



## Living with Assurance: John's Epistles

### Session 2: 1 John 2:3-28

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You know that you know God if you obey God.

What are we to obey? *His commands.*

We obey his commands out of love for Him. Not because we have to, not even because we need to, but because we want to. Not only is there no fellowship with God apart from Christ, but there can be no fellowship apart from obedience to God's commands.

Obedience is the fruit of faith. If you have it on the inside, it will come on the outside. The inner attitude and the outward act are united.

B. H. Carroll:

A mere verbal orthodoxy is hypocrisy, and is more hateful to God and more fateful to man than avowed infidelity. I am quite sure that a strict application of this test would empty thousands of pulpits, hundreds of professors' chairs in Christian schools, and deplete thousands of church rolls. This emptying and depleting would not be deplorable but helpful. It would amount to a great revival.

The NT clearly teaches obedience to God's commands is fruit of salvation.

God puts a high priority on obedience. This is throughout the Bible:

- **1 Samuel 15:22** *To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*
- **Jeremiah 7:22-23** *For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, <sup>23</sup> but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.*
- **Hosea 6:6** *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*
- **Micah 6:8** *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*
- **James 1:22** *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

We know that we have come to know him if we obey His commands.

Keeping his commands is the first check point. (How are you living?)

**vv. 4-6** - John here describes two types of people:

- Person 1: Claims to know God but does not keep his commandments. John calls him a liar.
- Person 2: Claims to know God and obeys God. This is the true believer.

There is a great difference in professing Christ and possessing Christ. We are to possess Him. And if we possess Him, He possesses us.

James Montgomery Boice says:

- To walk as Christ walked is personal because we live not by rules but by example.
- To walk as Christ walked is active because our Lord is active.
- To walk as Christ walked is costly because the path Christ walked led to crucifixion. "Such a path can be walked only by the one who has died to self and who has deliberately taken up the cross of Christ to follow him."<sup>1</sup>

**Ephesians 5:1** says, *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*

**1 Peter 2:21** says, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15** "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

**v. 7** - Since Paul has been talking about living in the light, we might expect Paul to go now into a list of how not to live – a bunch of “do nots.” In reality, while there are instructions about what not to do, the general idea is, if you live by the Spirit, you’ll walk by the Spirit, which means you will do what the Spirit desires. It’s not all about doing or not doing. Christianity is not a list of dos or a list of do nots. It’s a relationship – it’s about living a life with the spirit of God.

**Dear friends/beloved** - A word based on the high form of love, agape. It is not brotherly love here. It is agape love.

**Not a new but an old . . . yet I am writing to you a new command** - How can the command to love be both old and new?

#### OLD

- it existed and was known before Christ's coming.
  - **Leviticus 19:18** 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (second)
  - **Deuteronomy 6:5** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (greatest)
- Jesus commanded his disciples to love.

**NEW** - two possible meanings of two different words in the original language. One meant "new in time"; the other meant "new in quality." The commandment to love one another is not new in time, but it is new in character.

James Montgomery Boice expresses the newness of love in this way:

- 1) Love is new in the extent to which it reached
- 2) Love is new in the lengths to which it will go
- 3) Love is new in the degree to which it is realized

#### **v. 8 - Darkness is passing and the true light is already shining**

Christ is on his throne, but God has not yet put all His enemies beneath His feet. We live in an already-not yet situation. Therefore, as believers, we belong spiritually to that age, but we live in this age.

**vv. 9-11** - John gives us three ways love should affect our lives.

##### **1. Love reflects our position (v. 9)**

This person is lost. Of you hate because of face, place, or race you are in darkness.

##### **2. Love affects our practice (v. 10)**

By loving your brothers and sisters you assure yourself that you will not stumble because you are walking as Jesus walked. Not only will you not stumble but you will not cause others to stumble.

Christian love is not a passing sentiment or emotion. Christian love is a practical thing that applies in the everyday affairs of life. Consider a few of the “one another” statements in the NT:”

- Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)

- Be devoted to one another and honor one another (Rom. 12:10)
- Be of the same mind one to another (Rom. 12:16)
- Do not judge one another (Rom. 14:13)
- Receive one another (Rom. 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14)
- Edify [buildup] one another (I Thess. 5:11)
- Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)
- Use hospitality one to another (1Peter4:9)

Treat them the way God treats them; the way God treats us.

### 3. Love affects our perception (v.11)

This person is in darkness, walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, and he is blind. There is both the absence of love and the absence of God.

How are you loving? That is John's question.  
Love one another. That is John's command.

#### 2:12-19

If we're not careful we could start second guessing our salvation instead of double-checking our salvation! This is not at all what John wants to happen! John is writing this letter to strengthen a true Christian's assurance, to help him or her know that they are the real deal. Therefore, John anticipates confusion at this point in his letter and inserts a quick statement to his readers before he goes on (vv. 12-14).

#### How are you loving? (What am I loving?) vv. 15-17

The word "world" can refer to three different things:

- The physical, created world. The earth. "God created the heavens and the earth."
- The human world, mankind. "For God so loved the world ..."
- Invisible system: the world of sports, the world of politics, etc. This is the use of "world" here. The invisible spiritual system world ruled by Satan is not the natural habitat for the believer.

John explains that you cannot love God and love the world because the things of the world do not come from God. Instead, those things come from the world. He uses three statements to describe "everything in the world":

- **Lust of the flesh - Cravings of the sinful man**
- **Lust of the eyes**
- **Pride of Life (Boasting of what he has and does)**

No Christian becomes worldly all of a sudden. It creeps up. We must be very careful. We must not love these things of the world and check ourselves regularly!

But John gives another reason why we should not love the world in v. 17 - Christians are to live for eternity!

#### What are you believing?

Three Common Views of the Last Hour:

- Refers to the period immediately preceding the end of the world.
- Refers to the entire Christian era - the time between Christ's first advent and His return.
- Refers to the Johannine period as a time of crisis.

The people of the early church lived with a great deal of expectation believing Christ could come at any moment. They *expected* him to come at any moment. For them, every hour was the last hour. That's a good way to go

through life. Having such an attitude causes us to be passionate about evangelism and consistent in confession and prayer. It causes us to want to have a strong relationship with God and to serve Him completely.

Antichrists:

- John is the only writer to use the word “antichrist” in scripture (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).
- The term anti-Christ means *one who stands against Christ* OR *one who stands instead of Christ*.
- John distinguishes between the antichrists who have come and the antichrist who will come.

### **Went out from / did not belong to**

Apparently, these antichrists were at one time a part of the Christian church. But something happened and they left. John says, “If they were from us (but they weren't), they would have remained with us (but they didn't).”

“Faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first.”

**vv. 20-25**

John has just said that we are living in the last hour, the last days, and that there are many antichrists around. Now, John helps us see the difference between the antichrists and the true believers – those who lie and those who know the truth. As you can tell just in a first reading, those who lie are the antichrists and those who know the truth are the true believers.

John demonstrates that true believers need not fear the antichrists because they have a three-fold security:

#### **1. They have an anointing from the Holy One.**

Christ – “anointed one”  
True Christian have an “anointing”  
AntiChrist – “against the anointed one”

#### **2. They adhere to the Christian message.**

*That which you heard from the beginning* - the gospel generally, the truth about the Son and Father specifically.

#### **3. They have union with Christ.**

Why are some people led astray by false teaching? Because they are not abiding in the Spirit. In the last chapter, John has shown many reasons abiding is important:

- False teachers do not abide in the fellowship (2:19)
- The word we have heard should abide in us (2:24)
- The anointing abides in us, and we should abide in the Spirit (2:27)
- As we abide in the Word and in the Spirit, we also abide in Christ (2:28)

Likewise:

- If we say we abide in Christ, we should walk as he walked (2:6)
- If we love our brother, we abide in the light (2:10)
- If the Word abides in us, we will be spiritually strong (2:14)
- If we do the will of God, we shall abide forever (2:17).<sup>2</sup><sup>13</sup>

Abiding brings and continues fellowship with the Father.

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, 501.