

June 18, 2017
Evening Service
Series: 1 John
Community Baptist Church
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HOW DO I KNOW I KNOW HIM 1 John 2:1-6

“He says he’s a Christian, but I don’t know.” We all have heard statements like that in conversations in the past. Maybe we have even said the same kind of thing or at least thought it. While questions about the genuineness of someone’s Christian testimony are common, so is the response, “Judge not that ye be not judged!” Most of us have also heard that kind of retort when we dared to express doubt about a person’s salvation.

So which is right? Is it right to wonder about or even doubt the veracity of a person’s new birth? Or should we studiously avoid ever wondering about the reality of salvation, or ever asking why Christian traits are missing in the professing Christian’s life, lest we be guilty of judging? It appears in this text before us, that John has laid down some pretty clear guidelines about the character of a person who truly knows Jesus Christ. For example, the words, “*whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him*” (v.5). makes a pretty good case for discerning evidence that a person knows God. And verse six, “*whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked*” seems like a pretty obvious measuring stick.

Statements in this text do clearly establish the characteristics of a person who knows the Lord intimately. However, it is entirely possible that John had the “speck and log in the eye” principle in

mind as he penned these words. John's argument is not so much, "These are the traits we should look for when we are trying to decide if someone is truly saved," as much as "This is what my life should look like if I am really born again." Probably at this point John agreed with Paul's statement: *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

Because we live in a thoroughly sinful world in a fleshly body thoroughly infected with sin, we can easily copy the traits of the people we associate with who do not know God. We can very easily begin to fit in with people who know about God, talk about God, and do religious stuff, but who are not regenerated. Because a certain lifestyle is acceptable to those who only know about God, we can begin to believe that such a lifestyle is also acceptable to God. Generally it is not. The traits John spelled out to us in this text are acceptable to God. Living like this is proof to ourselves that we truly know God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How I live reminds me that I love God because He first loved me and gave me Jesus Christ to redeem me from the sin that is so common and acceptable in my world.

We Are Confident That Sin is Covered (vv.1-2).

Don't sin . . . but when you do. John wrote, *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (v.1).* The admonition is plain. We who have the Word of God should not sin. We are the little children who have God's Word and we are special. To have the right influence in life for our children is so critical because they are malleable and easily influenced. They are vulnerable. They are dependent. Therefore, those responsible for them should have a deep concern that they be protected and taught right.

What gave John the right to feel that way toward grown adults in the Church at Ephesus? Notice that the wording abruptly changed here from the plural pronoun “we” (i.e. other apostles and John) to the singular “I” by which John expressed personal concern. John demonstrates the principle that it is good to have people genuinely concerned for our spiritual well being. Having people genuinely concerned for us is not the same as having people who are genuinely concerned that you live just like they do in order to prove that they are right. There have always been Pharisee kind of people who take great pride in the thought that they have been able to influence people to follow them and live like them. You and I are not the standard for Christian living. Just because someone chooses to live like me does not necessarily make him or her right.

John could bare his heart to the people because he was concerned like a father for his children. Most likely, as the pastor of the church in Ephesus, John wrote these things to help ground his beloved people in the truth of Christ. He used the present tense verb to express the desire of his heart saying, “I am writing these things.” But, what are “these things?” It seems most logical to conclude that these things include the truth John just wrote, that God is light, perfectly pure and sinless, which requires that we not live in sin if we really know Him. Also, included would be the truth that if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive.

John writes these truths so that his children will not sin. But doesn't assurance of sins forgiven (one of “these things”) actually tempt a person to act casually toward sin and sin all the more? That sounds like the argument Paul addressed in his letter to the Christians in Rome. *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2).*

We should never take sin lightly just because we have God's assurance that He will forgive. The person who boldly sins because he or she is certain God will forgive, does not have a meaningful

relationship with God. God does not promise forgiveness so that we can sin with a clear conscience!

If the company you work for provides a nurses station or a clinic, the company is not encouraging you to get sick or have an accident. The clinic is there in case you do. The goal is accident free days. For example, as you enter the visitor's section at the Mitsubishi Polyester plant down the road, you will see a large sign that says, "X number of days without an accident." Their goal is zero accidents every day. However, the company also provides a clinic in case there is an accident.

In a similar way, John writes these truths *so that you may not sin*. But John's desire for us to never sin seems to contradict the argument in 1:8, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8)*. Is John saying here that we can actually get to the point that we "have no sin?" Even more confusing might be the fact that John used an aorist tense verb here to virtually say that we should not sin one time. That is sinless perfection. We who love Christ but live in the real world know from experience that sinlessness is not going to be the case. Sinless perfection is not even a valid dream in this lifetime.

How do we explain this apparent contradiction? At the moment of salvation, we did not deny that we had sinned, but had confessed our sins, God sent our sins away, and we were debt free on the spiritual ledger with God. However, each day as we live we incur new debt of sin. It is very much like real life where we are in debt to the power company the moment we turn on the light switch. At the end of the month, the company sends us a bill, we pay it and are out of debt . . . until we turn on the switch again.

And so is the reality of life. On one hand Jesus Christ paid the price to cancel the cost of all our sins and we accept that reality by faith at salvation. But we need daily cleansing from sin for which Jesus's blood also provides. Rather than tempting us to sin carelessly, the advanced assurance of forgiveness if we fall into sin ought to make us very sensitive to and appreciative of God's amazing love. But too often even assurance of God's love is not

sufficient to keep us out of sin. What do we do when we have chosen to please ourselves instead of God and sinned against Him?

Because we sin God has provided an advocate. The Greek word for *advocate* (*parakleitos*) can mean comforter, encourager, or helper.

The word shows up in the New Testament only here and then four times in John's Gospel where it speaks of the Holy Spirit. Paul did not use the same word, but still described the ministry of the Holy Spirit as our advocate who speaks for us: *The Spirit urgently appeals to the Heavenly Father for us with unspeakable groanings (Romans 8:26).*

However, the thing we must see in this verse (1 John 2:1) is that the advocate who speaks for us is also Jesus Christ. How amazing that the One who acted in perfect righteousness intercedes for us who have acted unrighteously. Even while Jesus was ministering in the flesh on earth, He showed us what this work as our advocate looks like. He told Peter that Satan was going to sift him, *"but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers"* (Luke 22:32). He prayed to the Heavenly Father regarding the disciples, *"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours"* (John 17:9).

In the real world courtroom the attorney defends the accused based on the accused's character, alibi, or righteousness. In the real Spiritual courtroom, as Satan stands before the Father's throne to accuse me (Rev. 12:10), Jesus Christ my righteous advocate steps up and pleads my case based on His righteousness. God the Father "appointed" our attorney because we could not afford one who could sufficiently represent us. *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).*

Jesus Christ is the righteous advocate who is able and justified to speak for us because the blood of Christ is sufficient to cover sin.

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (v.2). Our Advocate Himself satisfies the cost of our sins. Let's remove the word propitiation from the deep, dark, scary recesses of theology and make it practical. It was actually a very common word in ancient Greek culture used to speak of an action or sacrifice the person who offended a god could make in order to appease the god's wrath.

There is no way that we can use that meaning of the word propitiation here. First, we, unlike ancient pagans, do not take the initiative to have our offenses covered. God, who is offended by our sin, took the initiative and provided the propitiation for us (4:10). Second, the propitiation does not satisfy God's wrath or quiet His anger. While God is angry at sin, He sent us the satisfying payment to cover our sin because He loves us.

What God provided for us in Jesus Christ is best understood in the Bible meaning of the Greek word for *propitiation* (*hilasmos*). The word speaks of the expiation, the means for appeasement, the basis for forgiveness, for sins. The word is found only here and in 4:10 in the New Testament. But in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word is found in some very definitive contexts where the *hilasmos* is viewed as "the atoning sacrifice."

One of the most important uses is in connection with the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) where God's law required, *Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land (Leviticus 25:9).* The sacrifice described here is the *Day of Kippur*, which is translated in LXX as *hilasmos*. And what was God's plan on the Day of "the expiation?"

The details for the Day of Atonement are found in Leviticus 16.

15 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16 Thus he shall make atonement

for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. 17 No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel (Leviticus 16:15-17). . . . And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him (Leviticus 16:34).

Jesus fulfills the picture of the “atonement for sins” required in the Mosaic Law. He is as John the Baptist introduced Him, “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” He is the final and perfect sacrifice that fulfills what the Law was incapable of fulfilling. And our Advocate’s provision is sufficient. Again consider the picture of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement to learn a very important truth. The sacrifice was offered for the sins of all Israel. But not every Israelite’s sins were covered, and therefore, not all Israel was saved. It is as Paul argued that there is a difference between an Israelite, a child of Abraham by physical lineage and a true Israelite who is saved by faith like Abraham was. *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical (Romans 2:28). Also, But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel (Romans 9:6).*

The blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was sufficient for all of Israel’s sin, but not all Israel had their sins forgiven. Consider the breadth of sin the sacrifice covered: . . . *the sin offering that is **for the people** (Lev. 16:15). Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of **the uncleannesses of the people of Israel** and because of **their transgressions, all their sins** (Lev. 16:16). . . . **has made atonement . . . for all the assembly of Israel** (Lev. 16:17). . . . **that atonement may be made for the people***

of Israel once in the year because of all their sins (Lev. 16:34). But most of the Israelites' sins were not forgiven.

In the same way God offers the blood of Jesus Christ for the expiation of the sin of the whole world. But this is not a promise of universal salvation. The whole world is not saved. All sins are not expiated. Then what did John mean by "*whole world.*" He uses the same word in different ways. Here the word speaks of all the people who have lived or will live in the world (same way in John 3:16). But in 2:15 the word refers to the system of thought or philosophy of the world. In 2:17 added to the philosophy can be material things that are passing away (also 3:17). In 3:13 it is the unsaved people in the world contrasted with the redeemed.

It does not appear that John ever used the term "world" to refer only to the elect. However, it does seem that we should conclude that while the blood of Christ is God's accepted satisfaction for all sin, only those who are born again by grace through faith will benefit from it. And if we have benefitted, we will know.

We Know (vv.3-6).

This is how we know. *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments (v.3). By this we may be sure that we are in him: (v.5b). whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked (v.6).*

John tells us that we should have certain confidence that we know Christ. Simply put, we know that we have come to know. Or a more precise translation of the verb tenses, "**We are knowing**, (learning through experience), that we have at some time in the past, come to know Christ." Having come into a relationship with Christ in the past, we are experiencing continuing results.

The person who is truly born again is absolutely confident about it. They do not come to the end of life with a "I hope so" attitude. Rather we know the person of Christ in an ongoing relationship. Let me illustrate. On the one hand, I can claim that I

know Representative Trey Gowdy. We have been in multiple meetings together, he has spoken at a Sportsman's banquet here at the church, and I have met with him in a group of six pastors as we prayed for him. If I were to go to the capital building in Washington and just run into Representative Gowdy in the rotunda, chances are pretty good that he would say, "Hi Dave. How are you doing." And anyone who might be with me in that setting would say, "Oh, you know Representative Gowdy."

But on the other hand, I do not know Trey Gowdy the way the term "know" is used in this text. I am familiar with our representative and I know certain facts about him. But the word in our text is one that describes my relationship with my wife. I know my wife thoroughly and she knows me. I communicate with her everyday and over a period of 44 years I have experienced an intimate relationship with her. That relationship effects the way I live. I am more like her today than I was the day we met— by a long way! My knowledge of Representative Gowdy hardly effects the way I live.

So too, how we live indicates who we know. I know that I have an intimate relationship with Jesus because that knowledge effects the way I live. I do not keep His commands in an effort to get to know Jesus. I am motivated to keep His commands because of our relationship. I am familiar with His commands because I communicate with Him throughout every day. I read His commands daily. I talk to Him about His commands. I ask Him to help me live like Him.

Therefore, when I discover that I am walking the way Jesus walks, I am absolutely sure that I am "in" Him. The preposition "in" describes the depth and essential nature of our relationship with Christ. By the way, the person who tries to live like Christ in order to be acceptable to God will actually not live like Christ. The Pharisees tried to please God through their own efforts and failed miserably. Jesus was quite different from the Pharisees. Rather, we learn by grace that God the Father accepts us through Jesus Christ

and our gratitude for that mercy motivates us to walk like Jesus walks.

All of that being said, John has brought us to the point that we realize there is clear and obvious proof that what we claim is so when we really know Christ. But in typical Johannean fashion, we run into the contrast, the denial of the claim where there is no proof. *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (v.4).* To be a liar about eternal things is very serious. If a person is not characterized by living according to Jesus' commands it is because there is no relationship with Christ and the claimant is devoid of truth.

Contrasted to the denier who is devoid of truth is our life that is an affirmation of the claim. *But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected (v.5a).* The person who keeps Christ's word is indwelt by God's love. It is a question of overall character. Remember that this assurance falls within the context of "if we sin we have an advocate with the Father." It is in the context of "if we are confessing our sins . . ." The standard is not "sinless perfection" because no one achieves that in this life. The question is: "How is your life trending?" The person whose life is tracking toward Jesus will be experiencing the indwelling love of God more and more. God's love in us becomes more evident as we draw on it and live by it. And that is sure proof of salvation.

Assurance of salvation is not gained by trying to do better. Rather, desiring to live like Jesus results in greater assurance. A desire to live like Jesus flows from the intimate knowledge of Jesus and His commands. A desire to live like Jesus makes us cognizant of sin, and drives us to confess it and forsake it. A common response in our day to the question, "Is that person truly born again?" is "He loves Jesus." According to our text, if "he loves Jesus" it will be obvious by the way he or she orders his or her life. To that end, the response of the unsaved world to us will be a pretty good indicator if we love Jesus because the world will treat people who walk like Jesus the same way they treat Jesus.