

Walking in the Light – Part 3
Commanding Love – 1 John 2:3-11
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Sept. 22nd, 2024

Intro:

- Many wonder, at times, if they really are a Christian, and at times wonder if others they love are truly Christians as well. The good news is that we can know for sure because the Word of God provides us with a number of questions we can ask ourselves so we can know that we have eternal life. These are critical questions to ask—you can either rest assured in your salvation, or you can be awakened to the truth and truly put your faith in Jesus.
- If you remember, the Gospel of John was written so we can believe in Jesus and have eternal life. The letters of John were written so that we know we have eternal life, an assurance of salvation.

1 John 5:13 NIV

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

- In this letter, Pastor John carefully, lovingly, and powerfully weaves truth and introspection so that we can know if we have eternal life. From our passage last week, we were given two questions to ask ourselves, the first being, “Do I walk in the light?” and the second being, “Do I own and confess my sins?” Today, as we continue to read, we will encounter three additional questions we are to consider and use to help us be assured of our salvation.
- Please turn to 1 John 2:3-11 (page 1054 in the pew Bible) as we look to and consider what is written for us. The next question we must ask ourselves to know if we have eternal life is this:

Do I keep His commands?

1 John 2:3-5a NIV

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them.

- So there is a “knowledge” of Jesus, a “knowing” Him, that produces a keeping of His commands, and keeping His commands is evidence that you know Jesus. What is this “knowing”? Judas “knew” Jesus but chose to betray Him. There are numerous academic scholars who know way more about Jesus than many Christians do and yet don’t believe or follow Him. There are many religious leaders and even pastors of churches who say they know Jesus, but don’t obey His word or keep His commands.
- So this knowledge of Jesus, or knowing Him, that John talks about is actually understanding who Jesus rightly is and His heart toward us. It is understanding what He has done for us and what He offers us. It causes us to entrust and gladly give our lives to Jesus and want to live to keep His commands and follow and honor Him. This is an encounter with the living God that utterly captures and transforms your life and your living. This “knowledge” is an experiential and active relationship with the living God.
- John says that if you say that you know Jesus but you don’t keep His commands, then you don’t really know Him, and you are a liar, and the truth—about who He is, about who you are,

and about your relationship with Him—is not in you. The one who is THE truth is not in you, and you are not in Him.

- If you obey His word, you put it into practice. His word is the entire Word of God, not just the “red letters.” All of it is His word. God’s love through the obedience of Christ for you, is made complete by His love creating obedience to Christ through you.
- If you want a summation of His commands, Jesus gave it to us when He was asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” He responded by saying:

Matt 22:37-40 NIV

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- Everything written in the Law and Prophets is under these two categories: love of God and love of neighbor. God is the one who has the right to define what love is because He is the definition of love. Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John, later in this letter, says, “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us” (1 John 3:23 ESV).
- If you truly know Jesus, you will keep His commandment by loving God and your neighbor. And keeping His commandment confirms that you have eternal life. John then provides us with another test.

Do I live as Jesus did?

1 John 2:5b-6 NIV

This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

- This is a direct reference and call back to the teaching of the vine and the branches in John 15. The word “live in” is the exact Greek word Jesus uses in the vine and the branches passage. Jesus says that if you “abide” or “remain” in Him, and He in you, then you will bear much fruit (John 15:5), and if anyone does not abide in Him, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. These branches are then gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned (John 15:6). This is serious stuff.
- Living like Jesus is not optional for someone who claims to be a Christian. If you don’t live like Jesus, you are not a Christian. You are not “in Him” because if you were “in Him,” you would live like Jesus. And “bearing fruit” means we are becoming more like Jesus in our character through the work of the Spirit in us, showing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). We are becoming more like Jesus in our conduct.
- Paul prays the same thing for us in Col 1:10-11: that we **“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”** (ESV). Living as Jesus means doing the good works that God has created us and designed us and prepared for us to do (see Eph. 2:10).
- The first test in this part of the letter is that if you know Him, it is evidenced by your keeping His commands. The second test is if you are in Him, you must live as Jesus did. And the third test in this passage is “do I love my brother and sister?”

Do I love my brother and sister?

1 John 2:7-8 NIV

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

- Pastor John loves these people, and the church of all people for all time, dearly. What he wrote for us was an old command made new in Christ, and they had heard this command from the beginning when they first heard the gospel. So what is this “old command” made new?
- The fact that John begins to talk about love and hate in verses 9-11 suggests that the commandment John has in mind in verses 7 and 8 is the love commandment from John 13:34, where Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”**
- Also, in 2 John 5, he quotes the “new commandment” and says it’s not new: **“And now I beg you, lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.”** So we know that the commandment of 1 John 2:7-8, which in some sense is both new and old, is the commandment of love that Jesus gave to his disciples, right from the passage of the vine and the branches, that we are to **“Love one another as I have loved you”** (John 15:12).
- This was a command that was given from and originated in Christ Jesus. He provided the example of His with His life. Again, in the vine and the branches passage, Jesus said, **“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13 ESV), and this is exactly what Jesus did. This is the “true light” that is already shining. This light was seen in Him, and—this is also an amazing part—this light is seen in Him and *in you* (v 8). The light of God is in us, and we walk in the light and shine the light when we love our brothers and sisters and *“lay down our lives for our friends.”* This is evidence of the gospel. This is evidence that we are in Him, and He is in us. John goes on to explain more.

1 John 2:9-11 NIV

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

- If you claim or think that you are a Christian, that you are in Jesus, and you are in the light, if you claim these things and hate a brother or sister, and we are talking about a brother or sister in the faith, if you hate a fellow Christian, you are still in the darkness. Now, this is a tall order because many people have been hurt by fellow Christians. My deepest wounds have come from the hands of fellow Christians, and my guess is that this is true for you as well.
- Do we have a “right” to “hate” them? The clear answer to that question is “no.” This is not an option. The deal is that hate is blinding; we stumble over it, and we continue not to hurt the other person but ourselves. We lose our direction with that person; our motivation is not love for them but hate for them, and instead of wanting the best for them, we want them to pay.

Hate is the poison we drink, hoping the other person will die. This, my friends, is not from God. He told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). He commanded us to love each other as He has loved us. He prayed that we would love each other, that we would be “one” (John 17).

- Love for our brothers and sisters, especially for those who have deeply hurt us, can come and must come from us because God is love and lives in us, and He will help us do this. When you don't have love for a fellow brother or sister, you can ask God for His love for them, and He will answer that prayer every time. You may need to ask this over and over again, but it will be there, and it will be in you and then flow through you, so you then will be able to “walk in the light” and know how you are to act toward that person.
- I know this is true from personal experience. When God works in your heart, you can truly love all your brothers and sisters, especially those who have hurt you the deepest. You and I can and must be free of any and all hate or wishing others any ill will. God will help you in this. You know that you are free when you can genuinely pray for the other's well-being and blessing. And you know you are healed when you can think of them—or when someone mentions their name—and not recoil or have a negative response. You have trusted that person to the Lord's hand, and you can interact with them well and in love. The memories, or the “scars,” will remain, but the pain and the poison will be gone.
- Do you “hate” a brother or sister in the faith? If this is the case for you, you are walking in darkness. If this darkness is in you, then you need to repent and turn to Christ to help and to heal you so that His light will be in you and shine through you. No Christian can be in the light and hate his brother or sister. Love is the living evidence of new birth and eternal life. Love for one another is not just a suggestion but the defining characteristic of a Christian.
- May we live this out here, and may we love each other deeply from the heart. And may everyone who walks into this place remark, “See how they love each other,” and experience this love as well. We often pray these things will be deeply true and clearly evident in us.

Conclusion

- John, our beloved apostle, in this portion of his letter to us, has given us three more tests to give us assurance that we have eternal life. With these we are to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Anyone who says, “I know Him” must be obedient to keep His commands. Anyone who claims to abide in Him must live as Jesus lived. Anyone who claims to be in the light must love his brother and sister.
- May the light of God's truth shine on and in our hearts so that we may become more and more like Jesus, as we follow in His footsteps and walk in the light.
- Prayer people and prayer

Benediction

As we leave here this morning, may we walk in the light as Christ is in the light, remembering that to love Him is to follow His commands. May the love of God shine through us so that we may love one another as He has loved us. May His Spirit guide our steps, keep us in His truth, and fill our hearts with His peace. Go now in the grace and light of Jesus, to love and serve each other and the world in His name. Amen.

Questions for Growth Groups

- What does it mean to “know God” according to verses 3-4? How does obedience play a role in that knowledge?

- Why do you think John emphasizes that someone who claims to know God must “walk as Jesus did” (v. 6)? What are practical ways we can imitate Christ in our daily lives?
- According to verses 9-11, how is love for others connected to walking in the light? What happens when we fail to love our brothers and sisters?
- How do these verses challenge the way we view relationships within the church? Are there any unresolved tensions or barriers to love that you need to address or we need to address as a group?
- What practical steps can we take to ensure we are walking in love and helping others to do the same, especially when it’s difficult?
- What area of your life do you feel the need to align more closely with Christ’s example of love and obedience? How can the group pray for or encourage you in that journey?
- In what ways can we better reflect the love and light of Jesus in our broader community, not just within our small group?