

1 Jn. 1:1-6 (LD 1, Q/A 2) “Guilt, Grace, Gratitude”

For the Children: Imagine that a boy is in trouble at school for using a bad word. He has learned the word from his parents in the home. So he doesn't really see why the teacher is so unhappy with him. When the teacher hears that this word is used in the home, she decides not to punish the boy this time, but to give him a warning instead. Though the boy is glad he is not being punished, he doesn't think too much about his behaviour, and he isn't very thankful that he was let off, because he doesn't really see what all the fuss was about in the first place. As God's children, we need to know how bad our sins are, so we will be very thankful that God forgives us for Jesus' sake. Then we will want to do all we can to fight against sin, and do good instead, because we are so grateful. **Questions:** What do these words, “guilt,” “grace” and “gratitude” mean? How do they tie together? How important is it to know about them?

Introduction:

First Point: What We Need to Know

- **Guilt:** Clearly, John assumes that we are sinners who need to admit our sin and seek to have our sin forgiven. See 1:8-10. He assumes that the believer is no longer enslaved to sin, and therefore committing it habitually, without repentance (3:6). But he is aware that believers still commit acts of sin, which need to be forgiven. Q/A 2 adds that we need to know *how great* our sin is, and its consequences (“misery”). See Is. 64:6.
- **Grace:** We are told about sin, but also about Christ, so that we seek forgiveness through Him. He is our Advocate – one speaking up for us in God's Presence; our Righteousness (imputed and imparted); and the “propitiation” for our sins – God appeasing His own wrath against our sins by the Self-offering of His Son. We do not need to be justified again, but we do need to have the once-for-all justifying work of Christ daily applied to our new sins, so that these are also forgiven us. The power of Christ's work to do so is seen in that He made propitiation for the sins of all the elect in the whole world.
- **Gratitude:** The test for whether someone has truly come to know God through Christ, and had his sins forgiven, is his grateful obedience – keeping His commandments and walking in the same manner as Christ. However, God's grace comes before our works. Those who are shown this grace are “perfected” – brought to completion – by God. Obedience is an inevitable fruit of knowing God.

Second Point: How Important It Is to Know It

- **What You Must Know:** The Catechism implies that we will not live and die in the joy of comfort/salvation if we do not know these 3 things. John says that we know that we know God by these 3 things – confessing sin, receiving grace and expressing it in grateful obedience.
- **Some Interconnections:** We can see why these 3 things are essential, when we consider how they are interconnected. We need to know our sin, or we will not seek grace in Christ. We need to know of grace, in order to know we are saved and to be motivated to grateful works of obedience, praise and thanks. We need to see good fruit in our lives to know that we really do have God at work in our lives.
- **Doctrine and Life:** Knowledge of these 3 areas involves much doctrine – re sin, Christ's Person and work, the application of redemption – but also much “life” – our obedience and “walk.” Doctrine and life go together, because of the above interconnections. Neither should be played down.
- **Only a Summary:** It is not a matter of simply agreeing that we sin, that God has saved us and that we should obey Him. What John and Q/A 2 state is just a summary of what is expected. The Bible expands on these 3 areas, and we should strive to learn as much as we can. The Catechism also expands on it. See Q/A 22. “Keeping” the Word of God (v. 5) means accepting that the whole Bible is from Him and therefore striving to trust and obey it all. As much as we can

Conclusion: