

The Proof Is In The Pudding

1 John 2:3-6

I imagine that sometime in your life you have heard this old saying: “the proof is in the pudding” This is an old idiom. It had been around for many years. What it means is that in order to determine the truth or worth of something, it must be put to the test just as the best way to test the pudding is by eating the pudding.

As John was writing, one of the desires John had for his readers was that they may “know” meaning that they may know whether or not they are in Christ. As was mentioned in the introduction, the Apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was moved to employ the word “know” or one of its cognate (or verb forms) no less than thirty nine (39) times. The reason being, at least in part, was the knowledge John had in knowing for a person to possess knowledge is a very powerful and assuring thing, especially knowledge which results in the assurance of one’s salvation.

John was also employing the word to refute the false ideas of the Gnostics who professed to have some sort of “super knowledge.” In essence, the Apostle was saying anyone can *say* they have knowledge, even a super knowledge, **but** the fact remains, *the proof of something is not in saying but doing*.

Verse 3 of **chapter 2** begins with “And hereby.” This phrase simply means “by this” or the things John has set forth here as a legitimate spiritual test for any and all willing to take it. It is meant for anyone who is truly interested in knowing for themselves whether or not they actually know the Christ they profess to know. In fact, it is not only meant to show those who are truly in Christ, but it is also meant to show those who only profess to be in Christ they are not.

When we consider all that John says, we will discover the basis of the test John sets before all of us is love. It is the keeping of “his (Christ’s) commandments” which is the proof of that love. The commandments John is referring to here are not the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue or the Law of the Old Testament but rather are the commandments of Christ or what Paul referred to as “the law of Christ” in **Galatians 6:2**. The law of Christ is not like the Moasic Law of the Old Testament but are rather commandments given so as to prove salvation truly resides in the heart of one professing Christ as Savior. The result of keeping the law of Christ is in an internal assurance and peace that abides in the heart of a believer who is keeping them out of a heart of love for their Savior!

If you are thinking, I didn't know Christ has given us commandments to keep in this Church age! Well, although there are more than the ones I will reference, here are a few He has given to those who profess to be a part of the family of God.

The first one I'll mention is the one I just referenced from **Galatians 6:2** which says "Bear ye one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ." I believe the force behind the law of Christ is love. It is the driving or motivating force behind the doing. In **John 14:23-24** we read Jesus' words as He said "Jesus answered and said unto him (i.e. Judas Iscariot), If (since or in light of the fact) a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:*" (emphasis mine)

The next two verses I want to highlight now will be considered again later in our study but I believe this is a good place to insert them and read. They are **John 13:34-35**. Those verses say: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men now that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to (not for) another."

In **1 Thessalonians 4:2** we find "For ye know what *commandments* (emphasis mine) we gave you by the Lord Jesus." If we would continuing reading there we would find commandments relating to sanctification, abstinence from fornication, the need to properly care for our bodies, the need to avoid lust, the admonition to refuse to defraud a brother, the need to stay clean, and the need to strive to be holy.

In **chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians** Paul lists at least twenty (probably more) commandments for those who profess to have a relationship with Christ Jesus. For instance, those who do have a relationship with Him are to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all things, be sure not to quench the Spirit, abstain from even the appearance of evil, along with several others things which negatively affects the testimony of a believer as well as negatively affects the internal assurance of the same.

Before we move on, isn't it good to know John is not afraid to confront his readers and challenge them? He is not afraid to let them know that to say "we know" Him means more than the possession of an academic knowledge about Him, but actually refers to the possession of a personal, experiential knowledge of Him because one has spent time with Him. Spending time with Him is the only way

one can acquire personal, experiential knowledge of Him. I imagine that is one reason why Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:10** “that I may know him...” It is not enough to **say** something. Anyone can **say** anything they choose. The proof is truly in the pudding.

In **verse 4** the Apostle continues to make truth plain. In fact, it's so plain it is impossible to miss! With an unshaken boldness he states “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, *is a liar and the truth is not I in him.*” (emphasis mine) Wow! Could you imagine any of God's men being that bold and direct in the day we are living in? Talk about thinning out a congregation. I'm pretty sure calling people a liar would probably do the trick and yet that was and, probably still is, needed in this day in some places and cases.

Matthew 7:21 reads: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Man has the privilege to **say** anything he chooses to say. But he also needs to remember what he says can be tested and, actually, will be tested. If they are not tested in this life, rest assured they will be tested in the life to come at the judgment.

In order to test whether or not a confession is real, allow me to suggest a few ways of doing so. It can be done by simply asking the one professing to know Christ as Savior the following things:

- have you been baptized
- do you partake of the Lord Supper
- do you attend Church faithfully (if not providentially hindered)
- have you set your heart set on thing above instead of things on the Earth

Many things could be added to this list but hopefully those four things will suffice for a sufficient example. Here in **verse 4**, John is saying the habit of life for true follower of Christ will manifest the things of Christ intentionally and not accidentally. Remember, even a broken clock is right twice a day. The life of a true believer is built around Christ and not around self.

If a person **says** they are a follower of Christ but they do not have as a Christ-like life style, practice, or habit of life which manifests the things of Christ, John boldly declares that that person is a liar. That's clear and simple enough don't you think? Even I can understand that statement!

Although enough may have already been said, please allow me to say one more thing about this subject of testing our profession. As we all know, none of us are perfect. Yet, as believers and followers of Christ, although there are times we fail to be obedient to what we know we should be obedient too, if we are saved there is an unquenchable longing in our hearts to be perfect or to be obedient to the commands of our Lord even when we aren't.

Verse 5 begins with my favorite word, "But." Here, John is saying "on the other hand, let's consider the one who is not a liar!" Those who are not a liar are "whoso keepeth his word." It is the person who not only *says* they are keeping His word but the ones who actually do so intentionally and consistently. Please note the word "keepeth" here. In the Greek I am told the verb form is what is known as the present subjunctive which refers to a present and continuing process. In this case it refers to one who is consistently being obedience to the commands of Christ not as an accident but as a matter of choice and purpose. It is in this person that the "love of God (is) perfected" or shown to be what it is intended to be. Let's face it, our testimony is what we live and not what we *say*.

As I think about what the Apostle is saying to us I can't help but think about the words of an old and familiar hymn known and loved by many. Some of its words are:

"Trust and obey,
"For there's no other way:
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey."

This song aptly sets forth the idea John is teaching very clearly. A believer can have and needs to have the internal assurance of their salvation. I'm glad it is available at all times. But the only way a believer can have that assurance is by obeying the commandments of our Lord, not occasionally or accidentally, but faithfully and willingly.

Continuing on to **verse 6** we find it saying: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." I can't help but wonder if John was remembering the night Jesus spoke His great Upper Room discourse in the presence of His Apostles. I wonder if he wasn't specifically remembering the things we find recorded in **John 15**. There we find Jesus giving His great parable about the vine and the branch. There we find how imperative it is for the branch to **abide** in the vine *if* there is to be any life or fruitfulness in the branch.

Although it might be wise for me to lift-up each word we find in **1 John** ending with the suffix “eth” to try and determine its contextual meaning, I will refrain from doing so for fear of sounding redundant and not investing our time wisely. I feel sure you noticed the word “abideth” in this verse. Its meaning is very important. In the Greek, the word as written in the tense it was written speaks of something that had a beginning in the past continues to be true in the present. It actually speaks of permanence. It speaks of something once begun, continuing.

Verse 5 tells us where the believer is to abide and that is “in him” or in Christ Jesus. Being in Christ is the principle thing. It is such an important thing that the Holy Spirit moved His holy men to employ it in their writings no less than 130 times. In fact, it was one of the Apostle Paul’s favorite phrases. Being “in him” means to be in-sphered in Christ. It means to be encapsulated by Him just as Noah was encapsulated in the ark long ago.

If the above is true, and it is, then the evidence of being in Christ will be made manifest as the believer walks even as Christ walked! It’s just that simple and yet that profound. Our walk speaks of our behavior or manner of life. It also implies progress. As we walk as Christ walked on planet Earth, we must remember His goal was to walk in complete obedience to the Father. He did so because He loved the Father and desired to please Him. In fact, **John 8:29** states Christ said: “I do always those things that please him.” When we walk in the same manner as did Christ and for the same reason as did Christ, it is then we walk as Christ walked.

In closing, I can’t but wonder whether or not you passed John’s test? If not, take a moment of time and have that little talk with Jesus that makes things right.

Tom Price, 2020