

A Know So Faith

1 John 2:3-6

With all this teaching on sin, John wants to reassure us that "**we know that we know Him.**" It is not uncommon for believers to have doubts about their relationship with God, especially when they have sinned and they don't have a close fellowship with Him. He wants to give us a "know-so" faith by pointing out the marks of an authentic relationship and genuine fellowship with God.

I. The Real Believer Keeps God's Commandments (v.3).

John says "**Now by this we know that we know Him.**" That means that we CAN KNOW THAT WE KNOW HIM! Our relationship with God is not some subjective feeling but an objective reality.

When John says "**we know that we know Him,**" he is referring to a real past experience. The tenses of the Greek NT read literally, "**we know that we have known Him.**" The NIV translates it, "**We know that we have come to know him...**" In other words, we can know that we have a relationship with God by what we are doing today. There should be some evidence of it in our lives.

What is this evidence? How can we know? John tells us it is, "**...if we keep His commandments.**" The evidence is obedience, nothing else. It's not based on feelings: We don't know that we know God because we feel the presence of God. It's not based on what you say: We don't know we know Him because we have prayed some prayer or said some creed. It's not based on a religious ritual: We don't know that we know Him because we have been baptized, or because we are church members. We can know that we know Him "**if we keep His commandments.**"

The present willingness to keep God's commandments is a certain mark of someone who has already begun a relationship with Him in the past.

Some people get this principle turned around. Understand this clearly, *you do not come to know God by keeping His commandments; you keep His commandments because you already know Him.*

The Bible is very clear that we cannot be saved by keeping the commandments of God. Paul says in (Rom 3:20 NIV), "**Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**" And again in Eph.2:8-9 he says, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**" We come to know God through His Son Jesus by God's "**grace**" and our "**faith**" in Him. Salvation is a "**gift of God.**" It cannot be earned. A relationship with God is "**not of works**" because then we could "**boast**" of our own accomplishment.

When we receive Jesus into our lives by faith, He then comes in lives within us through His Holy Spirit. And when He does, He begins to change everything.

When Kathy and I first saw the house we now own another family lived in it. It looked a lot different. Where we have wood floor, they had carpet and pergo. Where we've painted one color, they had another. We changed the handles on the cabinets; we tore out a wall and a shelf; we moved in new furniture; and we're not done making changes yet. There is more painting to do, shelves to make, fixtures to replace...etc. In the same sense, when Jesus moves into our lives, He changes us. One of the changes Jesus makes in us is a desire to "**keep His commandments.**"

Here the word "**keep**" means "to guard and keep safe as a precious thing." So, it's not just the act of obedience, which is certainly the important first step, but it's the attitude of obedience that we have. It's a heart that desires to be obedient because we are guarding the commands of our Master as a precious thing. God gives us a new attitude about His commandments. Though we all still struggle with sin, we find ourselves drawn to His light. Even though we often fail, there is an inner desire, born of God to "**keep His commandments.**"

When John writes of keeping "**His commandments**," he is not saying we do it perfectly. This is not sinless perfection. No believer is sinless or perfect. We already saw in chapter 1 that is self-deception (**1:8**). When we do stumble and sin, we are to "**confess our sins**" and know that our "**Advocate**" will "**forgive and cleanse**" the guilt and stain of our sin.

Our obedience to God proves our authentic faith in God. Faith always comes first but faith is always validated by obedience or works. James 2:26 says "**For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**"

The surest mark of love is obedience. Jesus said in Jn.14:15, "**If you love Me, keep My commandments.**" In 14:21, He develops that statement, "**He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.**"

As parents, We know our kids love us, but we really see it when they obey us. It is the same in our relationship with God.

More often than not it isn't huge individual acts of obedience that we're talking about, it's day-to-day, it's moment-by-moment responding to God's Word, responding to His love. Fred Craddock was addressing some ministers one day and he caught the practical implications of obedience that we're talking about. He said, "*To give my life for Christ appears glorious; to pour myself out for others, to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom. I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory. We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1000 bill and laying it on the table and saying here's my life, Lord, I'm giving it all. But the reality for most of us is that He sends us to the bank and He has us cash that \$1000 bill in for quarters. We go through life putting out twenty-five cents here and fifty cents there. We're not very often asked to lay down the \$1000 bill.*"

So often it comes down to the little things, like saying a kind word when someone has just insulted you; like listening to the ramblings of a child instead of saying,

"I'm busy;" like giving to the mission offering instead of going out to dinner; like faithfully teaching children's Sunday School; like inviting someone to come to church with you; like being honest on your tax form; like reading your Bible and praying daily; or thousands of other simple acts of obedience that show our love to the Father.

II. The Counterfeit Believer ignores God's Commandments (v.4).

Have you ever seen a counterfeit bill? I don't know that I have ever had one handed to me. I may have, and, if so, I passed it along without knowing. But I know one thing about counterfeit bills. They never come in \$3 or \$7 denominations. Counterfeiters are smarter than that. At a superficial glance, a counterfeit bill appears to be perfectly normal and in a common denomination. But there is always something bogus about it, there is always something phony. There is a lack of exact correspondence. There is a blur somewhere, or something is omitted from it which marks it as a counterfeit bill. It is the same with a phony Christian.

As John indicates, they say the right things. John says that the counterfeit Christian says, "**I know Him.**" If you were to judge him by what he says, you would never know he was a phony. He goes to the right places, mingles with the right crowds, and says the right things. But there is something wrong with his life: the phony "**does not keep His commandments.**" His life is unchanged.

There are people like this in churches everywhere. There may be people like this right here in this room. They look like Christians, sound like Christian and at least outwardly act like Christians. Yet, it is all a show for there is no real change within them.

Paul wrote of such people in Titus 1:16 (NCV), "**They say they know God, but their actions show they do not accept him. They are hateful people, they refuse to obey, and they are useless for doing anything good.**"

C.H. Spurgeon once said, "**An unchanged life is the sign of an unchanged heart.**" John says such a person is "**a liar and the truth is not in him.**"

Even non-Christians can spot a phony. In 1805, a number of Indian chiefs and warriors met at Battle Creek, NY to hear a presentation of the gospel by a missionary named Cram. After hearing about Jesus and His life changing power, an aged chief named Red Jacket stood and said, "**We have heard that you also have been preaching about the Great Spirit to the whites who are our neighbors. We are well acquainted with them. We will wait a little while and see if the effect of the Great Spirit is upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest and less inclined to cheat and belittle Indians, we will certainly consider what you say**" (*Great Stories*, V.6; I.22; p.2).

III. The Real Believer is being Changed by God's Word (v.5).

Not only "**keep His commands**" but "**keep [obey] His Word.**" This refers to the general content of God's Word. Basically, the genuine Christian has a desire to know and do God's will.

John also says, "**truly the love of God is perfected in him.**"

When I became a Christian, I was not only saved and sealed for eternity I was changed on the inside. God gave me a new nature. Theologians call this *regeneration* which basically means "recreation." 2 Cor.5:17, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**"

In regenerating or recreating me, God did something spectacular. We read about it in Rom.5:5, "**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out [shed abroad - KJV] in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**" God in the person of the Holy Spirit came to permanently live within me and pour out His love in my life.

"**The love of God**" is not only "**poured out**" in my life, it is doing something in me. John says here in v.5 that it is "**perfected**" in me. In the life of an authentic believer, God's love is accomplishing, consummating, consecrating and finishing him.

Paul says in Phil.1:6 that we can be "**...confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**"

John says, "**By this we know that we are in Him.**" By what? By the fact that God's love is changing and completing us. Slowly but surely we are becoming more like Jesus. As Rom.8:29 puts it, we are being "**conformed to the image of His Son.**"

V. The Real Believer Walks as Jesus Walked.

John says "**He who says he abides in Him.**" "**Abides**" comes from *meno* meaning "to stay, dwell, remain or stand." This is the same word Jesus used when he told his disciples to stay with Him and watch in Gethsemane. To abide with Jesus is to stay with Him, to have close, intimate fellowship.

Jesus used this same word in His teaching of the vine and the branches. He said in Jn.15:4-5, "**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**"

You can be attached to the vine and bear only leaves. That is a relationship with God. When we are in fellowship with Him, when we abide in Him we bear fruit.

John says that the person "**who says he abides in Him**" the person who claims to have fellowship with God "**ought himself... to walk just as He walked.**" If you claim to have fellowship with Jesus you should act like Jesus. The proof of love is loyalty.

John says if we want to "**abide in Him**" we have to "**walk just as He walked.**" How did Jesus walk? He was different. People were drawn to Him. He spoke "**as one having authority, and not as the scribes**" (Mt.7:29). Where did he get his magnetism?

How did He have so much power? How did He always have the perfect answer, the fitting word and such great consistency?

Nicodemus came to Him at night hoping to find out the secret of His power. Others came asking as well. The really strange part is that Jesus kept telling them. They just didn't listen. Listen closely to these verses and see if you catch it:

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (Jn.4:34).

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (Jn.5:17).

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (Jn.5:19).

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (Jn.5:30).

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn.6:38).

"My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (Jn.7:16).

"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things" (Jn.8:28b).

"but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." (John 14:31 NIV)

"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." (John 15:10)

Did you get it? How did Jesus walk? He walked in total, unbroken and unrelenting dependence and obedience to the Father. We have access to that same fellowship today if we walk in it.

Conclusion:

This last week the world celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the end of the Berlin Wall. In 1961 a man named Erich Honecker, as the Central Committee secretary for security matters, was in charge of the building of the Berlin Wall. Honecker later became the head of the communist party and dictator of East Germany from 1971 until 1989.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, no person in all of East Germany was more despised than the former Communist dictator Erich Honecker. He had been stripped of all his offices. Even the Communist Party rejected him. Kicked out of his villa, the new government refused him and his wife new housing. The Honeckers were homeless and destitute.

Enter pastor Uwe Holmer, director of a Christian help center north of Berlin. Made aware of the Honeckers' straits, Pastor Holmer and his family decided to

take the former dictator and his wife into their own home! They lived there with the Holmers for about two months before eventually going into exile in South America.

Erich Honecker's wife, Margot, had ruled the East German educational system for twenty-six years. Eight of Pastor Holmer's ten children had been turned down for higher education due to Mrs. Honecker's policies, which discriminated against Christians.

Uwe Holmer had always taken the words of the Bible literally. Forgiveness was a central value of his Christian faith, and no person was excluded from that. Not even the Honeckers, who had made life hard for both of them for many years. Holmer said, "Here a person needed help, we couldn't fail him. Jesus would also have not have turned him down." Now the Holmers were caring for their personal enemy—the most hated man in Germany. This was so unnatural, so unconventional, so Christlike. By the grace of God, the Holmers loved their enemies, did them good, blessed them, and prayed for them.

Now it would be a great story if I told you that the Honeckers surrendered their life to Christ and were changed by the actions and witness of the Holmer family but there is no evidence that ever occurred...but that is not the point of the story... the point of the story is that the Holmer family lived what they believed! They walked as Jesus walked. Do you?