

The World

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[0 : 00] If you're using the Bibles in the pews, page 989 is where the reading tonight begins from 1 John chapter 2. And let me again pray as we ask God to teach us.

Heavenly Father, you have caused all of Holy Scripture to be written, breathed out by you, so that we may be trained in righteousness, corrected and rebuked, taught, so that we may be wise for salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray tonight that as we sit under your word, that the very purpose for which you wrote it will indeed have impact in our lives, that we may be corrected and rebuked, we may be taught and trained in righteousness, and be wise for salvation in your Son. Amen.

There's this wonderful quote that you may have heard in recent times. Reports that say something hasn't happened are always interesting to me because, as we know, there are known knowns.

There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know.

[1 : 20] But there are also unknown unknowns. The ones we don't know that we don't know. Those words, in case you're not aware, were said by the great Donald Rumsfeld with regard to the war in Iraq.

Gives you confidence, doesn't it? In this letter as a whole, in this passage and specifically tonight, John the Apostle is assuring us of what is, we might say in Rumsfeld type language, a known known.

Something that we know that we know. Namely, our relationship with God. Knowing God. That is, to use Rumsfeld type of English, knowing God ought to be, for Christians, a known known.

I hope that's clear. It's a striking emphasis that John makes here, in this passage, about knowing God as, in a sense, something that is a known known.

When you think about it, around our world, there is so much mystique or mystery associated with God or a relationship with God.

[2 : 42] And so even from medieval times, but very popular in some Christian spiritual type circles today, in Anglican circles as well, included in that, that God is unknowable or that he's unfathomable, simply a mystery beyond our comprehension.

Not that John or the Bible is saying that everything about God we can actually fully understand and know, that God is somehow reduced within the confines of our limited brains, not at all.

But so often the language of God being unknowable and mystery, it comes out in ways as though we can know almost nothing about God, that God is an unknown known, to use Rumsfeld type of language.

On the other hand, there are many who would say, yes, I know God. I've got God in my heart, for example. Or that I know God through hugging trees or walking on beaches or meditation or some sort of Eastern mystic experience, for example.

Or I know God through the power of positive thinking. But as I think positive thoughts, I can feel the sensation of God sweeping through my veins, sort of language.

[4 : 00] Yes, I know God. And that's where knowing God is equated with something little more than just some form of spiritual type of experience.

Well, there's errors on both sides. That God is unknowable beyond their just mystery. Or that God is, yes, simply known as though he's sort of flowing like a force or a warmth within my body.

John here is assuring his readers that they know God. Therefore, that God can be known. But for these particular readers, that they know God.

There is a very clear current through this letter of assurance that those to whom the letter is written know God and ought to know that they know God.

That it's a known known. But the test is not some warm feeling. It's not how many trees they've hugged. It's not some getting back to nature or some mystic karma experience.

[5 : 06] It's not being peaceful and quiet in the stillness of the Sea of Galilee like that Victorian hymn says. Or in the quiet of some form of traditional service or meditation.

There is a very objective test that John parades before us here indeed in the verses preceding as well. That you can know that you know God.

A known known. Objectively. And it's a moral test. Very striking. It's nothing to do with sincerity. It's nothing to do with personal conviction. It's nothing to do with experience. It's a moral test. See verse 3, for example, of John 2.

By this we may be sure that we know him. That is, knowing God is a known known. If we obey his commandments. That's the moral test.

[6 : 06] An objective moral test for knowing that you know God. And that's in fact been part of the argument in the verses preceding as well.

After the introductory paragraph at the beginning of 1 John 1. John goes on to declare in verse 5 that God is light. But far from shying away from a perfect light in whom there is no darkness at all. As though people and God can have nothing in common. He goes on by raising the claims of some false teachers in the midst of the readership. And then refutes them with counter claims in effect. And their first claim in verse 6 was if we say we have fellowship with him while we're walking in darkness. We lie and do not do what is true. That is, there were people who claimed to have fellowship with God.

Or in the language of verse 3 of chapter 2, to know God. And yet they walk in darkness. Their ethics or morality doesn't match up. They fail the moral test.

[7 : 07] They claim some form of fellowship with God. Presumably based on some form of spiritual experience or occasion. But they lack the moral test. And of course that's so common today.

Spirituality is quite a buzz. Spirituality in bookshops and so on. But much, much more seldom. Spirituality with morality.

Which is the test of the Bible. And John's not saying something new here. Let's don't think that this is sort of so idiosyncratically joanine. As though it's outside the mainstream of the scriptures.

Think of the prophet Jeremiah as he anticipated the new covenant in Jeremiah 31. That you may know God in your heart. And it comes out of the law being written on your heart.

That is a knowledge of God that is morally grounded. Or to take another passage from the prophet Hosea. Very strikingly.

[8 : 14] The language of knowing God is rare in fact in the Old Testament. Only occurs a few times. But in Hosea chapter 4.

Or the accusation is leveled against Israel. There is no knowledge of God in the land. And the very next verse. In a sense to back up that claim.

Swearing. Lying. Murder. Stealing. Adultery. Breakout. Bloodshed. Follows bloodshed. That is infringement of half of the basic ten commandments. From the time of Moses.

That is all through the Bible. Knowing God has an essential moral character to it. There is no knowledge of God when you walk in darkness.

There is no fellowship with God when you walk in darkness. It is a clear objective test. John is writing it for the sake of his readers. To clarify their thinking for them.

[9 : 11] Also of course to assure them. As we will see more clearly later in tonight's passage. So here in chapter 2 verse 3. The language is. If we obey his commandments.

Not that obedience to the commandments is the condition. To get into a relationship with God. To know him. That is. John is not advocating here. What theologians would call a salvation by works. That is. You obey his commandments. And if you're obedient enough. Then you can have a relationship with God. He'll accept you because of your obedience. That's not what John is on about. And we run the risk a little bit tonight.

Of jumping in at verse 3. And for the bulk of you not here on Sunday night. Seeing the end of chapter 1. And the first two verses of chapter 2. It's clear that John is not advocating.

A sort of perfectionism. That we must be thoroughly obedient. In order to win God's favor. Because he makes clear. Three times. In chapter 1 verse 5 to 2.

[10 : 09] 2. As he refutes three times different counter. Different claims of the false teachers. That the relationship with God is through. The end of verse 7. The blood of Jesus his son cleanses us

from all sin.

The end of verse 9. God who's faithful and just will forgive us our sins. And cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The end of chapter 2 verse 1. We have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ. The righteous who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. That is. John is grounding a relationship with God. In grace.

In the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And in his work as an ascended Lord Jesus Christ. At the father's right hand. Based on that work on the cross. That's the grounds for the relationship. It's a relationship established by grace. But the test. Of that relationship for the Christian. Is obedience to the commandments of God. Not a perfectionism.

[11:08] As though I've slipped up today. By breaking one of the commandments. Therefore I'm out of a relationship. Not at all. Because the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin. John uses very black and white language.

Which over the centuries. Have perhaps sometimes led. People who've not taken it very carefully. To overstate a case. Here or there. There's a fine balance.

Through the scriptures in John as well. So that the person who's walking in light. Isn't perfect. The blood of Jesus is still cleansing them from their sins. And so on. But their walking in the light is. If you like their. Their intention. To obey God's commandments. Their will and desire to do that. Their acknowledgement that when they fail. They turn again for the cleansing blood of Jesus. And his advocacy. At the father's right hand. So we need to keep these things in balance. Otherwise we can end up in all sorts of theological quagmires and cul-de-sacs.

[12:07] There are false teachers it seems. That John is trying to refute. And maybe more carefully. Trying to encourage his readers. Not to follow after them.

And go astray at the hands of their teaching. Some would say that possibly these false teachers. Late in the first century AD. Are a little bit like what are called in the second century.

The Gnostics. That is having a view about the knowledge of God. God who is mystery. A denial of the real incarnation. And maybe that's why John uses the language in verse 3.

Of knowing God here. To show where real knowledge of God. Is grounded and found. John's response. To this.

In verse 4. With a. Again perhaps a quote of one of their. Sayings or slogans. Whoever says. I have come to know him. But does not obey his commandments.

[13:08] Is a liar. And in such a person the truth. Does not exist. John typically in this letter. Brings up an assertion. Often. A claim made by the false teachers.

Or those who are following them. And then. Brings it with a counter claim. Or. Or perhaps it's antithesis. Sort of. In where it might be stated positively. He then. Will state it negatively.

To draw out some of the implications of that. So. He's just said. We can be sure. If we obey his commandments. But if somebody claims to know God. But doesn't obey his commandments.

Then what? And John doesn't pull any punches. They're lying. That's the language he's also used. Three times already. In the. Three previous claims.

That he's quoted and refuted. From one verse six onwards. So at the end of. Verse six of chapter one. We lie. And do not do what is true.

[14:02] The end of verse eight. We deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us. And then more seriously. Again. In verse 10. We make God out to be a liar. And his word is not in us. Here at the end of verse four.

Whoever. Claims to know him. But doesn't obey. They're lying. It's a very strong statement. When you think about it. But how often in our own society.

There are people in that category. And. And we. We sort of dissolve. Religious claims. Into. Into statements of opinion. As though each opinion is equally valid.

Well yes. I know God. You know. I've had this spiritual experience. And. You know. In my own quiet of my heart. Well I know God. He's with me. He's. He's there helping me every day. Are you walking in the light?

Are you obeying the commandments? If not. You're lying. You don't know God. You're deceiving yourself. Not just. Oh yes.

[15:02] Your opinion's fine. But I know God this way. Not at all. The moral test is a very important test. For ourselves. And maybe pastorally. To use. With others too.

John. Comes back to this same theme. In verse five. Now. Chapter two. Restating it in a different way. Whoever obeys. God's word. Truly.

Truly. In this person. The love of God. Has reached. Perfection. Often. When John. Says something. And then. Perhaps says it's converse. And then goes back to the first way of saying it. He's always. Expanding it slightly differently. Adding a new. Word or idea. As he does here. In verse five. In a sense. He's saying what he's already said in verse three. And then negatively. He'd said it in verse four. Now. He's saying it again. But expanding the idea just a little bit. And here now. The obedience to the commandments. Leads into a discussion of the love of God.

[16:00] Which has reached perfection. Simply. I think the connection here would be. Worth saying. Is that obedience to God's commandments. Is not a sort of.

Slavish. Reluctant. Obedience. As though rules and regulations. Are what it's all about. See at the heart of Christian ethics and morality.

Is love. It's loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It's loving our neighbor as ourself. And all the rules. The regulations.

The laws. In old and new testament. In a sense. Are grounded in love. So John. Uses different sorts of language. To describe the same things. He talked about.

Back in chapter 1 verse 6. Walking in darkness. Now he's talking about. Obeying commandments. And now in verse 5 of chapter 2. The love of God.

[16:54] That is the love of a Christian for God. Is probably what the love of God in this verse. Is about. He's saying you see. That obedience to God's commandments. Is relational.

It's an expression of love. In effect of course. He's saying in summary. What Jesus said so often. Such as in John 15. If you love me. You'll keep my commandments.

And so the obedience to God's commandments. Is our expression of love. Which again reminds us. That the grounds of the relationship. Is not obedience. But grace. And in response to that grace. In response to relationship. Then obedience is to flow. That is obedience. That is the fruit. If you like. Of a heart that loves God. And his people.

Now the end of verse 5. Is tricky to understand. Truly in this person. The love of God. Has reached perfection. We might well say.

[17:50] That John's using. Ideal language here. That somebody. Who is perfectly obedient. Will. Therefore evidently show. A perfect love for God. That's where that love of God.

Has reached perfection. Maybe he's claiming something like. A promise. That as you. Come to perfect obedience. Then. Love has perfected itself in you.

Maybe. The way. To be careful here. The word perfect. Has got the sense of. Complete or fulfill. In ancient Greek. There's debate about.

Which sort of side. You might take. And. Perhaps the best way. Of understanding this. Because John. Clearly in the context. Of this letter. Is never advocating. That a Christian on earth.

Is in any way. Sinlessly perfect. Though they still walk. In the light. Is that. Our love for God. Completes its work. Becomes perfect.

[18:48] When we obey. God's commands. Is perhaps. The sense. Of what's being said here. So verse 5. Whoever obeys. God's word.

Or commandments. Word is a broader term. Because we recognize. That not everything. Strictly. Is a commandment. In the scriptures. But the whole of God's word. We actually obey. The one who. Obeys. God's word. Truly in that person. This person. The love. Their love. For God. Completes its work. In that obedience.

So Jesus. Is commending. Obedience. For his readers. As a test. That they can objectively. See in their own life. To assure them.

Of their relationship. With God. He's commending them. To a love. That is. Not. Vacuous. Not sentimental. Or soppy. But a love.

[19:43] That is full of content. Because it is. Obedient. To the commands. Clearly given. In scripture. That is love. See so often. In our society.

In general terms. As well as in spiritual terms. People. Redefine love. As though it is simply. A feeling. Or an emotion. Some of our modern songs. Are little more.

Than that sort of thing. As someone I know. Calls them. You know. Jesus is my boyfriend. Type songs. But real Christian love. For God. Is full of content.

And obedience. That is. It is defined by God. Not us. We are not free. To redefine. What it means. To love God. God tells us. What it means. To love God.

That means. That we won't murder. That we won't commit. Idolatry. Or adultery. For example. As the commandments. Through the scriptures. Make so clear. Now the aim of this.

[20 : 37] Is not to. Pull out the carpet. Under John's readers feet. And make them feel insecure. It is actually. To assure them. John uses such. Strikingly high standards.

In his language. And yet at the same time. Is doing that. For the very sake. Of assuring his readers. Of their relationship. With God. So the very end of verse 5.

And into verse 6. By this we may be sure. That we. Not now. Know him. But are in him. He's using an even more. Intimate term. But still describing.

In effect. Knowing God. In relationship with God. So by this. We may be sure. That we're in him. Whoever says. I abide in him. Ought to walk. Just as he walked.

The language has taken. A step up. In intensity. Of intimacy. So that we're in. God. Or in Christ. We're abiding in him. Which has got a permanent. Sense about it. And such a person.

[21 : 31] Ought to walk. Just as. He walked. Which. Probably is referring. To Jesus. Own earthly example. As a person. Of perfection. Who is a model.

For whom. To whom we. Aspire. To be like. Again. It's relational. Language. He's saying. The same idea. In slightly different. Slightly more intense way.

But now. Showing that. Obedience. Which is. In a sense. Coming from love. Has got a. A fundamental. Character. Of. Imitation. About it.

That is. Our obedience. To the commandments. Our love. For God. Is modeled. And imitating. The example. Of Jesus. For the father. Is a sense. Of the end. Of verse six.

So then. We're dealing. With an objective. Test. That is. Moral. To assure. The readers. That they know God. They're in a relationship. With him. I guess. For those. Who have no evidence. Of obedience.

[22 : 28] It will do the opposite. It will make them aware. Become aware. That they're not in. A relationship. With God. But are in darkness. But the. Thrust of John's letter. Is more. To assure. Christians.

That they are. In that relationship. And as I've said. This. Claim of obedience. Love. Imitation of Christ. Morality. Is not the precondition.

For a relationship. But is rather. The response. To. A relationship. Started. By grace. Through Christ. John moves on.

Then. In verse seven. To say. Beloved. A term of. Some endearment. And affection. Just like the chapter two. Begins. My little children. He's. Got a real pastor's love.

For the people. To whom he writes. In this letter. I'm writing you. No. New. Commandment. And what John is saying there. Is that what I'm saying to you.

[23 : 24] Is authentic. I'm not making it up. I'm not adding it. It's not my idea. It's not my creation. It's not new. Because it comes from Jesus. As he goes on in verse seven. To say.

But an old commandment. That you have had from the beginning. That is from the beginning of your Christian life. So what John is saying. Is. Is a claim of authenticity. Just like the first paragraph of chapter one.

That famous paragraph of. You know. We've seen and touched him. You know. Where I'm an authentic apostle. Is in effect what he's saying. And Jesus is authentic and real. The one whom we follow. He's not made up. Or myth.

So John is again. Staking a claim of. Authenticity. And authority. In these words. Verse seven. He's going back to Jesus. In that sense.

I guess. He's probably. Contrasting himself. To the false teachers. Who perhaps are adding. New things. So often. In the New Testament. You see that. The new teachers come along. And they say.

[24 : 18] Yes. This is all very well. But you've got to move on. To the next level. You see that. Especially in 2 Timothy. I think. But here. I think perhaps. The same sort of thing. That somehow. The beginnings with Jesus.

Might be the first step. The preliminary kindergarten step. But now we're moving on. With advanced teaching. John says. No. I'm not doing that. What I'm telling you.

Comes from the beginning. From Jesus. There's nothing new to add. Is in a sense. The authority. And authenticity. That he's claiming. And in saying that.

Of course. The commandment. That he's referring to. Is clearly. The commandment. To love. That comes out. Of what we've already seen. In the equation. Of obedience. And love.

In verse 5. It comes out. In the verses. That follow. He's not making it explicit. But of course. He's got in mind. Things like. Jesus saying. In John 13. The night before he died.

[25 : 11] A new commandment. I give to you. That you love one another. John now. A generation. Or more. Bit later. Is saying. It's not a new commandment. In one sense. Because it comes from Jesus. Back there.

However many years ago. But it's. And it's from Jesus. Love is the primary commandment. Is in effect. What's being said here. In verse 7. You've had that.

From the beginning. Of your Christian life. The old commandment. Is the word you've heard. This is not new. He's saying. I've taught you this already. You know it. From what Jesus. Has been recorded. As saying as well.

Yet. He says in verse 8. I am writing you. A new commandment. Not a. Another new commandment. He's not saying. The commandment to love is old.

But here's a new one. To go with it. No. That's not what he's saying. I am writing you. A new commandment. That is. True. In him. And in you. Because the darkness.

[26 : 05] Is passing away. And the true light. Is already shining. What I think. The emphasis here. On the new commandment. Is. Not only alluding. To the language of Jesus.

Saying a new commandment. I give to you. But it's a new commandment. That is true. Or fulfilled. Might be a better way. Of translating that word. In verse 8. In Jesus.

That is. It's new. In the sense. That it belongs. To the new era. Inaugurated. By Jesus. In his incarnation. On earth. And it's new. In the sense.

That Jesus. Perfectly. Fulfilled. That commandment. To love. God. And other people. First time ever. Perfectly fulfilled. By human being.

On earth. It belongs. To the era. Of light. Not to the era. Of darkness. That is passing away. So as verse 8. Goes on to say. Because the darkness.

[26 : 58] Is passing away. And the true light. Is already shining. That is. It's new. In that it belongs. To the new era. That Jesus came about. To bring. The kingdom of light. Love.

Is the primary commandment. Of that new era. It's true. In Jesus. Because he. Perfectly fulfilled it. Uniquely. And firstly. Perfectly fulfilled it.

And demonstrated that. And of course. In John's gospel. In particular. Written by the same John. I'm convinced. We find Jesus. Speaking of himself. As for example. The good shepherd. Who lays down his life.

For the sheep. As a demonstration. Of perfect love. Etc. But strikingly. In the middle of verse 8. I'm writing you. A new commandment. That is true. In Jesus. In you.

My goodness. What a striking thing to say. About a Christian congregation. Now there are many fine Christian congregations around. Holy Trinity.

[27 : 54] Doncaster. Not least. In my estimation. But is it. Can we really say. Even about the best of Christian congregations. That the commandment.

To love one another. As I have loved you. Is true. In them. What a remarkable claim. What an assuring claim. To make.

John again. You see. Is not. Saying. That they're perfect lovers. Of each other. In Christian fellowship. But that love. Is a mark of them. As a church. And as individual Christians.

It's an amazingly. Assuring thing. To say. We're not certain. Of all the things. That the false teachers. Were saying. But no doubt. Part of it. Was to undermine. Their confidence.

In the gospel. They'd heard from John. So that in their being. Undermined. From that gospel. They'll turn to something else. And who knows.

[28 : 51] If there were. Claims about. The nature of love. In all of that. John is saying. You are already. You are already. In a sense. Fulfilling that claim. To love one another. Not perfectly.

I'm sure. He's not saying that. He never ever says. That any Christian. Is perfect on earth. It's a striking thing. To say. And if we apply. To our own lives.

And to our own congregations. It may be. That we're assured. In our faith. That would be great. And I hope. In a sense. Whatever congregation. We come from. There are elements.

Of seeing. How that. That love of God. For us. Is flowing out of us. In love of him. And love of others. But yet.

Sadly. So often. Our church lives. Fall woefully short. Of that one. Primary commandment. So maybe. In God's word here.

[29 : 45] There is an assurance. For us. Maybe a rebuke too. Because in my observation. There are many. Christian congregations. Where love seems.

Almost singularly lacking. And periodically. People. You hear people say. How much love. They receive. Outside the church. Rather than from within.

As well. He moves on. In verse nine. Perhaps to. Again. Quote the. False teachers. Or their adherence. Whoever says.

I am in the light. While hating. A brother or sister. Is still in the darkness. Hate. Hate is a strong word.

Probably. Doesn't quite carry. The strength here. That we might. Import into that word. That is. There are plenty of people. For whom we feel. Relative. Neutrality about.

[30 : 40] I guess. The garbage collector. For example. I doubt that. Many of us. Hate. Our garbage collector. To be honest. I've never personally.

Spoken with him. But that is. In our life. There are lots of people. We come in contact with. Within Christian fellowship. As well. For whom. In one sense. Perhaps. We're a bit neutral. In our feelings. Towards them. That is.

Maybe we just don't know. Them well enough. But in a sense. What John is saying here. Is not. In a sense. Overt hatred. But is a lack of. Willingness to love. If you don't love. Then you are actually.

Hating. The context for John. Is within Christian fellowship. So maybe. Our secular garbage collectors. Are outside the context. Of what he's talking about here. But you think around.

Within your church. Not so much. Thinking of people. I hate that person. I'm never going to sit next to them. Although I've heard people say that. In different churches. But are there people that. You just keep at arm's length.

[31 : 39] You keep a sort of. Benign neutrality. In your relationship with them. In John's language. You hate them. You're not loving them. You're not serving them.

You're not prepared to give up everything. For them. There may be some for whom you would. Would you do that for every brother and sister. In Christ. You see.

He's. He's refuting those who. Don't have a moral test. To their. Claim of spirituality. I am in the light. John says. But you hate your brother and sister.

And to the extent that. Any of us. Hates our brother and sister. Or at least. Does not love them. That's really the. The black and white contrast. The effect of the language really. If you don't love them.

Then. You hate them. There's no neutral ground. There may be any claims. That we might make. To walk in the light. Are empty. And lies. As well. He restates that again.

[32 : 41] Differently. In verse. 10. Whoever. Loves. A brother or sister. Lives. In the light. And in such a person. There is no cause. For stumbling. Typical of John.

He's. Said it about. Hating your brother and sister. You're not in the light. Now he puts it. Positively. If you love your brother and sister. You're in the light. And typically. He adds another dimension. To what he's saying.

He doesn't just repeat himself. But he. Develops his arguments. Sort of step. By step. In a sense. So the sort of. The counter hypothesis. I suppose. To verse. Nine.

Whoever loves. A brother or sister. Lives in the light. And in such a person. There is no cause. For stumbling. Now the idea. Of stumbling.

The Greek word. Is from where we get. The word scandal. But it doesn't necessarily. Carry a connotation. Of scandal. We have to be careful. Of sometimes. Those sorts of. Etymologies. But to stumble.

[33 : 36] Is to fall into sin. To fall into apostasy. To do the wrong thing. As though something. Will lead you. Down the wrong path.

Of behavior. What John. Is probably. Saying. Here. Is that someone. Who does love. Who does love. Their brother and sister. Who is guided. And motivated. And driven.

By their love. For their brother or sister. All their brothers and sisters. In Christ. That is. Christian fellowship. In such a person. There's no. Cause. Or. Object. Of stumbling. That is in their own life.

By being driven. And motivated. By love. For their brother. They are walking. In the light. They are aware. Of what is right. And wrong. And they are not stumbling.

Into sin. In the next verse. It goes on. To talk about being dark. In the dark. And blind. And that's where. Of course. Stumbling. Will come. Literally. So clearly.

[34 : 29] As you. Walk about. In the night. And don't put the lights on. In the house. And you bump into doors. And chairs. And all those sorts of things. As periodically. We do. But. But the sense of stumbling.

Is. Is more significant. That stumbling. Into sin. And wrongdoing. So in verse 11. Whoever hates. Another believer. Is in the darkness. Walks in the darkness.

And does not know. The way to go. Because the darkness. Has brought on blindness. And you can see. The antithesis. From verse 10. Somebody who's. Hating is. Carrying in a path of sin.

The language of earlier. In the letter. Is walking in darkness. Darkness. You. You don't see. What is right or wrong. You don't see at all. And indeed. As you continue. Down a path of darkness.

You're actually blind. You lose your sense. Of moral orientation. And so there are all sorts of causes. For stumbling. That confront you. Indeed.

[35 : 24] You don't always know. Morally. What is right or wrong. When you're in the dark. The analogy I've used. In other times. Is that. If you're heading down. A straight path.

Well that's often the. The way that the. The right path. Is defined. For example. In Proverbs. But you veer off. A little bit. It looks innocuous. At first.

But the more you veer off. The more you lose. Your sense of direction. Entirely. And head. In the end. In a completely opposite direction. But thinking. That you're going. The right direction. That's in effect. The effect of blindness here.

You might start off. In the dark. You know that it's wrong. But you're prepared. To persist. In that habit. And then gradually. All your moral faculties. Just get so darkened. And hardened.

And you become so blind. That you've lost all orientation. And sense of what is right or wrong. Completely. I remember the first day. Or the next day actually.

[36 : 17] The first full day. I was. I'd moved to England. To study. And I'd. Left the place where I was staying. To go and look into the town. And open a bank account. And look around the campus. Where I was going to be studying. And so on. And it's a nice town.

But it's got lots of roads. That are not like Melbourne. Lots of grid patterns. They sort of sweep around. In circles. And I ended up going. Completely the opposite direction. Trying to get back to where I was staying.

The first night. Absolutely disoriented. And in a sense. That's what John is saying here. If you're going to walk in the dark. You will lose all your moral orientation. You'll be blind entirely.

And you'll just stumble. And fall into more and worse sin. As you go. But then again. He comes back to this. And so.

And verse 11 then. Concludes this little section. In a sense. Whoever hates another believer. Is in the darkness. Walks in the darkness. Doesn't know the way to go.

[37 : 13] Because the darkness is brought. On blindness. Now that's very serious. Because it seems to me. Sometimes when we do hate another believer. For whatever reason.

And there are plenty of reasons. In Christian churches. Not to get on with. And not love. Our fellow Christians. Then as we persist. In that sin. Our whole life. Is vulnerable.

To become morally blind. To live in darkness. And be totally away. From the light. Of the gospel of God. That is. Don't treat it.

As a trivial. Or light matter. That if there is. A fellow Christian. Within your congregation. Or outside your congregation. Whom in John's language. You hate.

That is. We do not love. Beware. Because as you persist. In not loving. That fellow brother. Or sister. It has consequences.

[38 : 05] For the whole. Of your life. And as you persist. In darkness. You go blind. As that old joke. So often.

Using comedy sketches. Is it. Stop it. Or you'll go blind. It's serious. The persistence. In sin. And we see examples.

Of that. In the scriptures. Pharaoh. Hardening his heart. And God. Hardening his heart. As he persisted. In sin. And God. Making him harder. In Romans 1. The judgment of God. On those who are sinners. Is to throw them over. To their sin.

To harden them. In their pursuit of sin. John chapter 12. Jesus says. Much the same sort of thing. Quoting from Isaiah chapter 6. Be careful. Don't treat sin lightly.

Not then. So far in summary. John is advocating morally. Two things. The absence of sin.
[38 : 59] And the presence of love. I spell that out. Because in one sense. It's obvious. In another sense. It just reminds us. That sometimes our society.

Doesn't quite get it right. So often. I hear people say. He was a good person. He never harmed anyone. Did he ever love anyone? Or serve anyone? Or do anything good for anyone?
I usually don't ask that. Because it's usually in the context. Of preparing for a funeral. When people sell me. That sort of thing. So I. I do have a little bit of sensitivity. Occasionally. But I often wonder. One of these days. Probably if I'm in a really bad mood.
I'll actually say that to them. But that is. It's not just the absence. Of wrongdoing. It's the presence of love. And indeed. As John has said.

In the verse. Where it says. You won't stumble. Where love is present. In effect. There's. There's no room. For stumbling in sin. So it's not just the absence.

[39 : 54] Of wrong. But it's actually the presence. Of what is right. As well. That's the moral test. Now the next verses. Move on in a slight. Change of feel. They're slightly odd verses.

And they're quite tricky. In detail. You can see there. That little children. Fathers. And youths. Are addressed. Some say. That there are three different groups. In particular. We might then wonder. Well. What about the other groups. Within the church. Some say. That it's just the one group. And he uses different language. It's quite. It's a bit hard to say. Why. He might address all Christians. As fathers.

Or youths. Elsewhere in the letter. For example. Chapter 2. Verse 1. He does call all his readers. Little children. So some people suggest. That he's talking to. Two groups. Little children.

All of you. And those who are older. And those who are younger. Within you. Maybe we shouldn't get. Too fussed about it. He is speaking to anybody. And everybody. I don't think.

[40 : 49] His language. Of fathers. Or youths. Is meant to be. Gender specific. I think it's male. And female. And maybe the use. Of different. Categories. Is not. Is not particularly.

To say. Well. For this group. Focus on this. And this group. You focus on this. But is rather. To use different. Categories. To make them wake up. But also. To show. I suspect. That those who might. Consider themselves. Mature. In the faith. The fathers. For example. I'm writing this for you. Don't think you've moved. Beyond this. And you can ignore. What I'm writing. But for those of you. Who are youths. Or little children. In the faith. Don't you ignore this. And think. Oh this is too hard for me. This is for more experienced people. Not at all. So John's saying. This is for all of you. To listen to.

And heed. Verse 12. He says. I'm writing to you. Little children. Because your sins. Are forgiven. On account of his name.

[41 : 44] Isn't that a wonderfully. Reassuring thing to say. To his readers. Especially if they're facing. Dilemma of false teachers. They've been forgiven. In the past. The time of their conversion.

They've been forgiven. On account of Jesus name. That it is by God's act. In Jesus. That they've been forgiven. Not because of anything. These people have done. It's grace. That brings the assurance. As indeed.

The last verses of chapter 1. Make clear. To you fathers. He says in verse 13. I'm writing. Because you know him. Who is from the beginning. God the father.

Jesus the son. Either or both. He's referring to in that. You know him. Remember how verse 3 was. We may be sure. That we know him.

If we obey. And he's now writing. To the fathers. You know him. Isn't that wonderfully. Reassuring. To people who. Who know that like us. Still sin. But he's saying. You know him.

[42 : 39] It's evident in your life. And to the youths. In verse 13. At the end. I'm writing to you. Young people. Because you have conquered. The evil one. You've conquered.

What an assurance. That is. How often we see. Of Christians. Who say. I'm struggling. With the evil one. I'm still fighting. Well yes. There is a sense. Of that language. In the New Testament. But there is a greater sense. Of already victorious. The language. Of conquered. Is the Greek word. That from where we get. The word Nike. So I picture people. Putting on their Nike shoes. You've conquered.

In a sense. Just do it. And then he repeats it all again. In a sense. In verse 14. I guess the repetition. Is there. For the added reassurance.

See. I often find Christians. Who lack reassurance. They. They sometimes need. Repetition. Of assurance. For them. They're not. They haven't quite grasped. Sometimes. That. They can be absolutely.

[43 : 38] And thoroughly. Assured. Of their relationship. With God. Because it's totally. Grounded in grace. There is evidence. Of the fruit of God's spirit. Their obedient lives. Their demonstration. Of love. That is the.

The moral test. They pass. They're not perfect. But it's there. It's clear. They can be assured. And so he says. I write to you children. Because you know the father. I write to you fathers. Because you know him. Who's from the beginning. I write to you young people. Because you're strong. Not strong in their own strength. They've overcome. That's clearly done. Through Jesus. And I was going to point out. About that word.

Nike. And the victory. Clearly later. In this letter. It is always. On the strength. Of what God's word. Or Jesus Christ. Has done. In and for his people. And you've overcome. The evil one.

Already done. And passed. That is. Satan. The evil one. Often those. Who lack assurance. Are vulnerable. To false teaching.

[44 : 33] It seems to me. And more and more. I think. I realize. How important it is. As Christians. That we are sure. Of our standing with God.

I can understand. Lack of assurance. Because we all sin. And so. Oh dear. You know. Is God really going to forgive me. Again. For that. Do I really.

Evidence. Godliness. And obedience. In my heart. And life. God. But nonetheless. For each and every one of us. We ought to be utterly. Totally.

Unmovably. Sure. And certain. That we are in fellowship with God. That we walk in the light. That our sins are forgiven in Christ. That we know God.

And that our eternal destiny. Is secure. And wrapped up. In him. We ought to be like that. Because it's true. If we're Christians. That's the fundamental thing. But practically.

[45 : 33] If we are sure. And certain. Then we are much. Much more likely. To persevere. When Paul writes to Timothy. In 2 Timothy. Chapter 3.

He talks about the. The silly women. Who are. Overwhelmed. By their burden of sin. And so they go after false teachers. I'm not sure that he's being. Particularly sexist there. But the reason why they go after false teachers.

Is because they haven't got assurance. That their sins are dealt with. And therefore. They've still got to look somewhere else. They've got to find something. Greater or better. And I think it's one of the traps. In some Christian forms of teaching.

That head towards. Sort of greater holiness movements. Or greater spiritual experience movements. Is that they lack a foundational. And fundamental assurance. Of their relationship with God.

Sometimes there's noble motivation. I want to be holier. I want to be better in my life. I'm frustrated with my own sinfulness. Sometimes it's motivated. By a lack of assurance as well. John is saying in this letter.

[46 : 30] That the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Is absolutely sufficient for us. That his blood and righteousness. Are our beautiful dress. To pick up Wesley's hymn we sang before. We can stand secure and certain.

We will not be vulnerable to false teaching. A friend of mine once said. That whenever you get false teaching. Whether it's a Mormon or JW. Or a false Christian in effect. Teaching you. Do you think or you even ask them.

What can you offer me. That Jesus has not already done for me. That's from a question. From the position of assurance. From where each one of us ought to be.

Well having reassured though. Like Paul does in 1 Corinthians 10. If you think you're standing firm. Be careful lest you fall. Now comes the warning in verse 15. Do not love the world.

Or the things in the world. The love of the father. Father is not in those who love the world. For all that is in the world. Comes not from the father. But from the world.

[47 : 27] A very dualistic statement. God here. The world here. Instead of what we'd normally think. God over. The world that he made. Full of beauty and. Fallenness as well. Well John's using dramatic language.

To make his point. We all well might. We say. Well. It's all very well for God to say. Don't love the world. But God loves the world. The most famous verse in the Bible. Tells us that.

God so loved the world. Well. Shouldn't we love the world. If we're to imitate in something. Of the character of God. Well. Clearly in verse 15. 16.

The idea is. Loving the world. As in prizing it. Being attracted by it. And seduced by its pleasures. And desires. And so on. The love of. That the world is.

Is really. What is. What is our God. What is our idol. That's the love. That's being spoken about. And prohibited. In verse 15. The world that's described.

[48 : 23] Is. Is not set apart from God. In the sense of denying. That God made it. But it's set apart. In antagonism towards God. Because it's a world. That is fundamentally. Opposed to God.

It's the fallen world. In its rebellion against God. That John's describing. And that world. He says. We're not to love. He's not denying. That there is some beauty. In the world. For which we can give God.

Thanks and enjoy. He's not denying. The bounty of God. In the world. For which we can give thanks. And enjoy. And indeed love. To an extent. But he's saying. That fundamentally. The world is fallen.

Our desire. And love. Is to be for God. And not for the world. Which is against God. Fundamentally. Rebellious against him. Becomes the object of temptation.

And sin. And the source. Or home. Of evil. He uses the language. In verse 16. Of the desire. Of the flesh. Which is not just sensual. Or sexual desire. But general covetousness.

[49 : 18] And desire for pleasure. And so on. The desire of the eyes. Greed. And lust. And those sorts of things. The pride. In riches. Not that. They're a bad thing.

Not that. We ought to avoid looking at nice things. Not that we ought to. Think that riches in themselves are bad. But it's the desire. The covetousness. The lust.

The greed. The pride. The arrogance. The boastfulness. That is being condemned here. In these words. The pride. The pride. The pride. The pride.

The pride. In riches. I couldn't help but think of. A so-called great Australian. Who died last week. And his absolute. And his absolute. Blind.

Arrogance. If I may say so. In that. Quoted. Interview. With Ray Martin. Let me tell you. There is no heaven. This is it. And that boastfulness.

[50 : 12] In riches. That is so wrong. And so evil. And so misplaced. And sadly. Now I guess. He's beginning to realize that. Some say that the language of verse 16.

In between the hyphens. Is a bit like Genesis 3. Eve who sees the fruit. Sees that it's pleasing to the eyes. Takes it and eats it. And so on. The language is not that tight.

To be clear. That it comes from Genesis 3. But there's certainly some allusions. To that original sin. Too. And then. As an added incentive.

To obey this prohibition. Of verse 15. Verse 17 concludes. The world. And its desires. Are passing away. Just like the world of darkness.

Of verse 8. Is passing away. The world of light is coming. The world. And its desires. Are passing away. That is if you invest. Everything in them. The riches. The delights.

[51 : 05] Of this world. You're a fool. You're an idiot. You've wanted it all now. But fading. Is the world's best pleasures.

All its boasted. Pomp and show. Solid joys and lasting treasures. Are none but Zion's children. Will know. That's all passing away. Don't invest in that.

But love God. Not the fallen world. And those who do the will of God. Live forever. Eternal life.

For those who demonstrate. The moral test. Of their spirituality. They do the will of God. Well in the spiritual smorgasbord.

Of today. In our society. One John keeps us. On a narrow path. It urges us. To avoid the spirituality. That comes with no moral content. Which abounds.

[52 : 02] In our own society. And in our own churches. As well. In liberal Christianity. It urges us. To avoid moral laxity. And complacency. God is light.

Sin is serious. Don't treat it lightly. Don't claim you know God. If you walk in darkness. You're lying. One John.

Urges us to avoid. That sort of. Self-improvement type. Holiness pursuit. The quest for sinless perfection. In this life. Doesn't happen.

John uses striking language. But it's not the language. Of sinless perfection. On earth. Yes he uses. High standards. God is light. In him there is no darkness. At all. But our fellowship with God. Comes through the grace. Of the cross. Not through our efforts. At holiness. Though we ought to be. Striving to holiness. Furthermore. One John. Urges us to avoid.

[53 : 01] Having a lack. Of assurance. And acceptance. By God. Yes God. May be perfect. And we may not yet be. But we know him.

Through the grace. Of the cross. One John. Urges us. Not to be overwhelmed. By our sins. But to confess them. And know they are. Forgiven. And cleansed.

By the blood of the son. You see the high standards. And yet at the same time. The relationship with God. That can be so sure. About which we can be so confident. All hangs together.

Because the Christian gospel. Is woven together. By grace. The grace of Jesus. God is light. In him. There is no darkness at all. And yet at the same time.

We can stand confident. Of our sins forgiven. Confident. Of eternal life. Confident. In knowing God. And knowing God. Is a known.

[53 : 56] Known. Not an arrogant boast. Because it's all undergirded. Woven together. By grace. Let us pray. God your word tonight.

Stirs us. To walk in light. To obey your commandments. To love our brothers and sisters. To imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. And to walk as he walked on earth.

High ideals and standards indeed. From which we know all too well. How far full. How far short we fall. And yet Lord God. With confidence.

We know that we know you. For our relationship is grounded. In the grace of the cross. We confess our sins to you. Knowing that you forgive them.

And cleanse them by his blood. And we desire to obey you. To love you. And love each other. Help us and empower us.

[54 : 59] We pray. To persevere in that. For Jesus sake. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.