



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Testing One's Claim (1 John 2:3-6)

FEBRUARY 19, 2013

Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, February 19, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, February 19, 8:30 PM in Office #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

INTRODUCTION

"This is a test of the emergency broadcast system. This is only a test."

Today's passage is also a test. For those who pass the test, the test can bring much courage and assurance. For those who do not pass the test, this teaching from John should result in a rebuke and a challenge.

At the beginning of his letter, the Apostle John confronted the false teachers who claim to have a close relationship with a holy God, but yet live in sin or claim to not have any sin (1 John 1:5-10). After this stinging rebuke of their teachings and beliefs, John tenderly addressed his "little children" of the faith by reminding them of the amazing grace of God in providing an advocate and atoning sacrifice for them (2:1-2).

In light of this context, one may ask the following: How do we know if we really know God? If we cannot live a life patterned by sin and say we know God, how can we know that we know God? Or can we? Maybe we are always in a state of the unknown? Maybe we are to never know so we will work harder? How do we know if Jesus is our advocate?

These are very legitimate questions, especially in light of what John has just written. The passage discussed in today's study (and the next couple of studies) is about assurance. How can one be assured of his or her salvation? How do we know if we are one of God's children? This issue of assurance is one that John addressed several times in this letter. Today's study will cover the first of these tests. James Boice calls it the "Moral Test".

1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 'The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 'but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 'the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

THE TEST

Notice in verse 3 that John said, "By this" (that is, the things that follow), "we know that we have come to know Him." He did not write, "we hope that we..." nor did he state, "we wish" or "we think". When the test is passed, the true follower of God through Jesus Christ can "know" that he or she knows God. Assurance of salvation (which is synonymous with "knowing God") is something which one can be certain. This is one purpose of John writing this letter in the first century. He even wrote as he began to wrap up this letter: *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life* (1 John 5:13).

And the test is simply this, "if you really know God, you will obey Him." Context informs the reader that to "know God" cannot be defined as a mere intellectual knowledge or acknowledgement. It is so much more. It is not a mystical knowledge that only the elite can comprehend. It is not an experiential knowledge nor a knowledge discovered by humanistic reasoning. It is a knowledge of a person (God, through Jesus Christ) which brings about a total change in those who know Him.

This is not something unique to John's writings. It is the goal of a religious life pleasing to God found throughout Scripture.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

Testing One's Claim (1 John 2:3-6)

The goal of a life with God is not one of religious practices, rituals or mindlessly following rules. It is a life of relationship with God (“that he understands and knows Me”) which transforms a person’s character (for God delights in “lovingkindness, justice and righteousness”).

The phrase “to keep” conveys the idea of a watchful, desirous obedience. It is not an obedience that comes from threat of punishment and discipline. “It is the eager obedience of one who ‘keeps’ the divine commandments as if they were something precious to guard.”¹ For the one who truly loves God, His commands are a delight, not a drudgery; a light yoke rather than a heavy burden.

John used an interesting word translated in English as “commandments”. He used the Greek word which references “injunction, order or command”; he did not use the word typically translated “law”. Therefore, John is not directly referring to the Mosaic Law but rather the principles and precepts taught by Jesus. These things taught by Christ, though, were consistent with the Law given to Moses—reflecting the holy, unchangeable nature of God who revealed them.²

**“THEREFORE KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS IS
‘NOT A CONDITION’ OF KNOWING GOD ‘BUT A SIGN’
THAT ONE DOES KNOW GOD.” --DANIEL AKIN**

This transformed life of which John wrote is the moral test of person’s claim. Anyone can “say” he knows God, but John says “Fine, let’s see your obedience.” It is similar to the man in the book of James who “says” that he has faith. In essence, James responded, “Fine, let’s see it. Where are your works that prove your claim?” (James 2:14-26).

So, how can one know that they have this saving knowledge of God? It is found in obedience to His commands. This obedience, to be sure, is not to make one qualified to acquire this knowledge, but rather it shows the claim to be true. Daniel Akin noted, “Therefore keeping the commandments is “not a condition” of knowing God “but a sign” that one does know God.”³

HE WHO FAILS

Those who say “I know God” but do not obey, truly show that they do not really know Him. They show that they do not know...

...that God is holy. If they did, they would realize that sin (darkness) can have nothing to do with holiness (light).

...that God is good, powerful and wise. If they did, they would not doubt His promises.

...that God is just. If they did, they would know that their sin is an affront to God and deserving of the punishment He will require.

...that God sees all. If they did, they would know that they cannot hide their rebellion.

...that God is the Sovereign of the universe. If they did, they would not dare to rebel against such a high and powerful king.

...that God paid the debt owed by our sins. If they did, they would stay far away from the deeds which bring about such an unpayable debt.

...that God loves them. If they did, they would not desire to offend the One who has displayed such a great love for them; even while they were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

They may have an intellectual acknowledgement of these things and may even understand the implications, but their knowledge is useless and incomplete. In fact, it is foolish knowledge. It is similar to the one who knows that smoking can give a person lung cancer, but smokes anyway. For some reason, they do not think it will happen to them. In the same way, many people have a “head knowledge” about God and His ways, but they foolishly believe it will not affect them; or they will just take their chances when they stand before Him.

John earlier confronted those who say that they have a relationship with God but still lives a life patterned by sin by saying they lie. In the same way, John says that the person who “claims” to know God but lives a life patterned by disobedience is also “a liar” and that “the truth is not in him.”

A person’s claim is either proven or disproven by his or her actions; it gets tested by words, deeds and attitudes. Continual disobedience disproves anyone’s claim to know God.

HE WHO PASSES

But as the claims get tested, the one who keeps God’s word (the same as His commands as seen earlier), is assured that He truly loves God.

Missouri

Testing One's Claim (1 John 2:3-6)

John's statement goes right along with what he heard Jesus teach.

John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 14:23a Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word..."

John 14:24a He who does not love Me does not keep My words...

There are a couple of ways in which the phrase "love of God" can be understood. It could refer to God's love for people, or one's love toward God. And it seems best to understand this as a person's love *for* God. One's love for God is seen in his or her actions, thoughts and attitude—are one's actions in accord with the principles and precepts taught by Jesus Christ? A disobedient "love" is no love at all; an obedient love is a love perfected or complete.

Before moving on to the next test, John illustrated this obedient love with the perfect example of this type of love: Jesus Christ. If one claims to "abide in Him", that is, be in "right relationship with Him", then he or she is to walk as He walked. The pronoun "He" is in reference to Jesus. It would be hard to see how God the Father walked, but people can observe God's exact representation (Hebrews 1:3; cf. John 14:9); "God incarnate", "God in the flesh" (John 1:1-4, 14).

The people of God, in other words those who claim to love God, are to pattern their daily life after the example of Jesus. How did Jesus walk?

- In obedience (John 6:38; 8:24; 10:17-18; 14:31; 1 Peter 2:22)

- In truth (John 1:14)
- In humility (Philippians 2:5-11)
- In service (Mark 10:45)
- In love (Ephesians 5:2)

Can one walk in perfection as Christ walked in perfection? No! That has already been addressed by John in the previous section of this letter. But the life of someone who claims to be right with God, to be in right relationship with God, should be proved by becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The first test is quite simple to understand: The claim of one who says he or she loves God is to be seen in a life of loving obedience to God's command. It is observable in a life which resembles more and more the life of God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

If the deeds and words and attitudes do not match the claim, then the claim is false!

Therefore, there are two questions for all to reflect upon:

#1 What is your claim?

#2 What are your actions?

Through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

¹ John MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 168.

² John MacArthur, *1-3 John The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 57.

³ Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 91-92.