

Knowing That We Know Him – 1 John 2:3-6

Introduction – At first blush, John’s epistle seems to possess certain statements that stand in opposition to one another. Worse, read wrongly, this epistle has been known to upset the assurance of salvation of many tormented souls. Quite to the contrary, the purpose of the epistle is to give believers genuine assurance of their salvation (5:13). But all through the epistle, John unravels the tangled web of hypocrisy which was at the heart of those who were full of false teaching, especially the hypocrisy between professions and realities (i.e. 1:6, 2:4, 2:9, 4:20).

Assurances – Many sensitive Christians in the midst of a panic attack read v3 and freak out. If you lift v3 out of its context, you can ruin your assurance (like reading Heb 10:26-7 out of context). In John’s situation, he is dealing with false teachers who have an utter disregard for the commands of God (they thought they could not sin or that their sin didn’t matter; all that mattered was a mystical-teaching-experience). Another way to understand it is that John’s hostility is towards the charging elephant of Antinomianism and not the bothersome mosquito of remaining sin. Remember 1:6-2:1, if we are walking in the light we will be struggling with sin, which is why we need an Advocate with the Father.

Knowing That We Know (v3) – There is a way to have assurance that you “*have come to know Him.*” The first assurance has to do with knowledge of Someone other than yourself, looking away to Jesus, to His *perfect* obedience. That assurance is confirmed when we see our own *imperfect* obedience (distinct from our previous rebellion) which is accepted for Jesus’ sake. This knowledge corresponds to belief (faith) in Christ as well as to the intimacy of relationship with Christ, and not to knowledge about Christ. Knowing God is evidenced by our heartfelt desire to obey Him; an authentic claim of faith is efficacious and has moral consequences (Tit 1:16).

Keep His Commandments – The verb, “*keep*” expresses the idea of watchful, careful obedience, of guarding and preserving a particular path. No one is perfectly obedient (see the previous verses), and so Calvin says, “*he does not mean that those who wholly satisfy the Law keep His commandments (and no such instance can be found in the world), but those who strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God.*”

The Truth Is Not In Him (v4) – And so, the one (the false teacher) who says, “I have come to know Him” and does not intend to be watchful and careful to love the Lord in his or her actions, is a liar. There is no intimate, relational faith in the One who loves the Law. It is not saying that the one who stumbles while walking in the light is a liar. It is making the claim that the one who is walking in the darkness principally and purposefully while claiming to know Christ is a liar (again, 1:6). Not only is he a liar, “*the truth is not in him.*” Truth is more than something abstract here. Truth describes Jesus (John 14:6), the Holy Spirit (14:17), and the Word (17:17). Truth is the integrity required in all worship empowered by the Spirit (4:24). A practical application of this helps explain this assurance and lack thereof. If you sin, you have not lost your salvation. If you sin, and having been convicted of that sin by the Word, by your brother or sister, or by the Spirit, you refuse to repent or even care about that sin, you are in great hypocrisy and have no assurance of your salvation. You cannot declare to have some inner light while walking in the darkness.

The Love of God is Perfected in Him (v5) – This verse is not teaching some sort of perfectionism brought on by our keeping God’s commands. The verb “perfected” is in the perfect tense (it happened in the past with ongoing present consequences) and is passive (it was done to you; you did not do it). The keeping of God’s commands (that is, having a zealous desire to adhere to God’s will) is one of the assurances God gives us that His love (that is, His saving, transforming, Holy-Spirit given work) had been accomplished in you and is being worked out in you. “*Being a Christian consists in essence of a personal relationship to God in Christ, knowing him, loving Him, and living in Him as the branch lives in the vine (John 15:1ff)*” - Stott.

Abiding in Him/Walking Like Him (v5b-6) – And so, it is not enough to simply talk about obeying God’s Word. It is much more about walking as Jesus did. And why would we walk as Jesus did? Because He abides in us. This is another word (abide) that John will use over and over in the epistle. To abide (meno) is to remain, to dwell, to tarry, and to continue in the other. This is the fellowship and joy we enjoy in Christ. Disobedience mars this fellowship and it is the number one reason for fears and doubts. “*The roots of our fears are in our sins. Search there, and you shall find the cause of soul-trouble*” – Spurgeon. This troubling experience is the kind work of God to true believers. The unregenerate find they don’t care about their sin or excuse it away. His true disciples, because of the deep, intertwined life of Christ in them, find they must deal with their sin and again continue in a walk that imitates their Master more and more, although imperfectly for now.