

## John's Letters – 1 Jn 2:1-6 This is How We Know

A common issue for people is questioning the reality of their salvation. After all, it's dealing with a spiritual realm that we can't readily see or touch. Sometimes we look back at an event, a time when we put our trust in Christ, said a prayer, etc. But is there another way for us to be sure? John addresses this in his first epistle after presenting the truths of God's holiness, His desire for fellowship with us, and His provision of our salvation. At the end of chapter 1, he hints at a major theme – validating our salvation. This was a concern for people in his day, just as it is now, and this is a major reason why he wrote this epistle.

We already heard the message proclaimed in ch. 1, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." This sets the stage for what we are going to read in ch. 2. There is a very real possibility that a person could have a false claim on salvation. As John put it in these verses, if our walk doesn't measure up to God's walk, there's something wrong. If God is light, but we're walking in darkness, we aren't walking with Him. This doesn't mean sinless perfection, because right after that, he said, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That awareness of and confession of sin is a key principle in the book.

Now he starts ch. 2, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." His statement here sounds like a loving, patient, grandfather. He's not badgering us or making harsh judgments on us – he's appealing to us from a loving heart, encouraging right behavior. In this statement we also see that he's offering us all the help he can. He wants us to succeed, and in this he is reflecting the character of God, who wants us to be in fellowship with Him.

What did God do in order for us to have that fellowship? He gave us an advocate. "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." Jesus is our advocate. The Greek word is *parakletos*, which we usually associate with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the comforter. The word literally means one who comes alongside, and was used in secular language to describe a lawyer for your defense, or one who comes to help you. When Jesus told His disciples that He was sending "another" comforter (Jn 14:16), that indicated one of the same sort that He already had been for them.

Why is Jesus able to be our Comforter, Advocate, and Helper with regards to our spiritual walk? Because He is "Jesus Christ the Righteous." Let's break those names down. Jesus – "Yahweh is salvation"; this tells us that the man Jesus is the Savior, and when we tie it with what we already saw in ch. 1 and John 1, this same Jesus is the Word which was in the beginning with God the Father, and created all things, then came to this earth and was made manifest in the flesh. In this way, we can say that the name Jesus emphasizes the incarnation, God taking on human flesh to be known by His creation. Christ – this is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "messiah," which means "anointed one." This term was also applied to three offices in ancient Israel: the prophet, the priest, and the king. Jesus is the prophet like Moses who was foretold in Dt 18:15, He is the Son of David, who God promised in 1 Chr 17:11-14, and He is our Great High Priest, as Hebrews tells us. Jesus is "the Christ" – the one promised for ages to fulfill God's plans, but here He is also called "the righteous." Scripture is abundantly clear that there is no one truly righteous but God, and Jesus is God in the flesh, so He has a confirmed righteousness. It is His righteousness which made Him an acceptable sacrifice for our sins, and it is His righteousness which is applied to us when we receive His salvation. Next He is called "the propitiation for our sins." What is this

word “propitiation”? It means an expiation, making amends for guilt; a satisfactory payment of a debt. God’s holy justice demands that the wages of sin is death. Jesus’ death satisfied that requirement for us – and not just for us, but for the whole world. This indicates an unlimited atonement – Jesus didn’t just die for the elect, but He died for all, so that all could have the opportunity for salvation. His death is sufficient for all, but efficient (or applied) only for those who put their faith in Christ. This is our entry into fellowship with God. Romans 10:9-10 says “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

If Jesus’ death is sufficient to satisfy God’s wrath on our sins, how do we know if we have received that salvation? Verse 3-6 – “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” John isn’t saying here that we are saved by our works. Throughout this epistle, as well as his gospel, he clearly states that we are saved by faith, by believing that Jesus is the Christ. What he is saying here is that we demonstrate the truth of our salvation by our obedient lives. Anyone who claims to be a Christian, but doesn’t live out a Christ-like life, John calls a liar. If we have received new life from God, it should show. If it doesn’t show, then we don’t have His life in us.

Notice the closing statement, “By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” Being Christ-like, imitating His example, demonstrating the same compassion, love, mercy, and holiness that characterizes Jesus Christ – that is the way we know whether our claim of salvation is real. When we keep His word, obeying it, allowing it to transform our lives – that is when the love of God has been perfected or brought to maturity, to its intended end, in us.