

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **1, 2, & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 2** **(Chapters 3-5)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8). Welcome to our study of the Book of First John. In this second lesson on 1 John, we will notice how in chapters 3 through 5 John shows us that God is love, and that the application of that is that we must walk in love. John begins by showing the great love that God has for us. In 1 John 3:1 we read, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.” And this we are! John begins by putting the love of God at the forefront, and says, “Look at God’s amazing love for mankind. Behold what manner of love He has showered upon us that we can be called children of God.” It is by the love of God that we have the privilege of calling God our Father. That love, however, came at a very high cost. In Romans 5:6-8 we are told,

“When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

When we think about the amazing love of God, we realize that it is beyond comprehension. When man was at his worst as a sinner who was ugly and pitiful, and who stabbed God in the back multiple times, it was at that point that God sent His beloved Son to die for us. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God made Christ “who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God made His own Son to be a sin offering for our sins—when Jesus had no sins of His own. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we see the beautiful picture of Christ and all that He gave up for us: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Think of what Jesus gave up. He left the realm of Heaven, came to Earth, and lived and died as a man. Why did He do that? It was so that we could have the hope of salvation. In John 3:16 we are told that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Galatians 4:4-5 tell us that when we were at our worst, and when we had come to a point where sin was unbearable to God, “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” It is because of this that we can be called “children of God” because we are adopted sons and daughters of the God of Heaven. Just look at God’s amazing love.

What does this love cause us to do? Walking in God’s love means that we should purify ourselves. In 1 John 3:3 John said, “Everyone who has this hope in Him [that is, the hope of knowing we are children of God and that we will be changed into the image of Jesus—verse 2] purifies himself.” The love of God is what causes us to want to live a pure life. God said, “Be holy, as He who called you is holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). In Romans 2:7-9 we are told that it is the goodness of God that brings man to repentance. Hebrews 12:14 teaches us that without holiness, no one will see God. When we look at the life of Christ and see all that He did and how He lived a perfect life (“tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin”

—Heb. 4:15), and when we look at the great love that God had for us, it should humble us and make us want to live a holy life. We should want to live for God every day. We should want to be faithful to the cause of Christ, and we should want to glorify God because of His great love for us.

“Walking in love” not only should cause us to want to live pure lives, but also should cause us to avoid sin. In 1 John 3:4 John identifies what sin is when he says, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (transgression of the law). When we want to live a pure life in view of the love of God, we need to clearly understand what sin is. We need to avoid lawlessness, because all transgression of the law is sin. In 1 John 5:17 we are told that all unrighteousness is sin. When God sets up a standard (His Word is our law—James 1:22-25), and we break that law by doing other than what the Word of God says, we sin. When we do unrighteousness, and when we do things that we know are ungodly, 1 John 5:16 tells us that is sin. James 4:17 identifies another sin—“To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” “Walking in love” means that we want to know what sin is, and we want to avoid it.

Let’s be honest and clear. There are people who come to the Book of First John and try to teach that a Christian cannot sin. In doing so, they misuse verses like 1 John 3:9—“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” When John says, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin,” is John trying to teach that a child of God cannot sin? Some people believe that this teaches that a child of God cannot sin so as to be lost. But if that is true, then John has already contradicted himself. Why? Because in 1 John 1:7-9 he wrote,

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

To whom is John writing? He is writing to Christians. He says, “You must walk in the light.” That means that Christians must recognize that they do sin, and that they need to confess that sin. Wait a minute. Why would we need to do that if we cannot sin? What about 1 John 2:1-2 where John said,

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

John said that he was writing so that the people to whom he was writing would not sin, but if they did... Wait a minute. What about the idea that some people suggest which says that Christians cannot sin—a concept based on the language of 1 John 3:9? The word “sin” in 1 John 3:9 is in the present tense. This means that it is not discussing a one-time sin. John is not saying that a person who is born of God can never commit one sin. John is saying that whoever is born of God does not **continue** in a life of sin. In fact, most translations today recognize this as present-tense, durative, continuous action. All John is saying is that if we are born of God, and if His seed remains in us, then we will not continue practicing a life of sin. We cannot do that and be a faithful child of God. The Scriptures teach that a child of God can sin so as to be lost. Over and over again this is taught. In Galatians 5:4 we read, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” To whom is Paul writing? Galatians 1:1-2 shows us that he is writing to the churches in Galatia. People in the church are saved, and are a part of the body of Christ. Thus, to Christians Paul says, “To those of you who are in the body, and who are attempting to go back and be justified by law, you have been cut off from Christ and have fallen from grace.” Some people today say that a Christians cannot fall from grace, and cannot sin so as to be lost. Paul said the exact opposite.

In Acts 8:20-22 we see Simon who, in his past life, had been something like a magician or trickster. He then witnessed the Holy Spirit being given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, and saw that real miracles were the result. But after his conversion he reverted back and said, "I'll give you money if you'll give me that gift." Peter then said to him, "Your money perish with you. You have neither part nor portion in this matter. Your heart is not right with God. Repent and pray so that the evil thought of your heart might be forgiven you." Simon was in sin and needed to be forgiven. And notice that his money would perish with him. Simon had just obeyed the Gospel. He then sinned, and was told that he would be lost and would perish. People who are Christians can sin. They shouldn't. They ought not to live in sin. But sometimes they do. In 1 Corinthians 10:12 we are told, "Take heed lest you fall." In Revelation 3:4-5 we see that some in the churches discussed in that book were going to have their names removed from the Book of Life if they were not careful. Is 1 John 3:9 teaching that it is impossible to sin? No. All it is teaching is that if the Word of God (the leaven or seed) remains in us, and if we are trying to follow the teaching of Jesus, we cannot practice sin and still claim to be faithful to God. This is what John has been teaching throughout this book.

In 1 John 3:18 we see that walking in love is not something that we **say**, but instead is something we **do**. What does it mean to "walk in love"? God is love, and we must walk in love. What does that really mean? In 1 John 3:18 we are told, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The idea of "deed" means that we act. We cannot simply say, "God, I love You," but never do anything. To walk in love, like walking in the light, means that we must do what God says. In James 2 James gives us an illustration of real faith and what it means to walk according to the teaching of Jesus. He says, "Imagine that you have a scenario where someone comes in who is naked and destitute, and is in need of food and clothing. You then say, 'God bless you; I hope you get what you need,' and you send them off. But you never give the person anything. Have you shown your faith? No, you have not. You cannot show your faith without doing something. You cannot show your love for God without doing something." If a person comes to us and is in need, and we say, "Oh, we love you so much. God bless you. We hope you get what you need," and then we push him out the door and never give him anything, have we really shown that person the love of God? Of course not! We must **do something** to show our faith. We must **do something** to show our love. Jesus said this; it is nothing new. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." That leads right into 1 John 3:24, where we are taught that in order to walk in love that is in deed and in truth, we must obey the commandments of God. "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." John writes a lot about "knowing." How can we **know** that we are walking in love, and that we are abiding in God? It is very simple. We must look at the Bible with an unbiased, unprejudiced attitude, read what it says, and then go do it! A true, tried, bullet-proof way of knowing that we are in the love of God is to take the Bible and do what it says. Beyond that, we cannot know. Hebrews 5:8-9 teaches us that obedience is essential to showing our love of God. Jesus is the Author of eternal salvation to "all those who obey Him." In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said that it is essential to **do** the will of God. Hebrews 7:25 teaches that Jesus will "save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him." We must do His will. In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked a haunting question, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" If we want to walk in love that is in deed and in truth, then we must do what the Bible says.

Part of that means that we must test the spirits to see if they really are "of God." Walking in love means not believing everything we hear, but testing those things. In 1 John 4:1 we read, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God."

What are these spirits? The last part of the verse answers that question when it says that “many false prophets have gone out into the world.” When we are walking in love, it does not mean that we never confront anyone. It does not mean that we do not take what someone says and check it by the Bible. Walking in the love of God means that we must test what we hear in order to make sure that it is right because, as John said, “many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Just because someone is likable, is dynamic, has a good spirit, or has a good attitude, does not mean that he is a servant of God. This passage is teaching all of us not to believe everything we hear. We need to possess the attitude of the Bereans, who are mentioned in Acts 17:11. Paul comes to the church in the area of Berea, and says, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” That is what John is teaching, and is what Jesus and Paul also taught. When we hear the word gladly, we then must check it by the Bible to see if it is true. If it is true to the Word of God, then we must believe it because God said it, not because men said it. But we must not be so gullible that we believe everything. This is why multitudes of people will be lost. Some, for example, are being told that in order to be saved, all they have to do is “call on the name of Jesus.” Just “come forward, say the sinner’s prayer, bow at the altar, and you will be all right with God.” But they never check the Bible to see if that is correct. The sinner’s prayer is not found in the Bible. We are never taught to “say the sinner’s prayer” in order to be saved. We are never told that belief alone will save us. In fact, we are told the exact opposite in James 2:24, where we learn that “faith alone” will never save anyone. All John is trying to encourage us to do is not to believe everything we hear, but to check what we hear by the Bible in order to make sure it is right.

“Walking in love” also means that we not only test the spirits, but that we also realize that the power is in God and His Word. In 1 John 4:4 we find a powerful passage about where we should look for power today: “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Who is in the world? John 8 teaches us that the devil is the prince of the power of the air of this world. He is the one who rules evil people. Thus, He who is in us [God] is where the power is. God already has defeated the devil, as Hebrews 2:14 teaches us. God is more powerful than the devil (Rev. 20:19-20). He has cast the devil into the bottomless pit. God always has had power over the devil. Thus, walking in love means that we must realize that our power is not in us, but is in God, Who is the greatest of all. In Philippians 4:13 Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Hebrews 13:5-6 says,

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”

Thus, we must trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and lean not on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

Just as the message of 1 John 1:2 (that we must “walk in light”) means that we must love our brethren, so the message of 1 John 4:9ff. means that we must walk in love. In this section, John discusses how “walking in the love of God” means that we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ. In verse 21 John says, “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” We cannot say, “I love God, but I wish that fellow over there didn’t come to church here,” or “I love God, but I really despise that individual who is part of this congregation.” Walking in love means that we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hebrews 13:1 says, “Let brotherly love continue.” The second commandment is, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk. 12:31). Jesus taught His disciples a “new commandment”—that they “love one another as I have loved you.”

How much did Jesus love them? How, in the context of John 13, did He **show** them His love? Jesus knelt down, humbled Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. The Creator bowed down and washed His disciples' dirty feet?! That is the example from which John 13:34-35 comes. To love God, we also must love one another.

God's commandments, though, ought not to be a burden to us. It is true that there are some things in Scripture that challenge us, and that are difficult for some of us to do. But the commands of God such as walking in the light or walking in love must not be viewed as burdens. In 1 John 5:3 we are told, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." Rather than being a burden, God's commands should be viewed as a joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). Here is why we ought to view them as a joy. If we are willing to take the Bible and do what it says, then we can have the best life imaginable. God's commands are not burdensome. We should not think, "Oh, we've got to get up and go do this today" or "Oh, I have to watch my tongue today, and that is such a burden." These things ought not to be burdens because the commands of God give us the best life possible. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Why is it a joy to keep the commands of God? It is because we know that, by keeping those commands, we have "the abundant life." We have the best life that anybody anywhere could ever have. In 2 Peter 1:3 we are told that God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us." We know that we can be godly people by keeping the commands of God. We also know that in keeping the commands of God, all spiritual blessings can be ours in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). If we have the best life, if we can be godly people, and if we can have all spiritual blessings, why would anyone view the commands of God as burdens when, actually, the commands of God **relieve** our burdens? In Psalm 38:4 we are told, "My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." How do we get rid of that burden? We do that by obedience to the Gospel. If obedience to the Gospel can relieve my greatest burden—the burden of sin—then surely we ought not to think of God's commands as burdensome, but instead as a joy.

When we have that mindset, it will be our faith that will give us the victory. In 1 John 5:4 we are told, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. We have faith in the commands of God, faith in walking in the light, and faith in walking in love. These are what help us have victory over the world. The world, and all that is in it, John said, will pass away (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Worldly people and ungodly people will burn in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8). Thus, to overcome that, we must have our faith. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith is not just a leap into the dark; rather, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is essential. In Hebrews 11:6 the writer said, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." We must have faith to please God. It is essential. But how we do get that faith? We get it by reading and studying the Word of God, by studying the character of God, by noting His promises, by noting that He never lies, and by noting that His promises are always sure. We can put stock in those things. Victory is in faith in God and in His Word.

A question that Jesus asked was, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on Earth?" (Lk. 18:8). When the Lord returns, will he find us faithful? Will our faith give us victory? May we have the boldness to do that. Eternal life can be found only by putting our trust in Jesus Christ. In 1 John 5:11-12 we are told that eternal life is found in Jesus. He is the only way that men and women can be saved. In Acts 4:12 the apostle Peter said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." If men and women are going to be saved, it will be only through faith

in Jesus. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." In Hebrews 7:25 we are told that Jesus "will save to the uttermost" [that is completely] those who come to God through Him. Hebrews 9:22 says that without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Thank God that Jesus, after He had offered one sin for sacrifice forever, sat down at the right hand of God. Jesus Christ makes eternal life possible.

The good news in the Book of First John is that, yes, we must walk in light, and yes we must walk in love. And when we combine these two things and carry them out, then we can **know** that we have eternal life. In 1 John 5:13 we find one of the great thematic statements found in the Book of First John. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." The good news is that if we realize God is the light, if we walk in the light, if we obey His commands, if we love one another, if we love God, if we walk in love, if we realize that God is love, if we realize what He has done for us, and if we live pure lives, then we can know that we have eternal life. Christianity is not a "best guess." It is not a "possibility." If we live the Christian life according to the Bible, and if we will do what the Scriptures say for us to do, then we can **know** that we **are** going to Heaven. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Ephesians 5:17 says, "Do not be ignorant, but understand the will of the Lord." If we "study to show ourselves approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15), and if we do the commands of God (Phil. 4:9), then we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are right with God and that we are Heaven bound.

Let me ask you today: Are **you** walking in the light? Have you submitted your will to the light of the world—Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:12)? Have you obeyed His commands? Are you walking in the light? Have you realized the great love that God has for you? And has that love motivated you to obey God's commands to love other people and to live a pure life? Is your faith going to be your victory? We all must be obedient to the Gospel so that we can be saved. You can know that you are right with God. Do you know that today? If not, why not obey the Gospel? Believe that Jesus is God's Son. Repent of those things that you know are not right in your life. Confess the beautiful name of Jesus before men. And then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. In Acts 2:37 when the Jews cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," the answer was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (vs. 38). Are you walking in light and walking in love? If, as a child of God, your life has perhaps not been lived as it should, another opportunity is now being afforded you to make it right. May God help each of us to have the conviction of faith and heart to walk in the light and walk in love so that one day we may hear God say to us, "Enter in, good and faithful servant."

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1, 2, & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 3-5)

1. According to 1 John 3:1, what amazing blessing is afforded Christians?
2. What amazing fact is found in Romans 5:6-8?
3. According to Paul's statements in 2 Corinthians 5:21, what did God do for humankind?
4. According to Paul's statements in Galatians 4:4-5, what did God do for us?
5. According to John 3:16, what did God do for us?
6. What commandment is found in 1 Peter 1:16?
7. What does Hebrews 12:14 teach us?
8. According to 1 John 3:4, what is sin?
9. According to 1 John 5:17, what is sin?
10. According to James 4:17, what is sin?
11. What did John mean when he said in 1 John 3:9, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God"?
12. What important information is found in Galatians 5:4?
13. What admonishment for Christians is found in 1 Corinthians 10:12?
14. According to 1 John 3:18, how are Christians **not** to love?
15. According to 1 John 3:18, how **are** Christians to love?
16. What did Jesus say in John 14:15?
17. According to 1 John 3:24, if we keep God's commandments, what are we doing?
18. What did Jesus teach in Matthew 7:21?
19. What did John mean when he said in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God"?
20. According to 1 John 5:3, what are God's commandments **not**?
21. What does 1 John 4:21 teach?
22. According to 1 John 5:4, what is the Christian's victory?
23. What, according to 1 John 5:13, can each Christian **know**?