



How To Know You Know God (1 John 2:3-11)

I. INTRO

- A. How much time do you spend thinking about the future, or YOUR future? It can be quite debilitating if we take the time to consider the implications...
1. In a **general sense**, it's difficult not to be disturbed (or perhaps numbed) by the news of the day and the seemingly bleak prospects of the future.
 2. **More specifically**, the political strife over the last several years has been particularly depressing and discouraging. We saw it intensify in our political process over the last several months and I suspect it will only intensify over the next five months.
 3. One of the discouraging side effects is that we have begun to see is the trickle down effect of increasingly strident and belligerent tones in our public discourse. [Dockery: Convictional Civility]
 4. (This has affected us specifically here at KHC. We have suffered the effects of "outbursts of anger" [Gal 5:20] in our church that have caused hurtful division and strife. We are continuing the healing process – and our text today addresses this.)
- B. As citizens of the world and people living within the United States of America we long for assurances. We desire to achieve a certainty about things in this life and in our world – and one of life's greatest difficulties is that we remain uncertain about SO many things.
- C. This is the main reason that John wrote this first letter to the churches in and around Ephesus (Asia Minor). In many ways the people that John was writing to were experiencing much harsher, unstable, and chaotic lives than we are today.
1. They wanted assurance and certainty just as much as we do.
 2. Here's what John records Jesus saying in John 16:33 (AMP):
"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have

tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.” [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]” --John 16:33 (AMP) (Chapters 14-17 are Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse”)

3. How and why Jesus has overcome the world is what John is addressing in this letter. What John is saying is that we CAN know God and we CAN have assurance in this life – no matter what our circumstances. (John uses the word “know” 38 times in this letter – and 5 times in today’s passage.)
- D. As we move toward our text for today -- biblical scholars agree that John’s letter is made up of a series of self-scoring tests. Here’s what one noted scholar has said:
- “The key to the interpretation of [1 John] is the fact that it is an apparatus [series] of tests; that its definite object is to furnish its readers with an adequate set of criteria by which they may satisfy themselves, *“that you may know that you have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13). –Robert Law¹ [John MacArthur also has some excellent resources regarding the “tests” of 1 John.]
- E. What I’d like to do is read our text for today (1 John 2:3-11), pray, and then consider two tests...
- F. *“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected [complete, mature]. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. ⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word, which you have heard. ⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. ⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know*

¹ Kerr Lectures 1909. Edinburgh Scotland.

where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” --1 John 2:3-11

II. BODY

A. Last week Dennis spoke to us from chapter 1:5-2:2.

1. He finished by describing to us a courtroom scene where we are guilty as charged but our Advocate, our Attorney – Jesus Christ agrees to take the punishment for us.
2. So, with that in mind, there are two primary points that are important for us to consider today:
 - a. **There is a Behavioral (Ethical, Moral) Test: Responsive, Grateful Obedience Confirms Our Standing in God (1 John 2:3–6)**
 - b. **How The Old Becomes New (1 John 2:7-8) [The heart of the sermon]**
 - c. **There is a Relational Test: The One Who (Authentically) Loves, Lives in Light (1 John 2:7–11)**
 - d. (And there is a doctrinal test that is a little further on in the chapter.)

B. Let’s look at them one at a time:

1. **The Behavioral (Ethical, Moral) Test: Responsive, Grateful Obedience Confirms Our Standing in God (1 John 2:3–6)**
 - a. The phrase, “*By this we know*” occurs about 15 times in this brief letter. And the word “*know*” occurs 38 times (I believe).
 - b. God wants us to know Him. God wants us to know that we know Him. It is one of the great overlapping themes of John’s letter – that we know Him – and that we have assurance of His love for us.
 - c. John’s primary concern is not merely that we would know the gospel but that we would know Jesus Christ. That our knowledge OF Him would flow out of our hearts in grateful and responsive obedience TO Him.
 - d. Lloyd-Jones, in his commentary on 1 John, describes it as the difference between the SOURCE of a river and the river ITSELF.²

² *Life In Christ*: 183.

- e. So, it is our assurance of God’s love that provides new and unheard of motivation.

2. **How The Old Becomes New (1 John 2:7-8)** [The heart of the sermon]

- a. These two verses reveal to us the power of the gospel that will help us to KNOW God, to WALK in grateful, responsive obedience, and to truly LOVE others in a way we never thought we could.
- b. Let’s look at them again. At first they seem confusing and inconsequential, but we will see they are quite powerful:

*“Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word, which you have heard. * On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.” –1 John 2:7-8*

- c. So, we must ask the question: How does the old become new?
 - 1) There are possibilities for knowing God, loving God and loving others that are found in Jesus Christ, which are revolutionary and that we can find nowhere else.
 - 2) The old commandment that John is referring to is the commandment to love one another. Jesus says these words to the disciples in John 13:34: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* --John 13:34
 - 3) But this is actually a very old commandment. It’s first found in the Bible back in Leviticus 19:18: *“you shall love your neighbor as yourself”* --Leviticus 19:18
 - 4) CS Lewis, at the end his book *Abolition of Man* writes about what he calls “traditional morality” (or “ethical commonalities”) of virtually all religions and philosophies of life;³ they all contain the command to love. So, it’s old and it’s not exclusive to Christianity. A person could be an atheist and still hold to the moral code of seeking to love others.

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, Simon & Schuster 1944 and 1996: 55.

- 5) So, what makes Jesus' and (now) John's command new? The answer is found in the middle section of v. 8: "*which is true in Him and in you*"
- d. Jesus gives us four things that only Christianity can provide:⁴
- 1) A model for understanding love
 - 2) A power to love
 - 3) A motivation for love
 - 4) A responsibility to love (agapao) others. [Our 3rd point]
- e. The model, the power, the motivation, and the responsibility is so far beyond anything we can find in any other religion or belief system. (Theologically it is referred to as the doctrine of Union with Christ.)
- f. Again, this is seen in the simple phrase "*in Him*" (v. 8b)
- 1) Here is what I want you to see: No one ever went through what Jesus went through for love. No one ever endured what Jesus endured for love.
 - 2) There are many moments throughout history where people sacrificed, and even died, for love. (Right?)
 - 3) But Jesus Christ went far beyond. God said to Adam (and the rest of us), "If you will love and obey Me I will give you life." Adam, and the rest of humanity said "no." (It's both "I won't" and "I can't.")
 - 4) Here is what the Father said to Jesus Christ: "Son, go to earth, live a perfect life, and die a brutal sinner's death and I will turn my back on You."
 - 5) The Father has never said that to anybody else. Jesus became obedient and the Father forsook Him.
 - a) Jesus Christ exposed Himself to the full force of all the sin the world has ever known or will know – and he did it for you (and me).
 - b) Nobody has EVER loved like that or sacrificed like that. Nobody's ever said they would go to hell to love and make a way for people to know and love God.

⁴ Adapted from material by Tim Keller.

- 6) Robert Murray M'Cheyne (early 19th century Scottish pastor and theologian):

“Dear friends let us look into the ocean through which Christ waded for us. He was without any comforts of God — no feeling that God loved him — no feeling that God pitied him — no feeling that God supported him. God was his sun before — now that sun became all darkness. Not a smile from his Father — not a kind look — not a kind word. He was without a God — he was as if he had no God. All that God had been to him before, was taken from him now. He was Godless — deprived of his God. He had the feeling of the condemned, when the Judge says: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed’ [Mat 25:41], ‘who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power’ [2 Thess 1:9]. [Jesus] felt that God said the same to him. Ah! this is the hell which Christ suffered...The ocean of Christ’s sufferings is unfathomable...He was forsaken in the [place] of sinners. If you close with him as your surety, you will never be forsaken...” My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [Mat 27:46] [M’Cheyne concludes] For me — for me.⁵

- 7) Nobody ever did anything like that, nobody will ever do anything like that. Nobody ever faced what Jesus faced and said, “Father, I love You and then faced people who were laughing, and mocking, jeering, beating, wiping, and spearing Me – while my friends ran away from Me.
- 8) But Jesus said, “I’m going to stay here and endure the hell.” He endured the punishment that is required of us.
- 9) **Do you believe that happened? It can be hard to believe that anyone ever loved like He loved.
- a) If your heart has not been awakened to see and believe that anyone ever loved you liked that then the Apostle John would say that you don’t know God.

⁵ *Sermons*, Banner of Truth 1961: 47-49.

- b) But if you know this (if your “knower” comes alive with this understanding) then you’ve got all at once A model, a motivation, a power, and an incentive to love that no other religion of belief system has.
- c) This is the new commandment that both Jesus and John are referring to.

3. **The Relational Test: The One Who (Authentically) Loves, Lives in the Light (1 John 2:7–11)**

- a. Authentically loving and living in the light means that we begin to see our whole lives – including personal, family, church, and vocation in the light of what Jesus Christ has done for us.
- b. How can we hold a grudge, how can we hate when we realize what Jesus went through to secure our salvation. He literally experienced hell on earth so that you wouldn’t have to.
- c. We still have our ups and downs but we simply can’t look at them the same. Jesus absorbed the only REAL tragedy that could ever befall you – or me.
- d. What Jesus has done for us will help us to view success differently as well. We will see our successes as a gift from God.
- e. We will live in the Light and our attitudes will change – whether it is the inevitable tragedies of life, to successes, even those sins that keep cropping up in our lives -- our view of life changes. We see all of this in a different light because of what Jesus Christ has done.
- f. When we see (with the eyes of our heart) what Jesus Christ has accomplished on our behalf, it ruins our ability to hate.

III. CONCLUSION

A. We have the privilege, today, of closing our service with an updated version of the Great hymn Blessed Assurance, written by Fanny Crosby in 1874. But before we get to that I would like to read a closing quote from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones – the mid 20th century London preacher:

“[When Christians] feel the love of God in their heart, they want to love Him and glorify Him, and they know they can glorify God most of all by being new men and women, by living as Christ lived and therefore showing and proving that they are indeed true disciples.”

- B. If you are here today and sense an awakening of your heart to the reality of what Jesus accomplished on the cross for you that means Jesus is drawing you to Himself. Don't resist that. You will need to talk to someone about that – it needs to make its way into the light.
- C. If you are a Christian, know that the more we know and love God, the more we prepare our hearts for assurance to blossom.
- D. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
 O what a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
 Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Refrain:

*This is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Savior all the day long;
 this is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Savior all the day long.*

vs.2

Perfect submission, perfect delight!
 Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
 Angels descending bring from above
 Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

E. **(Refrain)****vs.3**

Perfect submission, all is at rest!
 I in my Savior am happy and blessed,
 Watching and waiting, looking above,
 Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

(Refrain)