



# International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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## **1 John 2:1-6 Commentary** **New Revised Standard Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

**(1 John 2:1) 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;**

An elderly Apostle John wrote to those he considered his spiritual children; much as Jesus addressed His disciples as children when He saw them on the Sea of Tiberias after He rose from the dead, and asked, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" (John 21:5). Children are teachable and eager to learn, as were Jesus' disciples. John wrote to those he considered teachable and eager to learn. For their own good, children also need to learn to obey. For example, children need to learn to stop when a parent or teacher yells "Stop," rather than touch a hot stove or run into a busy street. Whereas no perfect human parent or teacher exists, our perfect and loving God gave all His commands for our good, for the good of His children, for the good of everyone God created. God designed us, and the Bible teaches us how to live the best ways according to the way God designed us. After Jesus saw Peter, His spiritual child, and after He fed him breakfast on the beach, Jesus had to teach Peter more about what it meant to obey Him, follow Him, and feed His sheep. The Apostle John wrote to do the same for his

spiritual children and for all who would read his letters. As believers in Jesus, we need to see ourselves being taught as God's spiritual children.

In 1 John 1, John described what Jesus requires of His followers for them to be forgiven and cleansed from all sin and unrighteousness, and he wrote about how Jesus forgives and cleanses His followers from all sin and unrighteousness. In John 2, John wrote so his readers would not think that committing sins no longer mattered or that believers could not be forgiven and cleansed if they sinned again. In 1 John 1:7, John promised that *if we walk in the light* as Jesus Christ is in the light, then *“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.”* Therefore, to be cleansed from all sin, we must walk in the light as Jesus did; that is, imitate Jesus Christ who lived without sin and who always obeyed His Father. Though we cannot imitate Jesus perfectly or obey God perfectly, we can walk in the light as He did. We cannot act, live, and speak perfectly in this world, but we can be cleansed from all sin because Jesus shed His blood and died for us. What happens if while we are walking in the light we trip into the dark and sin again, or what happens if while we are walking in the light we step into the mud and sin again? John wanted to help the followers of Jesus avoid sin by learning how to obey Jesus Christ and walk with Him in this world. In 1 John 1:9, John promised that if *“we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Without Jesus' death in our behalf, we could never be forgiven and cleansed; otherwise, Jesus would never have needed to die in our behalf. If we truly have been cleansed, we will not want to walk in the mud again, and we will want our feet cleansed as soon as possible if we step in it; so, if we sin again, we will turn from our sin (take our feet out of the mud) and confess our sin to Jesus. If we have truly been forgiven and cleansed, we will not want to do anything again that will cost us the joy that God gave us when He assured us of His forgiveness and cleansing. If we sin again, we will want our joy and clean conscience restored as soon as possible, so we will repent of our sin and go to Jesus immediately. We will want to learn how to avoid committing sin and how to behave better as children of God—Bible study helps us do that. After we have been forgiven and cleansed, we are not yet made perfect, but as true followers of Jesus Christ we have been born again. So, if we will still sin again, what hope do we have?

In 1 John 2, John gave believers, His little children, hope. In John 2:1, John gave us this precious promise, writing, “*If anyone does sin; we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*” Jesus was, is, and will always remain righteous, and along with the Holy Spirit who indwells us, Jesus will be our righteous Comforter, Helper, and Advocate (Defense Attorney). Jesus the righteous will help us live righteous day-by-day, and He will cleanse and forgive us when we confess our sins. The Father will not condemn us, and Jesus will teach us how to obey God better and more consistently. Rather than condemn us, the Father and the Son will help us, for we are their little children if we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

**(1 John 2:2) and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

Our sins cost Jesus Christ His life so we would not need to die eternally. To remain holy, loving, just, and merciful, to uphold His law and maintain His integrity, truthfulness, and righteousness, and to deter sinners from continuing to sin, God could have chosen to punish sinners immediately and eternally when they became lawless and rebelled against Him. A government or government leader that will not enforce a nation’s good laws, will lose the respect of its citizens or subjects, and this loss of respect and the loss of the fear of punishment guarantees an increase in lawlessness and violence in that government. Unless God had a better alternative, if God did not punish sinners and enforce His laws, He would lose the respect of those He created and guarantee an increase of lawlessness and violence in His kingdom. But God had a better way. God the Father and God the Son chose to send Jesus, the Son of God, into the world to sacrifice His life for us and for our sins, so we would not need to be punished eternally, so we could walk in newness of life, and so God could remain just while showing mercy and forgiveness to us—to repentant sinners who believed in Jesus and chose to walk in the light as He walks in the light. As people learn about Jesus, who is the atoning sacrifice for them, some will repent of their sins, trust in Jesus, and receive the gift of eternal life. God upholds His just and righteous rule when because of Jesus’ sacrificial death in their behalf God saves repentant sinners. Because God loves us and sent His Son to die for us, God will remain just and merciful

when we entrust our lives to His Son for cleansing and forgiveness. Justice and mercy are two sides of the coin of love. God will justly condemn those who choose to live in the darkness, who choose to persist in lawlessness, who would prefer to remain rebels against God rather than receive the cleansing, the forgiveness, and the eternal life that God has promised to those who by grace place their faith in Jesus Christ. God excludes no one from His offer of forgiveness and cleansing through faith in Jesus Christ, for Jesus is the atoning sacrifice “for the sins of the whole world.” Through the gift of Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, God has gained more love, respect, devotion, praise, glory, and a return to obedience by repentant sinners than if He had decided to eternally condemn all sinners for their sins. In thinking of Jesus as our atoning sacrifice, many truths may remain hidden from us, but God has revealed enough truth in the Bible that with the help of the Holy Spirit we can believe in and receive Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior, and Giver of Eternal Life. Jesus Christ is our Advocate and Atoning Sacrifice, and He will help us live in obedient love, with the peace and happiness that obeying God offers to every repentant sinner. Why would we ever want to sin against such a perfect loving God, who gave His Son for us, while we were still sinners, to save us from eternal punishment and help us walk in newness of life? We would not. In this way, God’s gift of Jesus Christ to the world deters sin and saves sinners in ways beyond our comprehension. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we will not become perfect in this world, but with His loving help we will sin less as we walk in the light as He is in the light.

**(1 John 2:3) Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.**

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we come to know Jesus Christ personally. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we want to draw closer to Jesus, and the more we come to know Jesus the more we want to spend time with Jesus. We see ourselves as He sees us, as His friends and as His little children. We see God as our Heavenly Father, and we know Him as a loving Father instead of as an angry Judge looking for reasons to condemn us. We see the Son of God as our Brother, because our Father has adopted us into His Family. In Galatians 4:4-6, Paul wrote, “But when the fullness of time

had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” As our older Brother, Jesus will help us live with happiness as children of God. If we obey our heavenly Father and the commandments of Jesus by walking in the light as He is in the light, then we have the assurance that we know the Father and the Son. God has won our love, and we want to love and honor God by obeying God.

**(1 John 2:4) Whoever says, “I have come to know him,” but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist;**

John also wrote to help true Christians live as true Christians. John gave his readers a means of determining if they truly knew and loved God. He also wanted Christians to have the ability to distinguish true Christians from false Christians; then, as God’s children they would not be easily misled. From John we learn that if someone says they are a Christian or know God, but we see that they obviously do not obey God’s commandments as clearly revealed in the Bible, then we know that person is a liar. Since Jesus said He was the Truth, we also see that in such a person the Truth does not exist. May we live in such a way that this can never be honestly said of us.

**(1 John 2:5) but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him:**

The love of God reaches perfection in the lives of those who accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who accept His loving presence into their lives, and who obey His teachings. Within them, Jesus Christ becomes their Advocate, their Counselor, their Helper, their Friend, and their Brother. Because they know Jesus as He truly is and wants to be within them, they obey His word (His teachings). If we sincerely want to love Jesus more and more, and if we want to obey Jesus more faithfully, perfectly, and reliably, then we may be sure that we are in Him. We can never be sure that we are in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior if we are walking in darkness instead of in the light of Christ, or if we are practicing sin in lawless violation of His

commandments. True Christians will never live, act, and speak perfectly in this life. Rather, we are God's children growing into spiritual and moral maturity. So, we will sin "sometimes," but we will not use this knowledge as an excuse for committing any sins or practicing sin. If we do sin, we will feel deeply grieved at offending and disappointing the One who gave His life for us; then, we will confess our sin, and ask our Advocate to help us avoid sin in the future. Acting in these ways if we sin indicates that God's perfect love in Jesus Christ is working in our lives

**(1 John 2:6) whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.**

As true followers of Jesus Christ, we need to be able to say to God and to ourselves, "I abide (remain) in Him, so help me God to do this." Whether we say so or not, we should also be able to say without hypocrisy, "I abide (remain) in Jesus, and His Spirit helps me do so." If we walk just as Jesus walked, those who know Jesus will see us and be able to say they see us abiding (remaining) in Him. In his gospel, John showed how Jesus walked and how His true disciples tried to imitate Him morally and spiritually by loving God, one another, and others as Jesus loved and served everyone.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why do you think John called his readers "My little children"?
2. What reason did John give for writing them?
3. If anyone sins, what good news did John give his readers?
4. What did John say was necessary for Jesus to be "the atoning sacrifice"?
5. How can we be sure that we know Jesus?

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