

## Lesson 4 – 1 John 2:3-6

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### Review/Introduction

The Holy Spirit through John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13); so they may see the objective truth and subjective evidence that gives assurance of salvation. The objective truth and subjective evidence go hand-in-hand. John is making it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deceiving. Often times, people who are self-deceived will only look at the objective basis and ignore the subjective evidence.

He is doing this by presenting tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. Woven into these tests is John's attack on Gnosticism which emphasized a special knowledge (gnosis), denied the deity and saving work of Jesus, and resulted in immoral lifestyles.

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. The spirals all have similar topics that are expanded on and/or reiterated in each spiral. Each spiral starts with a doctrinal test then presents conduct tests. We already looked at the first doctrinal test – holding fast to the truth of God's definition of sin and the only way of salvation.

- I. Introduction – Christ is the way of fellowship (1:1-4)
- II. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 1 (1:5-2:17)
  - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – The way of salvation from sin (1:5-2:2)
  - B. Conduct – Obedience (2:3-6)
  - C. Conduct – Love (2:7-11)
  - D. Conduct – Sin (Don't love the world) (2:12-17)

Ask yourself, "What do you love?" Then ask yourself, "How does anyone else know that is true?" The answer to the second question is the demonstration of the first. This morning we will continue looking at the first spiral with the first conduct test – a lifestyle of obedience. Obedience to Christ demonstrates love for Christ.

### Spiral 1 – Conduct – Lifestyle Obedience (2:3-6)

1. Walking in Obedience is a Characteristic of the Regenerate (2:3)

<sup>3</sup>By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

<sup>3</sup>And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (ESV)

Strangely omitted in the 1995 NASB update, the Greek starts with an "and" at the beginning of this sentence which ties it to the previous thought – holding fast to a biblical view of sin.

Sin is literally missing the mark or falling short of a standard. It is anything contrary to the character of God (Romans 3:23), by commission or omission transgressing God's word (Romans 5:15), lawlessness or rebellion (1 John 3:4), or missing the mark of perfect righteousness (Matthew 5:48). It is any departure from God's perfect standard, His light, in thought, word, or deed.

Specifically, the connection here is to 2:1-2. If you sin, you have an advocate. If you sin, your sins have been propitiated. But do not be fooled. You cannot say that you have come to know the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, and live like you did before. “Knowing” Christ means you have been changed.

“By this” is a phrase often used by John. Over half of the 29 New Testament usages are by John (4 in the gospel and 14 in 1 John). When we see this phrase, we need to stop and think about what John is trying to connect in a causal relationship.

“Know” means to perceive by experience from day to day. This first usage is in the present tense indicating a continuous action. We can know something on a continual basis and as a lifestyle. This is assurance.

The second “know” (have come to know) is in the perfect tense expressing a past completed action with ongoing results or effects. We can paraphrase the first clause as “we have a lifestyle of assured, experiential knowing that we permanently have come to know God and are in that state now”. How do we have that proof that leads to knowing experientially that we have come to know God? If we keep his commandments.

“Keep” speaks of guarding a precious thing in one’s possession. It means to observe attentively, to heed, to keep watch over and to retain in custody. It’s usage here describes a continuous action, a lifestyle. It could be rendered, “keep on keeping His commandments”.

As we read through Scripture, we see promises, principles (general guidelines), and precepts (commands). His promises are “precious and magnificent” (2 Peter 1:4). His principles give us ideas on how to live, but are guidelines. However, His precepts require obedience.

“Commandments” are some type of demand or requirement, a general injunction, charge, precept of moral and religious nature. This is the “observe all that He commanded” (Matthew 28:20) of being a disciple.

We can think of “commands” as general groupings laid out in the Scriptures like commands with respect to thought-life, home life, work life, body life, etc. We are tempted to list out all the New Testament commands and legalistically adhere to each one. But like all things in the Scriptures, God is concerned with the heart. This is not a legalistic keeping of a list of do’s and don’t’s. This is an outward manifestation of an inward motivation. This is a morning to night, moment-by-moment heart attitude to obey (keep His commands).

We need to be clear about what John is saying here. He is NOT saying that if you keep His commands then you will know God. He is saying that if you know God, then you will have assurance that you know Him by the natural outflow of that having come to know as a direction (or lifestyle) of walking in His commands.

### ❖ **Do you have an appetite to obey God?**

#### 2. Walking in Disobedience is a Characteristic of the Unregenerate (2:4)

<sup>4</sup>The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

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<sup>4</sup>Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, (ESV)

The statement here is clear. Contrary to the one who knows continually that they have come to know God because they keep His commandments (among other subjective evidences), the one who professes a relationship with God and yet walks in disobedience is deceived.

Some people “say” things with their words and their actions also proclaim the same message. Here this person “says” only with their words. It is in the present tense, continually, habitually, as a lifestyle of saying.

### ❖ **Does your practice and profession match in an ever-increasing way?**

Contrary to what is being said, this person is not keeping on keeping God’s commandments. The particle of negation (“does not”) is strong essentially meaning “absolutely not, no way”. Perfection is not required (1 John 2:1-2), but a direction of keeping His commandments is required to demonstrate with one’s life the saying, “I have come to know Him”.

This verbal declaration without the backing lifestyle demonstrates that the professor is a liar. “Liar” is one who speaks falsehood, untruth, and so attempts to deceive or one who breaks faith, a false or faithless person. This person “is” a liar; it is a lifestyle. This person is a phony. They claim to be one thing, but their life displays another. This lying is to God and the body of Christ, but most notably to themselves being self-deceived.

The idea of self-deception is enforced by the phrase “the truth is not in him”. “Truth” means that which is not hidden, that which corresponds to reality. We can clearly view this as the gospel message or even Christ Himself, but also must note that an absence of truth is indicative of self-deception.

Paul noted the same idea in Titus and James in his epistle.

<sup>16</sup>**They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him***, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:16)

<sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (James 1:22)

### ❖ **Is there enough evidence from your life to convict you of being a follower of Christ?**

#### 3. Walking in Obedience Demonstrates Love (of and for God) (2:5a)

<sup>5a</sup>but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.

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<sup>5a</sup>but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. (ESV)

Once again, we see a contrast. Saying and not keeping is contrasted with saying and keeping. “Keeps” means “keeping on keeping God’s word”. Exhibiting, not perfection, but a direction, a lifestyle of obedience. The lifestyle of obedience means that it is true that the one has come to know Him. For that person, the love of God has truly been perfected. “Perfected” means reached maturity, to be brought to the intended goal.

The phrase “love of God” is ambiguous and has several possible meanings: God’s love for us, our love for God, or God-like love. It seems best to think of this as the person’s love for God. Your love for God which you have because He first loved you (1 John 4:19) is demonstrated to be mature through keeping on keeping His commands (a lifestyle of obedience).

A heart to obey manifested by outward obedience to God's word (Christ's commandments) is a visible manifestation of your love for Christ.

<sup>15</sup>If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:15)

<sup>6</sup>And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. (2 John 6)

### ❖ Do you love Christ?

Your view of yourself, your sin, and the magnitude of your forgiveness impacts your love for Christ.

<sup>36</sup>Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*. <sup>37</sup>And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. <sup>39</sup>Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." <sup>41</sup>"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup>When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup>Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." <sup>44</sup>Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup>You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. <sup>46</sup>You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. <sup>47</sup>**For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.**" <sup>48</sup>Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." <sup>49</sup>Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?" <sup>50</sup>And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36-50)

### ❖ How large do you view your sin that has been forgiven?

#### 4. Walking in the Same Manner as Jesus Walked Demonstrates Union (2:5b-6)

<sup>5b</sup>By this we know that we are in Him: <sup>6</sup>the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

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<sup>5b</sup>By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup>whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (ESV)

"By this we know that we are in Him" can be taken with what precedes or comes after, but it seems best to follow the NASB and ESV in the sentence breaks.

Here is another way to say that profession and practice must match. This person is continually saying that they are "in Him". "In Him" is another way to say they have "fellowship" with God or "have come to know Him" or are united to Christ.

“Abides” means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time but when used in relation to Christ implies not only position, but relationship, fellowship, friendship, dependence, harmony, communion. John’s use is synonymous with “fellowship” or “union”.

### ❖ Are you an abider in Christ?

The Scriptures provide numerous metaphors for the purpose of painting a rich picture of the church; to describe the nature of the church and/or individual believers within the church. Christ is the King and you are a subject. Christ is the Shepherd and you are a sheep. Christ is the head and you are a member of the body. Christ is the vine and you are a branch.

John’s use of “abide” and the thought of “abiding in Christ” as a branch connected to a vine is unique to him (John 15:1-11). Looking at that metaphor helps us understand the idea here in 1 John of “abiding”.

<sup>1</sup>“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>**Abide** in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it **abides** in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you **abide** in Me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides** in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not **abide** in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you **abide** in Me, and My words **abide** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; **abide** in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and **abide** in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. (John 15:1-11)

Several points are clear from this passage:

- First, an “abider” equals a believer (15:1-2, 6).
- Second, an abider is being “pruned” or progressively sanctified (15:2).
- Third, an abider produces “fruit” or visible manifestations of abiding (15:4-5, 7, 8, 9-10, 11).

In his epistle, John is using the same metaphor, so “abide” brings with it the idea of “fellowship” or “knowing” – salvation as well as the subjective evidence that accompanies salvation.

The one who says he abides in Christ (has fellowship or knows Christ) ought to walk in the same manner that Christ walked. “Ought” means to owe something to someone and conveys the sense of necessity, duty, or moral obligation. In other words, there is no choice. The person who says they abide in Christ has a spiritual/moral obligation to walk as Jesus walked.

Christ is our great God and Savior. He also left us an example in the Scriptures.

<sup>13</sup>You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup>**For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** (John 13:13-15)

<sup>21</sup>For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, (1 Peter 2:21)

So how did Jesus walk? There are a lot of examples that we could look at in the Scriptures for how Jesus walked, but today we will only note three.

First, He walked in the power of the Spirit. This seems strange since Christ is God, but He was empowered by the Holy Spirit. We also must walk in the Spirit. We have to note this characteristic of how Jesus walked first because we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for power to walk well ourselves.

<sup>1</sup>Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1)

<sup>14</sup>And Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. (Luke 4:14)

<sup>34</sup>For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for **He gives the Spirit without measure**. (John 3:34)

<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but **be filled with the Spirit**,  
<sup>19</sup>speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; <sup>20</sup>always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Ephesians 5:18-20 c.f. Colossians 3:16; Galatians 5:22-23)

<sup>16</sup>**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

<sup>30</sup>Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30)

<sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit; <sup>20</sup>do not despise prophetic utterances. <sup>21</sup>But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Second, Christ always did the will of His Father. He walked in obedience.

<sup>5</sup>Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross**. (Philippians 2:5-8)

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. (John 4:34)

<sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (John 6:38)

<sup>29</sup>And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” (John 8:29)

<sup>30</sup>I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; <sup>31</sup>but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here. (John 14:30-31)

<sup>4</sup>I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. (John 17:4)

These are two general ways that Christ walked. Specifically, Christ walked in love, which we will see next time.

Walking in the same manner as Christ demonstrates that you have fellowship with Him, have come to know Him, are in Him, and abide in Him.

❖ **Are you striving to do God’s will (i.e., obey His word)?**

### **Conclusion**

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. The purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today’s passage looked at obedience. You can know (as a way of life) if you have come to know Christ if you keep His commands (obey Him). Obeying Christ demonstrates that you love Him. If you say that you abide in Christ then you must walk in the same manner as He walked.

### **Additional Study**

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today’s passage.
4. Read today’s passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Look at similar words and concepts found in the Gospel of John to help give clarification.
6. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.