the Bible meaningful in thought and daily living. (CSB)

*everything.* All things necessary to know for salvation and Christian living. (CSB)

Those baptized into Christ have received the Holy Spirit through God's Word. They have no need for false teachers, who deny God the Father by denying His Son. The Spirit who accompanied Jesus is the same Spirit who remains in us. He always reminds us of our Lord's words to us we have everything we need to tell the difference between the truth and a lie. We already have all that we need to be certain of our eternal life. • Heavenly Father, keep us steadfast in Your Word, and ever guard us from the deceptions of the many antichrists who seek to lead us away from Your Son, who is forever true God and true man. Amen. (TLSB)

*Children of God*

**28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.**

**2:28–4:6** A second appeal for the congregations to examine their faith and practice. (TLSB)

**2:28** *abide in him.* See "remains in" (vv. 24, 27). (CSB)

Remaining in Jesus through faith in Him and His Word. (TLSB)

**2:29** *he ... him.* God the Father. (CSB)

*practices righteousness.* Members of God's family are marked by holy living. (CSB)

If a person believes that Jesus is without sin and that He fulfilled the whole Law and God's will for him, that believer will want to behave toward God and neighbor the way Jesus behaved. (TLSB)

*born of Him.* We cannot begin to truly fear, love, and trust God or love our neighbor the way Jesus loved us unless we are first born of God (cf Jn 3:3-5). (TLSB)