

### Bible Study for January 22, 2020

In his 1982 book, *Critical Path*, futurist and inventor R. Buckminster Fuller estimated that up until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century, but by 1945 it was doubling every 25 years, and by 1982 it was doubling every 12-13 months. IBM now estimates that by 2020 human knowledge will be doubling every 12 hours. With knowledge increasing like this it would be easy for us to fall into despair of whether or not we can know anything. But the most important knowledge of all is contained in only one book, the Bible. It is in this book of books that the knowledge of how sinful man and holy God can be reconciled together by the death of Jesus Christ.

The book of 1 John was written that we might know that we have eternal life. 1 John 5:13 says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." This week's text begins in v. 3 with, "And by this we know that we have come to know him."

Forty-two times in this epistle John uses a form of the verb "know." Here the double use "know that we ... know" emphasizes the importance of knowing that one has a relationship with God. This is not an intellectual knowledge, it is an experiential knowledge - a relationship.

Regarding assurance, there are three groups of people: (1) those who are secure but not sure; (2) those who are "sure" but not secure; and (3) those who are secure and sure. Category *one* are conscientious believers in Christ who are saved but lack assurance. In category *two* are professing Christians who say, "Even though I'm living in sin, I'll make it. After all, 'once saved, always saved!'" The *third* group are born-again believers who enjoy a warm, secure relationship with Christ each day.

To all three of these groups John issues two tests which indicate whether or not one truly knows God. They are the tests of *obedience to God* and *love for others*.

#### Our Knowledge of God Tested by Our Obedience to God vv. 3-6

##### 1. The Test Stated v. 3

The test simply stated is "we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments" The false teachers against whom John wrote were teaching an early form of *gnosticism* which strongly emphasized their own secret "knowledge." Yet, evidently, despite their claims of knowing God they neither believed in Christ as the Son of God or showed love to others. John states the way we know that we know God is "if we keep his commandments." In the very next chapter, John clarifies what he means by commandments in 3:23:

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.

Jesus had said in the Upper Room, "If you love me, keep my commandments." (*John 14:15*). Obedience, faith and love are always seen as harmonious in 1 John. There's a children's chorus that says this "Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe."

Notice that this obedience is not a **condition** of knowing God, but a **sign** that one does know God. We come to know God by faith in Jesus Christ, whose death is the propitiation for our sins. But the result of knowing God in this way is obedience. Jesus told his disciples when He instituted the Lord's Supper that the purpose of his shed blood was to purchase the benefits of the New Covenant prophesied in *Jeremiah 31:31-34*.

When John says we can know that we know God if we keep His commandments, He is not saying we know God by keeping His commandments (works salvation) but that if we truly know God then we will have new hearts of obedience to God which will evidence that fact. These new hearts of obedience are part of the new covenant purchased for us on the cross of Calvary by Jesus Christ.

##### 2. The Test Applied vv. 4-5

Now let's see how this test is applied in vv. 4-5. First, with **negative** results (v. 4). There are some who "say" (profession vs. practice) they know Him who do not keep His commandments. John says very plainly, they're liars!

Second with **positive** results (v. 5). Tests do not have to be something dreaded (if you know the material). A good test only reveals the truth about you. If you keep His "word" (term synonymous with commandment) you show your love for God and show that you are in Him. The phrase "in him truly the love of God is perfected" is an interesting one. It is a reference to our love for God being perfected or completed in our obedience to God. The second positive evidence recognized by obedience is we "know that we are in Him." This is assurance based upon loving, faithful obedience to God (*continues on back*).

**Weekly Bible Study meets on Wednesday at two times (11:30-12 and 12-12:30). Both in Capitol Annex 436 or, if occupied, the 4<sup>th</sup> floor lounge (404).**

### 3. The Test Demonstrated v. 6

John now points us to an example of obedience. The greatest demonstration of obedience. He who said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God." (Heb. 10:9) is the greatest demonstration of how a Christian should obey. If you are to ask, "But what is this life of obedience look like?" The answer is the life of Christ while here on earth. We are to walk as He walked. What a challenge! But notice that it comes if we are abiding in Him. According to John 15, when we abide in Him, He abides in us. This is the key to walking as He walked.

William Temple used to illustrate the point in this way. It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear, and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it; I can't. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like that. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like that. This is the secret of Christian sanctity. It is not that we should strive to live like Jesus, but that he by his Spirit should come and live in us. To have him as our example is not enough; we need him as our Saviour. (Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p.102)

John's point in this text is not to produce people straining in order to obey God and be like Jesus, but that we look on the fruit of our life to see if there is obedience there in order to know if we truly know God.

### Our Knowledge of God Tested by Our Love to Others vv. 7-11

The first test of general obedience to God is made more specific here.

#### 1. The Commandment Described vv. 7-8

It is described as being both *old* and *new*. The readers of this First Epistle were without a doubt familiar with the author's gospel and they immediately knew what John was referring to here.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (John 13:34)

#### The Old Commandment

It was old in the sense that it was already there in the Old Testament. Did not the Law say, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself?" (Lev 19:18). It was old in the sense that this was not the first time that John's hearers had heard it. From the very first day of their entry into the Christian life they had been taught that the law of love must be the law of their lives. This commandment went a long way back in history and a long way back in the lives of those to whom John was speaking. (*William Barclay*)

#### The New Commandment

But, it was new in that it had been raised to a completely new standard in the life of Jesus -- and it was as Jesus had loved men that men were now to love each other. It could well be said that men did not really know what love was until they saw it in him. In every sphere of life it is possible for a thing to be old in the sense that it has for long existed and yet to reach a completely new standard in someone's performance of it. A game may become a new game to a man when he has seen some master play it. A piece of music may become a new thing to a man when he has heard some great orchestra play it under the baton of some master conductor. Even a dish of food can become a new thing to a man when he tastes it after it has been prepared by someone with a genius for cooking. An old thing can become a new experience in the hands of a master. (*William Barclay*)

#### How did Jesus love?

1. *Selflessly* Without thinking "What can I get out of it?"
2. *Sacrificially* All the way to the cross
3. *Understandingly* He knew all their faults and still loved them.
4. *Forgivingly* He was betrayed and denied, yet He forgave them.

#### Contrast of Darkness and Light (Spheres or Kingdoms) Col. 1:12-14

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

#### 2. The Test of Love Applied vv. 9-11

First, let's see how this test is applied with **negative** results (v. 9). There are some who say they are "in the light," yet hate their brother. They are in darkness.

Second, let's see how this test is applied with **positive** results (v. 10). Again, tests do not have to be dreaded (if you're prepared). If there is evidence in your life of love for your brothers, then you're showing that you are in the kingdom of light. Those who walk in the light do not cause others to stumble or fall in sin. The word used here is *skandalon* from which our English word "scandal" comes. There is nothing scandalous in the life of the believer who loves his brother which would cause another to sin.

This love is not sentimental. It is not even fundamentally emotional. Its essence is self-sacrifice; it manifests itself in the desire to serve, help and enrich others. (Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p. 105)