

KNOWING THAT WE KNOW JESUS CHRIST

1 John 2:3-5

Intro: This is another passage dealing with assurance, but, in this case, with the evidence of salvation, which is different from Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 1:12 where he was expressing his conviction as to the eternal character of our salvation.

I began this series on "Truths We Know" right here in 1 John, but in the last chapter, and verse 20. Basic to all that we believe as Christians is the truth that God's Son has come, and that He came that we might know God, that Father. But knowing the Father includes a personal relationship with the Father, in fact, union with the Father, and that in this relationship we have eternal life. A person can hardly be a Christian if he believes that there are other ways of salvation, or that there is any God, but whom the Apostle John called, "the true God," the only God. And a Christian believes firmly in the Deity of God's Son, Jesus Christ, a Deity which is identical with the Deity of God, the Father. These are great truths, truths which all true Christians hold.

But as important as true doctrine is in salvation, salvation does not stop with doctrine; it goes on to life. The Bible teaches that before any of us were saved, we were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). It also teaches that we were "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:15). We were without "hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). In 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul said that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or *a new creation*, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:21). This means that the result of believing what the Apostle John said in 1 John 5:20, is "eternal life," a new life, an amazing transformation.

This transformation was gloriously manifested in the life of Saul of Tarsus. After the Lord met him on the road to Damascus where he was going to arrest those who believed in Christ and take them back to Jerusalem to face possibly death, we find him meeting with the Christians in Damascus, and actually preaching the faith which he once sought to destroy. And he never went back to his former way of life! Instead of hating the Lord Jesus Christ and those who believed on Him, he loved the Savior and he loved those who loved Savior.

Tonight I want to consider with you what the Apostle John had to say in

verses 3 through 5 of 1 John 2. Let me read it as you follow in your Bibles. (Read.)

Now some of this language might seem a little rough, especially for a man in his late eighties or early nineties, which, as far as we know was the Apostle John's age at the time he wrote this epistle. So let us notice carefully the language of the Apostle in these verses.

I. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S STRONG LANGUAGE (1 John 2:3-5).

He called a person who claimed to know Christ, but who was not keeping the commandments of the Word, "a liar." That is very strong language. And I am sure that there are, and have been, many people, even true Christians, who think that the Apostle John could have been more gentle in describing such a person – one who claims to be a Christian, but does not keep the Lord's commandments.

Note where in this epistle the Apostle used this same word: 1:10; 2:22; and 4:20.

Why did John call such a person a liar?

Well, first, because he is saying something that really is not true. The Apostle John was saying what the Apostle Paul also said, and the Apostle Peter would have been in agreement with them. *There cannot be a true Christian who does not keep the commandments of the Word.* The Apostle John was not saying that we all keep the commandments perfectly. Nor was he saying that there would not be times when any of us might fail to be obedient to the Lord. But he was saying that a true Christian is going to want to live his life obeying the commandments.

Cf. John 14:21 and 23.

A second reason that John called a person who would claim to be a child of God, but who did not keep the Lord's commandment, "a liar," was because he wanted to shock them into facing the truth about salvation. And only eternity will reveal how many people have read this and were shocked into realizing that they really were not saved.

If you asked the average church-goer if he, or she, was a Christian, you would probably get "yes" for an answer. But how many church people

are there today, or in any day, who may go to church faithfully every Sunday, at least in the morning, but who never touch a Bible until they are ready to go to church the next Sunday. And many of them don't take a Bible even then. The Bible nowhere says that if you belong to a church and/or attend regularly, that you are a Christian. Years ago when it was thought that America was a Christian nation, there were many people who would respond positively to the question, "Are you a Christian?", would answer in the affirmative because they were citizens of the USA.

Let's move up into the pulpit. How many men, or today, women, stand in the pulpits of the land who are recognized as Christians because of their position in the church, and who lead respectable lives, but are not living lives of obedience to the commandments of Scripture.

There are people like I was, who were raised in a Christian home, who had to realize that they were not Christians because their parents were Christians. Many people believe that if you try to live a moral life, are a good citizen, pay your bills, and are kind to your neighbors, that this is what makes a person a child of God. But those same people may not even own a Bible, and never darken the door of a church.

Perhaps some of you could tell your own story of how you had to overcome your own mistaken ideas about the right definition of a Christian. Often Christian parents have trouble with their children when they try to bring their children up to know God and Christ, and to live to please Them, only to find stiff resistance. Not only is it impossible for a person to live like a Christian before he, or she, becomes a Christian, but such a thought is repugnant to him.

It is far better to find out now that you are making false claims about yourself, even though they are sincere, than to go out of this to find out that you didn't really know the Lord after all. The Apostle John had probably met a lot of people who were saying that they knew God, that they knew Christ, who did not keep the commandments of the Lord, and he felt it was too important to let anyone go on his way making a claim that simply was not true!

But now let us ask,

II. WHAT ARE THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND WHERE DO WE FIND THEM?

The commandments of God are found in the Bible. They are statements of what we are to do as Christians, or what we are not to do. So they are both positive commandments and negative commandments. Sometimes they have to do with what we are to believe, or what we are not to believe.

We find them in the OT, and we find them in the NT.

But how are we to find them? I know only one answer to that question: We need to read the Bible to locate them. Even people who don't claim to know the Lord, know about the ten commandments, but not even all Christians know how many commandments there are in the NT alone. But they number in the hundreds as the Spirit of God by the use of commandments describes the kind of a life the true Christian will be seeking to live.

Not all of the commandments of the Bible apply to us today. Observing the special days, such as the Passover, were very important in OT times, were very important before the death and resurrection of Christ, but the laws regarding the Passover which were given to the Jews, are not to be observed today by those of us who know the Lord. So in dealing with the commandments of Scripture, we need to use discretion. However, in reading our Bibles, we need to pay special attention to the many commandments which do apply to us.

There are always those who object to the commandments, saying that this leads to legalism. But we are not trying to win our salvation by obeying the Lord. Nor are we trying to keep our salvation by obeying the Lord. The legalist is trying to improve his standing before God by what he does. The Lord made it very clear that we are to obey the Lord because we love Him, and because we want to please Him. The ways in which our obedience might bring the blessing of the Lord, is a matter that is entirely in the Lord's hands.

So we need to read the Bible to find the commandments of the Lord. We need to listen carefully as we hear the Bible read by others, or as we hear it taught and preached, so we will think about how those commandments relate to our lives; that is, is there something that I need to be doing which I am not doing, or something that I am doing which is not pleasing to the Lord? It is good even to put some mark in the margin of our Bibles as we read to call attention to the commandments of Scripture. We don't need to be talking about it all of the time. We just simply need to do it.

But let me bring up a very important point. It is:

III. THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Not only is it impossible for a person who is not a Christian to obey the commandments of the Lord, but it is impossible for those of us who know the Lord to obey the commandments of Scripture if we are seeking to do it in our own strength.

Let me remind all of us of what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:12 and 13. (Read.) God gives us His strength in answer to prayer. God gives us strength through the Word of God itself. All of the time that we are seeking to live to please the Lord, the Lord is working in us to enable us to do what He wants us to do, or to keep us from doing things, even thinking thoughts, that definitely are not pleasing to Him. Cf. Isa. 40: 28-30:

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:28-31).

But now let me relate this great truth of obedience to the commandments of Scripture to at least three other passages which the Apostle John wrote about in this epistle.

IV. THREE BLESSINGS WHICH ACCOMPANY OUR OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD.

A. Our fellowship with God (1 John 1:6-7).

We can't be walking in the light unless we are obeying the commandments of the Lord.

Cf. also Eph. 5:8-10. We are not walking in the light if we are not being

obedient to the commandments of Scripture.

B. Deliverance from sin (1 John 3:9; 5:18).

What did King David mean when he wrote, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psa. 119:11). What did he mean that he was hiding God’s Word in his heart? Did he mean that he was memorizing it? Undoubtedly. But our memory work in our heads has to get into our hearts, and once it gets into our hearts it shows itself in our lives. The greatest defense against sin that we have is to be walking in obedience to the Word of God. What is sin? It is a departure from our obedience to the Lord and to the commandments which He has given us.

C. Love for the people of God (1 John 3:14).

Note carefully what the Apostle John was saying here: “We know that we have passed from death unto life ...” What is the evidence that we have truly been saved, that we have passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life? It is that we are living in obedience to God and to His Word, to His commandments. And when you find believers who love God and are seeking to show their love for Him by their obedience to His Word, you also find that those believers also have a great love for each other.

Concl: Let me close by asking you to turn to Matthew 7:21 where I want to read from that verse on to the end of the chapter. Notice “doeth the will of my Father” in verse 21, “and doeth them” in verse 24, “and doeth them not” in verse 26. Then see the reaction of the people in verses 28 and 29.

What kind of teaching were they used to? Cf. Matt. 23:1-3. The most powerful teaching there can be is when the teacher lives what he is telling his students to do. This is good advice for parents, and it is the best advice for all of us who minister the Word.