

Title: **GOD'S LOVE PERFECTED IN US**

Text: 1 John 2:3-6

Subject: *The Assurance of God's Salvation*

Introduction:

The title of my message is **GOD'S LOVE PERFECTED IN US**. Our text is 1 John 2:3-6.

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep **his commandments**. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth **his word**, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:3-6)

The spirit of the epistle is love. Every line is perfumed with tenderness. Throughout these five short chapters God the Holy Spirit tells us by his servant John about the infinite, eternal love of God for us, urges us to love one another, and assures us that our love for God our Savior arises from and is caused by his love for us. — “*We love him because*

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he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Here in 1 John 2:3-6 the Apostle connects the blessed assurance of God's salvation with the perfecting of God's love in us.

ASSURANCE

When I think about this matter of assurance, as a believer, as a pastor and a preacher of the gospel, I am faced with two problems, two facts that I have to deal with.

1st There are many people in this world, probably some people sitting here, who enjoy the assurance of salvation who have never experienced the grace of God in Christ. You claim peace, but you have no grounds of peace. You delude yourself with a false peace. Many live and die being fully persuaded that they are saved, only to wake up in hell under the wrath of God (Matthew 7:21-23). They base their assurance upon something in the past, a time, a place, an event, an experience when they began to believe, and they are sure they are saved.

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Illustration: *Bobby Smith — My Parents*

There are many who enjoy the assurance of salvation who have never experienced the grace of God.

2nd **There are some who have been saved by God's grace but have no assurance of faith in Christ.** It may be that some of you now find in your hearts **faith** in Christ, **repentance** toward God, and **love** for the Savior, but you have never confessed Christ as your Savior, because you lack assurance that your faith is real. **You have had no climatic experience** that you can point to and say, "There I began to trust Christ."

Salvation is not always a climatic experience. It is sometimes a gradual thing. We do not all experience the grace of God alike. The need is the same and the grace is the same, but the experience is different.

Illustration: *Compare Mark 8:22-25 with Mark 10:47-52!*

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(Mark 8:22-25) “And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25 After that he put [his] hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”

(Mark 10:47-52) “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, [thou] Son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, [Thou] Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I

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might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

If you now trust Christ, if you now repent of your sins, if you now love the Lord Jesus Christ, **it does not matter when or where you began to do so.** — **If you trust Christ you are born of God! You are an heir of God! You have eternal life!** I urge you to publicly confess Christ in believer's baptism. I hope that this message will be used of God to give you “*the full assurance of faith*” that speaks peace to the hearts of God's elect.

Men and women spend a lot of time debating and arguing about **who is saved** and who is not saved, **who knows God** and who does not know God, who will be in heaven and who will not be there. **John Newton** once said, “When I get to heaven I am sure that I will be greatly surprised by three things:

1. Many will be there whom I never thought would be there;

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2. Many will not be there whom I was sure would be there; and
3. Most surprising of all, I will be there!”

It is not our business to sit as judges over men and try to decide who is saved and who is not. **We do not have the ability to examine a man's heart!** That is God's prerogative alone (1 Samuel 16:7). We must each examine ourselves and determine whether we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Proposition: It is possible for a person to know whether or not he is saved (1 John 5:10-13).

- Peter Did – “*Thou knowest that I love thee!*”
- Paul Did – “*I know whom I have believed and am persuaded...*”

(1 John 5:10-13) “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that

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hath not the Son of God hath not life. 13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Divisions: I want that. I want what only God himself can give. I want an assurance of hope, assurance of confidence, and assurance of faith that is built upon and arises from the Word of God. Do you? If you do, give me your attention. I've got a message from God for you. I'll give it to you in these four points.

1. Be sure that you know Christ (v. 3).
2. Be certain that you do not profess what you have not experienced (vv. 4-5).
3. Those who know Christ and keep his Word have the love of God perfected in them.
4. Let those who say that they are in Christ walk after his likeness (v. 6).

KNOWING CHRIST

In the first place, let me talk to you about knowing Christ. I lay this solemn exhortation to each of our

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hearts. — **Be sure that you know the Lord Jesus Christ.** — “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*” (v. 3). **In this verse of Scripture, John plainly lets us know that it is both possible and profitable for God's children to be assured of their knowledge of Christ.** It is true that many of God's children do not enjoy the blessings of true assurance. And many of those who normally enjoy this privilege, at times do not. I have been with Newton on the mountain, overlooking the promised land, singing...

“The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.”

But I have also known the sorrow of that deep valley,
wherein my soul must cry,

“‘Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no,
Am I His, or am I not?”

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Yet, I want you to see that the Word of God distinctly teaches that a believer may and should have an assured confidence of his knowledge of Christ.

- Hear **Job's testimony**, *“I know that my Redeemer liveth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”* (Job 19:25-26).
- **David sang**, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me”* (Psalm 23:4).
- **Isaiah says**, *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee”* (Isaiah 26:3). And again, *“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever”* (Isaiah 32:7).
- **The Apostle Paul** spoke without hesitation of *“the full assurance of understanding,” “the full assurance of faith,”* and *“the full assurance of hope.”*
- **He says**, *“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor*

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things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:28-39). — “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). — “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him” (2 Timothy 1:12).

- **The Apostle Peter** admonishes us to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).
- And the **Apostle John**, writing in this epistle, says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (3:14). — “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (5:13). — And again, “We know that we are of God” (5:19). — And here in chapter 2, verse 3, we read, “**And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.**”

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I want to know Christ in truth, in reality, in sincerity. And I want to know that I know him. And I want the same thing for each of you. I do not want you to miss Christ. Let us be sure that we know him, whom to know aright is life eternal.

What is it to know Christ? We have never seen him. He left this world and ascended back to the Father many years ago. Yet, we can know him. It is possible. There have been millions upon the earth who have had a personal acquaintance with the Son of God. Though they have not seen him, they trusted him, loved him, and rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We too may know him.

To “*know*” is a word that is used in many ways in the Scriptures. And in each of its various shades of meaning we can learn something about the believer’s knowledge of Christ.

Sometimes the word “know” simply means “acknowledge”. We read of Pharaoh, that “*he knew*

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not Joseph.” That is to say, he did not acknowledge any obligation to Joseph. And our Lord tells us that his sheep know his voice. They acknowledge his voice as being the voice of their Shepherd, and cheerfully follow him.

This is the matter of first necessity. **You must acknowledge Christ, that he is the Son of God, that he is the Savior of his people, and that he is the rightful Monarch of the universe.** You must acknowledge that you accept Christ as your Savior, your Prophet, your Priest, and your King!

In a sense, this is what we mean by knowing the Lord. We own and confess in our hearts that he is the glorious God, the eternal Son, that he is our Redeemer, that his blood cleanses us, and that his righteousness covers us. **We gladly acknowledge that Christ is our only salvation, our hope of glory, and our desire.**

But the word “know” also means “to believe”. So it is written, *“By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many.”* In this sense, too, we must

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know Christ. We must believe him. We receive the reports of the prophets and apostles concerning him. We subscribe to God's Word concerning his Son practically with heart, soul, and spirit. We lean the whole burden of our everlasting souls upon Christ's finished work. We trust the Son of God for our eternal salvation.

And, frequently, the word “know” means “to experience”. It is said of our Lord that “*he knew no sin.*” That is to say, he never experienced sin. He never became a sinner. Now to know Christ is to experience Christ. We must become acquainted with him. To know Christ is to experience his power. –

- The power of his blood to pardon our sins,
- The power of his love to subdue our hearts,
- The power of his grace to govern our lives,
- The power of his Spirit to comfort our souls,
- The power of his Word to enlighten our minds.

Once more, to “know” Christ implies intimacy with him. To know him is “to commune” with him and love him. We acknowledge him, we believe him, we experience him, and now we commune with him.

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We become his intimate friends. O blessed thought! Is it possible? Yes! Our Lord says, “*I call you no more servants, but friends.*” We know him, not as a historic figure, but as a real Person. He is one with whom we speak and have fellowship. We are united to him in the bonds of love. Examine yourselves then, as to whether, or not, you know him.

NOTE: Satan deceives many with substitutes for this true heart knowledge of Christ.

- There is a great difference between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ.
- Many, I fear, can talk about Christ; but they do not know Christ.
- My friends, seek to know Christ. If you know him, seek to know more of him. Oh, “*that I might know him in the fellowship of his sufferings, and in the power of his resurrection.*”

I speak in simple terms, but no subject is of greater importance to your soul. Life and death, heaven and hell hang on this one thing: **Do you know Christ?** If you know him, all is well (John 17:3). But if you

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know him not, you are ignorant of the one thing needful, the one thing that can save your soul.

How can we know that we know him? First, we must know the Savior. But, then, we desire to be assured that we know him. How can we have that assurance? John tells us, “*Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*”

There are some Christians who do truly know Christ, who are yet in doubt about their knowledge of him. They lack assurance. This ought not to be the case, but it is. There are some true believers who do not enjoy this sweet assurance. Do not ever say that unless a man knows that he is saved, he is not saved. **All of God's children have faith; but they do not all have assurance.** A man may have faith sufficient to flee to Christ, lay hold of Christ, trust Christ, and be a true child of God; and yet, to his last day, never be free from anxiety, doubt, and fear.

Illustration: *Passengers on A Plane*

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Remember, that there is weak faith as well as strong faith. Our Lord does not regard the quantity of faith, but the fact of it. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. — “*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*” (John 9:35). That is the issue.

We must distinguish between faith and assurance. Faith is the root essential to life. Assurance is the flower, the sign of health. You may have the root without the flower; but you cannot have the flower without the root. Even so, you may have faith without assurance; but you cannot have true assurance without faith. This is beautifully illustrated many times in the Bible.

- Faith is the poor trembling woman who crept up to the Savior and touched the hem of his garment (Mark 5:25). — Assurance is Stephen standing calmly before his murderers, saying, “*I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*” (Acts 7:56).
- Faith is Peter crying as he began to sink, “*Lord, save me!*” (Matthew 14:30). — Assurance is that

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same Peter declaring before his captors, “*Him hath God exalted with his right arm to be a Prince and a Savior*” (Acts 5:31).

- Faith is the penitent thief crying, “*Lord, remember me*” (Luke 23:42). — Assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores, saying, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him*” (Job 13:15).
- Faith is the trembling voice, “*Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief*” (Mark 9:24). — Assurance is the cry of the confident soul, “*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemneth?*” (Romans 8:33-34).

Faith is life. How blessed the gift! Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, joy, power, beauty, and peace.

Yet, I say that it is both possible and profitable for God’s children to walk before him upon the earth with assurance. — “*Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*” **There are many who base their assurance on their keeping the commandments of men and the**

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commandments of the law. But John is talking about the obedience of faith to the commandments of Christ in the gospel (John 6:28-29; 1 John 3:23).

“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”
(John 6:28-29)

If we would have assurance, we must trust Christ alone for our acceptance before God. — *“This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 3:23). **Our confidence before God must never be set on our obedience, but upon Christ's obedience as our Representative, Mediator, and Substitute.**

- Active Obedience
- Passive Obedience

Still, though we do not and must not seek assurance based upon our obedience to our Lord, let me swiftly and firmly declare that true faith seeks in all things to obey Christ. Believers mold

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their lives to the Word of God. Our motto of life we take from Mary's words to the servants at the marriage feast, — "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*"

- Faith sees baptism as a manifest commandment of Christ, and obeys in good conscience.
- Faith sees the Lord's Supper as the symbolic remembrance of Christ's death, and goes to the table as Christ commanded.
- Faith hears Christ say, "*This is my commandment, that ye love one another,*" and heartily seeks the good of her companions.

“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.

Let cares like a wild deluge come,

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And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.

There shall I bathe my weary soul,
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”

A SOLEMN WARNING

I have deliberately spent the greater part of our time pressing upon you the more important part of our text. I want you to know Christ and to know that you know him. But now, I have a solemn warning to set before you – **Let us be certain that we do no profess what we have not experienced!** (vv. 4-5).

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” (1 John 2:4-5)

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There is such a thing as saying that we know Christ, without really experiencing his grace. But if any man says that he knows Christ, and keeps not his commandments, he is a liar. John's speech is bold, but it is true. Such a man is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

There are many who say that they know Christ, who yet keep the traditions of men, rather than the commandments of God. Their faith is the knowledge of the head, not the confidence of the heart. Their hope of righteousness is in their own good works, not the righteousness of Christ. And their hearts are full of self love, not love for the brethren.

It is very easy to say that you know Christ. Today, everyone says such. It has become popular to profess faith in Christ.

- You may become caught up in the excitement of a religious meeting.
- You may say that you know Christ as the result of pressure from friends and relatives who know him.

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- You may be induced to say what you do not know by some aggressive soul-winner.

Note: This is the greatest danger of modern day evangelism. — The emotional and psychological pressure put upon people to make a profession. Profession without experience is the inevitable result of the modern high pressure invitation system.

I warn you, my friends, as you love your souls, do not say what you have not experienced. If you do know Christ, say so at once. Confess him publicly in believer's baptism. But do not, do not ever be induced to say a word beyond what you know in this matter! A man, after he tells a lie many times, soon begins to believe it. And a hypocrite, after he professes faith in Christ for a long time, will begin to believe his own lie. He may even hold by it until the Day of Judgment! Oh, may God save us from the deceptiveness of easy-believism!

Let me speak plainly. I must point out some of those characters upon whom John places this bold and shameful brand.

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- Any man who says he knows Christ and lives by dishonesty is a liar.
- Any man who says he knows Christ and lives by the corrupt principles of his own lusts is a liar.
- Any man who says he knows Christ and lives by the standards of this world is a liar.
- Any man who says he knows Christ and harbors malice toward his brother is a liar.
- Any man who says he knows Christ and is unwilling to forgive any wrong done to him is a liar.
- And man who says he knows Christ whose tongue is full of the unbridled poison of gossip is a liar.

I cannot go on listing the lusts of the flesh. But if a man's conscience smites him, let it smite him hard, until he is driven from his sins. Let it smite him until it drives him to the feet of Christ pleading for mercy.

The true heaven-born soul, the true child of God is a far different character. Those who are truly God's children say that they know Christ, and they do know him. This is evident. — *“Whoso keepeth his Word, in*

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him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in him” (v. 5).

God's true children keep his Word. That is to say, those who know Christ holdfast their profession of the gospel.

- They receive God's Word with joy.
- They embrace it as truth.
- They hold it fast in love.
- And they obey it in sincerity.

LOVE PERFECTED

Here's the third thing I want you to see in our text: — **Those who know Christ and keep his Word have the love of God perfected in them.** When John says, “*In them is the love of God perfected*”, he is talking about God's love for us. That is perfect and knows no change. **The love of God is perfected in us when God the Holy Spirit creates life un us and gives us faith in Christ, shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God.** — I know God's love for me because I trust his Son!

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“Hereby know we that we are in him” (v. 5).—

- We are in his heart of love.
- We are in his covenant of grace.
- We are in his arms of protection.
- We are in his body, never to be disunited from him.

John is not talking about us loving God perfectly. Our love is anything but perfect love. **John is talking to us about the knowledge and revelation of God's perfect love for us in Christ in the sweet experience of his saving grace.** He is here describing the “*grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” Look at Romans 5:1-5.

(Romans 5:1-5) “Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the

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love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

God's love toward us, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the knowledge of Christ, is made perfect in us when we are made to see and experience and enjoy the fullness, completion, and perfection of our salvation in Christ.

OUR WALK

My final word is this: – Let all who say that they are in Christ walk after his likeness. Do we say that we are in Christ? Let us act accordingly. — “*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*” (6). Our Lord says, “*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done*” (John 13:5). Our Master has left us footprints to walk in. Let us carefully walk in them.

Read the gospel histories again, and behold the example Christ has given for us to follow, and follow him.

- Our Lord left us an example of righteousness.

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- He left us an example of obedience.
- He left us an example of self-denial.
- He left us an example of meekness.
- Christ left us an example of devotion.
- Our Savior left us an example of faith.
- Our Master left us an example of contentment.
- And our Redeemer left us an example of tenderness.

See to it, children of God, that you walk as he walked. — *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you....And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us”* (Ephesians 4:32, 5:2).

Is the love of God perfected in you? Is it perfected in me? Are we born of God? Are we in Christ? Then let us...

“Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching

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us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:10-14)

Amen.

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¹ Danville — Sunday Evening — June 3, 2012
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Tape # 1 John #12

Readings: *Merle Hart and Ron Wood*