

23 - 1 John 2:3-17 - By This We Know (Recap) - 2018-10-21
edited; originally preached 2018-04-29

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:171-172
Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:161-170
Sermon: "By This We Know (Recap)" 1 John 2:3-17
Benediction: Psalm 119:173-174

INTRODUCTION

Today we continue to review what we previously studied together in 1 John 2, so we can proceed where we left off a few weeks ago.

Last time we read the wonderful passage about Jesus Christ the Righteous being our advocate with the Father, advocating for us on the basis that He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.

In studying today's passage, which starts in verse 3, we have to be firmly hooked to what we learned in the previous two verses. Your sins are dealt with not by your keeping His commandments, but by His advocacy for you.

But the advocacy of Jesus Christ with the Father is for those who are His little children, those who have faith in Him, because He is the propitiation by faith. How, then, do you know that you are one for whom He is Advocate? Or how do you know whether someone else is one of those for whom Jesus Christ the Righteous is Advocate with the Father?

In the next few lines, we will see that the apostle John phrases the answer to that in terms of *knowing* Jesus Christ, and tells us how to know that we know Him, and how to see through the lies of those who merely *say* they know him.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is Himself the propitiation for our sins; and we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

TEXT

NKJV 1 John 2:3-6 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (4) He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (5) But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

BODY

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is Himself the propitiation for our sins; and we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

I. We Know That We Know Jesus Christ If We Keep His Commandments

A. False notions to clear away

1. obedience being the cause of our knowing Christ
 - a) it is not that if we obey Christ's commandments, that makes us Christians, or that makes us know Him
2. mere outward obedience makes us know that we know Jesus Christ
 - a) by compulsion
 - b) for our own selfish interests
 - c) to be approved of by other people
3. perfect obedience is necessary to know that we know Jesus Christ
 - a) this cannot be, since this is about those who sin, and therefore need an advocate before the Father
 - b) this cannot be, since even the apostle Paul said of his relationship with the law - Romans 7:14-15 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

B. True notions

1. obedience from the inmost part of you, where you love and delight in the law of God
 - a) Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.
2. obedience that is unto Him
3. having it be that His law truly decides things for us; when there is a question about what I should do
 - a) the deciding factor is not such things as "how will it work out" or "what I've always done is"
 - b) instead, the deciding factor is, "What is right according to God's law as written in the bible?"
4. obedience that grows over time, replacing disobedience (progressive sanctification)

C. Additional expressions of this; this is the general theme from here to verse 17

1. verse 10 we love our brothers
2. verse 15 we do not love the world
3. verse 17 we do the will of God

D. Note that John states this is the way to know that we are in Him

1. you shouldn't make up your own way to know; when you test yourself by that, you won't actually know
2. you shouldn't attempt to use ways already proven false in the scriptures
 - a) e.g. being the children or grandchildren of the righteous, like Abraham
 - b) e.g. having the temple of the Lord i.e. being in the congregation of the church
 - c) e.g. doing all kinds of religious works in the name of Jesus
3. you shouldn't listen to other people's made up way to know

example of someone's made-up way to know that you are in Christ

Bill Gothard---Basic Seminar Textbook, p. 159

One day a young man on a farm experienced a flood of doubts about whether or not he really was a Christian. He walked outside behind the barn, knelt down, and prayed. His prayer contained the following: "Thank you, God, for loving me and sending your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for me, a sinner. Right now, I do receive Him and ask you to cleanse me by His blood and make me your child. Thank you for raising Him up from the dead as a living Savior, and thank you for hearing and answering this prayer." He finished his prayer, pounded a wooden stake in the ground and wrote the date on it. About two weeks later, the doubts came back again. This time he had a ready and very effective reply, "All right, Satan. Come with me!" He walked out behind the barn, pointed to the stake and said, "See Satan. Here's the date and here's the place I received Jesus Christ as my Savior. And God has promised that if I call upon the name of the Lord, I shall be saved." Romans 10:13 Since that time, doubts never returned.

this is similar to many others

We know that we know Jesus Christ if we keep His commandments

- II. We Know That a Person Who Says “I Know Him,” But Does *Not* Keep His Commandments, Does *Not* Truly Know Him
- A. Note that John is returning to the concept he introduced earlier, the mere professor or false professor - the one who says He is a Christian but, in fact, is deceived and a deceiver
 - 1. John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth
 - B. Now John casts that concept into the form we see here
 - 1. 1 John 2:4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 - C. Through the centuries since John wrote, and in our own time, people wishing to have some place in Christ’s church have said “I know Him” in many different ways; but in whatever words a person claims to know God, if he makes that claim but does not keep the Lord’s commandments, he is lying; the truth is not in him
 - 1. he may be conscious of the fact he’s lying, and be doing so with the purpose of deceiving
 - 2. he may be so deceived himself that he doesn’t even know he’s lying
 - D. See additional expressions of this
 - 1. verse 9 He hates his brother
 - a) not affection or sentiment
 - b) not words, primarily
 - c) conduct, treatment
 - (1) if you lie to him, that is hatred
 - (2) if you dishonor him, you hate him
 - (3) if you steal from him, that is hatred
 - 2. verse 15 He loves the world
 - E. One of the things necessary for benefitting from this doctrine is acknowledging that there are such persons

-We know that we know Jesus Christ if we keep His commandments

-We Know That a Person Who Says “I Know Him,” But Does Not Keep His Commandments, Does Not Truly Know Him

III. We Know That Whoever Both Says, “I Know Christ,” and Keeps the Word of Christ, Truly Is In Christ (v. 5)

- A. Saying “I know Him” does not indicate the love of God has been perfected or completed in a person; a verbal profession of knowing God does not show the love of God perfected or completed in a person
- B. But saying “I know Him” *and* keeping His word does indicate that the love of God has been perfected or completed in a person; a verbal profession of knowing God, when joined with actual keeping of His word, is a thing perfect, complete
- C. John says this another way in verse 6: He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked
 - 1. the Lord Jesus Himself, being without sin, obeyed God’s law of love perfectly, completely, at every point
 - a) which is a very important truth, because if He had not, when He died, He would have had to die for His own sins
 - b) since He had no sin, when He died, He died for the sins of others
 - 2. whoever abides in Christ, then, ought to walk even as He walked
 - 3. illus child standing on father’s feet; illus a person riding in the car with me
 - 4. see this in expressions that have it built in
 - a) someone who says he is a follower of Christ ought actually to follow Him; if a person says he is a follower of Christ, but does not actually follow, we would know his statement is a lie
 - b) someone who says he trusts in Christ ought actually to trust Him
 - c) someone who says he is Christ’s servant ought actually to serve Him

-We know that we know Jesus Christ if we keep His commandments

-We Know That a Person Who Says “I Know Him,” But Does Not Keep His Commandments, Does Not Truly Know Him

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IV. APPLICATION

- A. If you don't understand your own spiritual state
 1. if you have said that you know Him, but you do not obey Him
 2. if you trust Him and obey Him, but have not said so
- B. If you need to make an evaluation about the spiritual state of someone else; see that making such a judgment or evaluation of someone is not something prohibited by our Lord's command not to judge; we must make such evaluations of people, such judgments
 1. Is this someone I would choose for a deacon or pastor in the church?
 - a) you would naturally choose someone who seems convincing in how he says that he knows God
 - b) but that is only good if in addition to saying that he knows God, he also obeys His commandments
 2. Is this someone I would considering marrying?
 3. Is this someone I would welcome as a new church member?
 - a) 1689.26.2 All persons throughout the world, **professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation,** are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.
 4. Is this someone I should listen to as a preacher and teacher?

CONCLUSION

-We know that we know Jesus Christ if we keep His commandments

-We Know That a Person Who Says "I Know Him," But Does Not Keep His Commandments, Does Not Truly Know Him

-We Know That Whoever Both Says, "I Know Christ," and Keeps the Word of Christ, Truly Is In Christ

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is Himself the propitiation for our sins; and we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

Prelude: Trinity 19 "Psalm 95"

Camille: piano - transpose

Noah: trumpet

Anna: clarinet

Trinity 400 "Come, Thou Fount"

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Trinity 461 "Psalm 130"

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Trinity 179 "Ah, Holy Jesus"

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Noah: trumpet - see attached in e minor

Anna: sing or clarinet - see attached in e minor

Grace 54 "Glory Is Certain"

Camille: flute or sing

Noah: sing

Anna: piano

JRY:

In studying this passage, we have to be firmly hooked to the previous two verses.
Your sins are not dealt with by your keeping His commandments, but by His advocacy.
But how do you know that you are one for whom He is Advocate?
-you are one who keeps His commandments
 -perfectly? No, else why do you need an advocate?

verse 3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

JRY:

“we know Him” seems to be John’s way of connecting us with what he wrote about Jesus being our Advocate

“keep His commandments” in what sense?

- perfectly? no
- always? no
- desiring in the inner man to keep them? yes
- loving to keep them? yes
- hating when we break them? yes
- more and more as time goes by? yes

Geneva:

This must be understood of such a knowledge as has faith with it, and not of a common knowledge

He returns to the testimony of our union with God, that is, to sanctification, declaring what it is to walk in the light, that is, to keep God's commandments. By this it follows that holiness does not consist in those things which men have devised, neither in a vain profession of the gospel.

Calvin:

John then takes this principle as granted, that the knowledge of God is efficacious. He hence concludes, that they by no means know God who keep not his precepts or commandments.

Cotton:

We grant much comfort from good works, for though they do not justify us, yet by them we know that we are justified.

Poole:

The meaning then is: That we perceive, or discern ourselves to be sincere believers, and consequently that Christ is both our Propitiation and Advocate, when it is become habitual and easy to us to obey his commandments.

Carroll:

But we are now to consider the discriminating evidences subjectively and practically, i.e., the evidences as knowable to the man himself in his own experience, and as manifested to others in his life. If a man be acquitted in God's sight, and if he be forgiven time and again after justification, and if he be born anew, and if he be cleansed from the defilement of sin, and if the progressive work of the sanctification be going on in him, we may expect to find some consciousness and realization on his part of these great changes, and we have a right to expect some differences in his life, observable to all men acquainted with his life.

verse 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

JRY:

Apparently this is a pattern John is using, a way of saying something that he will use repeatedly.

People get confused at "keep His commandments," since we are aware that none of us keeps His commandments perfectly, consistently, fully.

verse 5a But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.

JRY:

That is, completed. Love of God moves a person to do something, which is, to keep God's word. When a person keeps God's word, there is an operation that is concluded successfully.

Confession and obedience are two parts that make up one thing. When there is profession, but not obedience, the love of God is imperfect.

Geneva:

He that keeps God's commandments loves God indeed: He that loves God, is in God, or is joined together with God. Therefore he that keeps his commandments is in him.

“the love of God” Wherewith we love God

Calvin:

He now defines what a true keeping of God's law is, even to love God.

take this as its meaning, “to love God in sincerity of heart, is to keep his commandments.”

see Deu 10:12

see Deu 30:19

For the law, which is spiritual, does not command only external works, but enjoins this especially, to love God with the whole heart.

If any one objects and says, that no one has ever been found who loved God thus perfectly; to this I reply, that it is sufficient, provided every one aspired to this perfection according to the measure of grace given unto him. In the meantime, the definition is, that the perfect love of God is the complete keeping of his law. To make progress in this as in knowledge, is what we ought to do.

Poole:

His faith worketh by love, Galatians 5:6; his love is perfected, and attains its end in obedience, whereof it is the vital principle; 1 John 5:3; John 14:15

Gill:

not the love wherewith God loves him, for that is perfect in himself, and admits of no degrees

here it is to be understood . . . of the love wherewith God is loved by his people; and intends not the absolute perfection of it in them, in whom it often waxes cold, and is left, or the fervour of it abated, but the sincerity and reality of it; for by the keeping the word of God, both his truths and his ordinances, it is clearly seen that their love to him is without dissimulation, and is not in tongue only, but in deed and in truth

it is not the keeping of the word of God that causes this love, or makes it perfect or sincere, for it is a fruit of the Spirit, and is owing to the grace of God; but love, on the other hand, is the cause of keeping of the word; and the latter being a consequent and an effect of the former, is the evidence of it, of the truth and sincerity of it

Barnes:

That is, what he has spoken or commanded, The term “word” here will include all that he has made known to us as his will in regard to our conduct.

He professes to have the love of God in his heart, and that love receives its completion or filling up by obedience to the will of God. That obedience is the proper carrying out, or the exponent of the love which exists in the heart. Love to the Saviour would be defective without that, for it is never complete without obedience.

the passage does not make any affirmation about sinless perfection, but it only affirms that if true love exists in the heart, it will be carried out in the life; or that love and obedience are parts of the same thing; that one will be manifested by the other

where obedience exists, it is the completion or perfecting of love.

Ellicott:

The revelation of the will of God, looked at as a whole.

VWS:

The word is the revelation regarded as a whole, which includes all the separate commandments or injunctions.

The love of God is perfected or completed by the perfect establishment of the relation of love between God and man.

RWP:

“whoever keeps on keeping”
perfected = stands completed
our love for God

verse 5b By this we know that we are in Him.

JRY: by this, and not by something else

Geneva:

“we are in him” He means our union with Christ

Calvin:

He refers to that fruit of the gospel which he had mentioned, even fellowship with the Father and the Son; and he thus confirms the former sentence, by stating what follows, as a consequence. For if it be the end of the gospel to hold communion with God, and no communion can be without love, then no one makes a real progress in faith except he who cleaves from the heart to God.

Poole:

Such an efficacious governing knowledge of him, therefore, as, by the power of the love which it produces, subdues our souls to the obedience of him, is a certain proof to us of our union with him,

Gill:

in Christ, not merely nominally, or by profession . . . but really
-first secretly, through the love of Christ, the election of God, and the covenant of grace
-and then openly, in conversion and the effectual calling, through believing in Christ

the saints appear to be in him as branches in the vine; and which is known by their fruits, as here, by the keeping the word, and doing the commandments of Christ, which do not put a man into Christ, but only show that he is there; for a man's being in Christ is owing to the grace of God

RWP:

by continuous keeping of Christ's commandments, not by loud talk and loose living

Barnes:

That is, by having in fact such love as shall insure obedience. To be in him, is to be united to him; to be his friends.

JRY:

Let this be an aid to those of you who are looking inside yourself to know if you are a Christian or not. Do you love God, and does that love produce in you a desire to obey Him, and actual obedience to His commands?

Let this aid you when you are considering to whom you should listen, and whom you should choose.

verse 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

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