

Sermon 13, Walking Like Jesus, 1 John 2:5-6

Proposition: Abiding in Christ obligates you to walk like Christ.

- I. Imitation Is How You Know You're in Christ
- II. Abide in Christ
- III. Walk Like Christ
 - A. Jesus walked in perfect communion with God
 - B. Jesus walked in perfect obedience to His Father.
 - C. Jesus walked in love
 - D. Jesus walked in truth
 - E. Jesus walked in company with the people of God
 - F. Jesus walked through suffering
 - G. Jesus walked in patience with those who attacked, slandered, and wronged Him

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, John speaks frequently of abiding in Christ. Tonight, our text once again tells us to abide, and specifies that abiding in Christ obligates you to walk like Christ. It prefaces this truth, though, with the teaching that walking like Christ is how you know you're in Him.

I. Imitation Is How You Know You're in Christ

John gave us a moral test in the immediately preceding context, which we looked at last week. There we saw that obedience is the way to know God, comparable to physical proximity with another human being. But here, we have another version of this moral test. John tells us we can know we are in Christ by walking like Christ.

To be "in Christ" is the Bible's most frequent designation of a Christian. How do you know that you're in Jesus? Because you're like Jesus. And how do you become like Jesus? By abiding in Him. Really, John is saying "Do you want to know that you're a Christian? Then abide in Him and walk like Him."

II. Abide in Christ

What does it mean to abide or remain in Christ? Well, first of all, before you can abide in Him, you have to be in Him. Baptism is repeatedly described in Scripture as a baptism "into" Christ. You are put into Him by baptism — not by the water, but by the Holy Spirit, who spiritually baptizes you to make you like Jesus. Once you are inserted into Him in a relationship so close that the Scripture parallels it to marriage, sonship, and brotherhood, then you need to remain. That is, don't walk away from Christ! Don't jeopardize your relationship with Him. Don't do things that offend Him.

Abiding, then, means remaining in close relationship. It is simply another way of describing the “knowing” that we saw in the previous verses. What practices does the abiding Christian engage in?

He obeys. He prays. And he listens to Jesus. That’s how you abide. You engage in the practices appropriate to relationship.

III. Walk Like Christ

And if you are abiding in Christ, if you know Him, then what should you do? Walk like Him. Imitate Him.

This raises the question: How did Jesus walk? There are all kinds of ways to take this. Jesus walked in perfect communion with God. Jesus walked in perfect obedience to His Father. Jesus walked in love. Jesus walked in truth. Jesus walked in company with the people of God. Jesus walked through suffering. Jesus walked in patience with those who attacked, slandered, and wronged Him. Let’s just look at each of those in turn.

A. Jesus walked in perfect communion with God

We read in the gospel of John, “And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me” (Joh 11:41-42 ESV). “You always hear me.” Can you believe those words? Jesus says that the Father always hears Him. Brothers and sisters, that’s what I call a close relationship. That’s what we can call perfect communion. Jesus was never distant from the Father, never saying “Wow, I’ve gone weeks without talking to my Father. I have no idea what’s going on in His life.”

So how do you and I walk in perfect communion with God? How do we get this kind of intimacy so that we can walk like Jesus walked? First of all, you have to set aside some serious prayer time. For the Father to always hear you, you need to always be talking to Him!

Think of it this way. You come to me and say “Pastor, I just don’t feel very close with my parents. They live in another state and I just don’t get around to calling or visiting very much. How do I improve my relationship with them?”

Let’s face it: Any answer I give that doesn’t involve you picking up the phone and calling more often, or else you moving to a physically close location, isn’t going to work! You can’t have a closer relationship with investing some time. So if you want to walk like Jesus walked — which, John is telling is, is the characteristic of *everyone who knows Jesus* — then you must spend time in prayer. This is a total non-negotiable. If you tell me that you pray about 30 seconds a day, I will tell you that you are not walking like Jesus did.

B. Jesus walked in perfect obedience to His Father

But not only did Jesus walk in perfect communion with His Father; He walked in perfect obedience to the Father. He did no sin; there was no deceit found in His mouth. We can’t tame our tongues, but Christ tamed His tongue to the point that He never spoke a false word or said something in a harsh, unloving spirit. How did He do that? By walking in perfect communion with His Father. What motivated Him at every moment was the Father’s attitude, the Father’s

joy, the Father's smile. And brothers and sisters, you and I won't walk in obedience until we care more about pleasing our Father than we do about our own pleasure. If you care about venting your spleen more than about pleasing the Father, you won't be very pleasing to Him.

The other point about walking in obedience is that you have to know what God wants. If you never take the time to read His word, never take the time to memorize the Ten Commandments, never take the time to familiarize yourself with the lifestyles of those who do dedicate themselves to pleasing God, then you won't be able to obey because you won't have a clue. You might be like the evil persecutors Jesus mentioned who think that killing people whose faith differs from yours is the best way to serve God. That's not how Jesus walked!

C. Jesus walked in love

Furthermore, Jesus walked in love. Paul epitomizes this by telling us that Jesus loved and gave Himself. "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2 ESV). How do you walk in love? You live to give rather than living to take. You give away what you have rather than clinging to it with a death grip. My grandma was a wonderful woman, and I loved her. She was always very generous with me. But toward her own children she had a hard time giving. She would not give away any of her furniture or family pictures to her children, even though they had asked for various pieces many times. And so it was that when Grandma's house burned down, all of those things were completely lost. If she had given them away, she would have still had them — but because she could not bring herself to give anything away, she lost even what she had.

This story sounds like a parable, though I assure you that it is perfectly true. The application to us is obvious: If you're going to walk like Jesus did, then you need to walk in love. You need to show generosity, first of all to your own family, and then secondly to the church and to the poor. If you don't provide for your wife and children (and I don't just mean financially, but relationally as well), you don't know Christ. If you don't give to your church and the poor, you don't know Christ. This sounds harsh, but it's only what the text in front of us says (and many other texts say the same; see James' denunciation of those who say "Be warmed and filled"!). If you claim to be in Christ but don't walk in love, you're not in Christ. You're lying about your born-again status. He walked in love, and He showed that love by giving Himself for us.

D. Jesus walked in truth

But Jesus also walked in truth. He said "I am the truth." He always refused to lie, even when it perhaps could have saved His life. He was careful never to speak falsely. Are you? Do you walk in truth?

E. Jesus walked in company with the people of God

One thing that is incredibly obvious in the Gospels is that Jesus spent most of His ministry time with the twelve disciples. He was not a lone ranger Christian; He walked in company with God's people. He worshipped at His local synagogue and was even asked to speak there early in His ministry. Clearly, Jesus was no outsider among the people of God.

What about you? Do you walk with a group of fellow Christians, people to whom you're not biologically related but who form your church? Would anyone reading your biography look up and say, "Wow. It's clear that this guy was constantly around church people!" If not, brothers and sisters, you're not walking like Jesus did.

F. Jesus walked through suffering

Our Lord also walked through suffering. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was scourged and crucified after being betrayed by one of His own disciples.

Jesus walked through suffering. If you have chronic health problems, a broken family or other relational difficulties, then you have the preconditions to walk like Jesus. His life wasn't perfect all the time! The evidence we have suggests that He lost His earthly father as a teenager, that He was rejected in His messianic role by His younger siblings, and that the people of His hometown regarded Him as a bastard and didn't hesitate to throw that in His face. Brothers and sisters, He walked through suffering! That means that if you're walking through suffering, you get to be like Jesus. Indeed, we can say that if you know God, you're going to suffer. If you are in Christ, you will walk through persecution and difficulty and pain just like He did. And you will learn to love and trust the Father in it, just like He did.

G. Jesus walked in patience with those who attacked, slandered, and wronged Him

Finally, Jesus walked in patience. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten. He kept on committing Himself to the one who judges righteously.

Do you show patience to those who attack you? Do you walk humbly, or do you arrogantly fight back against anyone who tells you something nasty?

Will you walk like Him today? If you don't, you'll have no real assurance. But if you do, you will know that you know Him, and that will strengthen you to put your foot forward once again, to take that next step, to walk all the way to Heaven. Amen.