

## How Can I Know That I Know God?

1 John 2:1-6

October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022

1. The promise of forgiveness isn't an \_\_\_\_\_ to sin. (2:1-2)

**Advocate:** A \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who speaks on behalf of another.

**Propitiation:** An offering made by a \_\_\_\_\_ person in order to placate or appease the person who has been offended.

2. If we obey God's commands, it shows that we \_\_\_\_\_ God. (2:3)

3. If we don't obey God but claim to know God, we're \_\_\_\_\_. (2:4)

4. \_\_\_\_\_ God leads to \_\_\_\_\_ God. (2:5)

5. To obey God is to live like \_\_\_\_\_. (2:6)

6. Applying the Word

a. Obedience is an \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation not a \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.

b. \_\_\_\_\_ yourself honestly.

## Questions for Discussion/Reflection

1. Have you ever struggled with a lack of assurance of salvation? (i.e. have you ever wondered if you are really saved?) If so, what was that like? What was it that made you question your salvation?
2. What wrong assumptions might someone reach after reading 1 John 1:5-10 that John is correcting in 2:1? How is that similar to Romans 5:20-6:2?
3. Besides a courtroom, can you think of other situations in which a person might need an advocate? How are those examples similar/dissimilar to Jesus as our Advocate?
4. What do Hebrews 2:17 and 1 John 4:10 add to our understanding of propitiation? What key ideas do you see in those verses?
5. As far as you understand, what do Limited Atonement and Unlimited Atonement adherents agree on? What do they disagree on? Is this an issue you have studied for yourself and, if so, have you reached a position? How does 1 John 2:2 fit into the discussion?
6. Why does 1 John 2:3 describe the Christian as one who has "come to know Him"? How do we see similar ideas in Jeremiah 9:24; John 17:3; and Titus 1:16?
7. What is the connection between loving God and obeying God in 1 John 2:5?
8. How can we practically learn to "walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6)? What questions might we ask ourselves throughout the day to grow in this?

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Big idea: We can know that we know God if we see increasing obedience in our lives.

Intro:

One of the most stressful parts of buying or selling a home is the home inspection.

An expert is hired to carefully examine every part of the home to see where there are problems.

On the side of the eager buyer, it's stressful because you may find out that this home you love and have already pictured how you will decorate, where you will put the Christmas tree, etc. is actually not a wise purchase.

The first home that Sarah and I considered buying 18 years ago was like that. It was a beautiful, small home in the university neighborhood that had recently been remodeled. Everything looked great upstairs. But it was from 1924. Downstairs in the basement, the foundation was literally crumbling. I can still picture crawling to a part of the basement with Ernie the home inspector as he showed me how he could scrape it away with a screwdriver.

The primary goal is not to expose a bad home. The primary goal is to give you confidence as you buy a home that it is good! A secondary effect is to expose something that you should avoid.

Likewise, after a bridge is constructed and throughout its lifetime it is tested to make sure it is safe.

The goal is to give confidence that it's safe to drive on so motorists can continue on without fear.

In the same way, 1 John is giving us tests so that we can know that our faith is real, solid, stable, and saving.

The primary goal is not to expose false converts with shallow professions of faith. The primary goal is to assure true Christians that they are really saved so they can rest assured.

A common question for people who have grown up in a church or come to Christ in adulthood is to wonder, how do I know if I'm really saved? How do I know that I really know God?

This passage starts to answer that question. More parts to the answer will come as we continue through 1 John.

1. The promise of forgiveness isn't an excuse to sin. (2:1-2)
  - a. "My little children" is a term of affection from a senior saint.
    - i. If I addressed you as "my little children," that would be odd since 40% of you are older than me.
    - ii. But John was probably in his 80's at this point and he uses this phrase 7 times in this short letter.
    - iii. It reminds us that then as now, issues of sin and obedience are not shouted down from a Lording ruler, but implored from a heart of fatherly love.
  - b. The purpose of 1:5-10 was not to excuse sin, but someone could misapply it that way if they don't take the verses all together.
    - i. Can't walk in darkness and claim to have fellowship with the God who is Light
    - ii. Need to walk in the light and His blood cleanses us from all sin
    - iii. Can't deny that we sin (repeated twice)
    - iv. Must confess our sin and He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness
    - v. To deny our sin is to lie, deceive ourselves, and make God a liar
  - c. Our heart should be to "not sin."

- i. Our heart should not be, “what can I get away with?” “What’s the line and how close can I get?”
  - ii. Sin harms people, grieves God, impedes fellowship.
- d. But if we sin we have an Advocate who is the propitiation for our sins.
  - i. The “if” is a likely “when” based on the phrasing of it and the principles in the previous verses.
  - ii. **Advocate:** A helper and defender who speaks on behalf of another.
    - 1. It’s the same word that is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16 when He is called “another Helper.”
    - 2. He is like our defense attorney in God’s courtroom, but not quite. It is a very imperfect analogy. Not like a defense attorney who argues for the innocence of the party he represents. Doesn’t try to find a legal loophole to get us out of trouble. He confesses our guilt but offers Himself as the one who has made the payment for sin on our behalf.
    - 3. Two mistakes we can make with the defense attorney/judge/defendant analogy.
      - a. Jesus isn’t arguing that we are innocent.
        - i. Rather, His innocence is credited to us.
        - ii. It is Jesus Christ “the righteous” who is our advocate.
      - b. The Father as Judge is not pitted against the Son as Advocate.
        - i. We see this in the language of propitiation.
  - iii. **Propitiation:** An offering made by a guilty person in order to placate or appease the person who has been offended.
    - 1. Moves from the courtroom to the temple, from an advocate to the sacrifice
    - 2. Rough example of buying flowers for your wife when you know she is angry with you in an attempt to soften her wrath. In a sense you are propitiating her wrath.
      - a. Hesitate to use this example because it is trivial compared to what we see here. And it doesn’t quite capture the meaning of it because the flowers don’t absorb the wrath of your wife. She doesn’t trash the flowers. If she does then you have real problems on your hands.
    - 3. We must understand God’s anger at sin.
      - a. **Numbers 11:1** Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, ***His anger was kindled***, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed *some* of the outskirts of the camp.
      - b. **Psalm 5:5** The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You ***hate*** all who do iniquity.
      - c. **John 3:36** “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the ***wrath of God abides on him.***”
    - 4. But again the image is not of an angry God the Father who wants to pour out His anger on us but is turned by the Son.
      - a. **1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the ***propitiation*** for our sins.

- b. Rather, Father, Son, and Spirit are in complete harmony and unity in accomplishing our salvation.
- e. Why does he say Jesus is the propitiation not only for our sins but also for those of the whole world?
  - i. The emphasis in this verse is that Jesus is the exclusive and unique sacrifice – there is no other. It is He Himself.
  - ii. It does bump into an area of theology known as the extent of the atonement.
    - 1. Did Jesus only die for the those who would believe? (Limited atonement)
    - 2. Or did Jesus die for everyone, whether they will believe in Him or not? (Unlimited atonement)
    - 3. It's a "debate for" issue, not a "die for" or "divide for."
      - a. There would be different views of this at UBC, even different views among the leadership at UBC.
    - 4. Both sides agree on the following: (Bruce Ware)
      - a. Christ's death is sufficient for all.
      - b. Christ's death is savingly applied to those who believe.
        - i. All agree that only those who truly and savingly believe in Christ, only the elect (either way of saying this is fine) have the Christ's payment for sin applied to their lives. In brief, his death is efficacious only for the elect.
      - c. The gospel should be offered to everyone.
        - i. All agree that all are to be recipients of the gospel offer. In brief, the gospel is for all people.
    - 5. There is biblical language that can support both views.
      - a. **Matthew 1:21** ... call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.
      - b. **John 10:11** "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
      - c. **Acts 20:28** ...shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
      - d. **John 1:29** ..."Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
      - e. **1 Timothy 4:10** ...who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.
      - f. **2 Peter 2:1** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.
    - 6. I lean toward an unlimited view of the atonement because I feel like it is the best explanation of all of the verses, but I don't hold fast to that and am willing to be persuaded otherwise.
- f. Why do we deny, minimize, or hide our sin? Sometimes it's because we're ashamed of it. Because we don't know what else to do with it.

- i. This tells us what has been done with our sin.
  - ii. John Stott: Thus the Father's provision for the sinning Christian is in His Son, who possesses a threefold qualification: His righteous character, His propitiatory death, and His heavenly advocacy. Each depends on the other. He could not be our advocate in heaven today if He had not died to be the propitiation for our sins; and His propitiation would not have been effective if in His life and character He had not been Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
- 2. If we obey God's commands, it shows that we **know** God. (2:3)
  - a. John writes with bluntness and without nuance, so my outline will reflect this.
    - i. We might want to nuance this and say, "but of course we still sin and of course some people seem to obey but it's from wrong motives and they don't really know God..."
    - ii. But John doesn't nuance here. The rest of scripture provides context and nuance, but John cuts with clarity.
  - b. God wants you to know if you are saved. He doesn't want you to live wondering what will happen when you die.
  - c. This verse simply says that one point of evidence that you "know Him" is if you keep His commandments.
    - i. Perfectly keep? Of course not. The rest of the verses leading up to this wouldn't make any sense if that was the case and our own experience shows that isn't the case.
    - ii. But is there a growing desire to obey? Is their conviction when you disobey?
    - iii. Is your obedience more than, "I don't want my parents to find out so I won't do it...I don't want others to see...I don't want to be punished...I don't want the fallout"?
  - d. Don't miss the terms that are used to describe a Christian in this passage.
    - i. "come to know Him."
    - ii. "we are in Him." (v. 5)
    - iii. "we abide in Him." (v. 6)
    - iv. The terms are relational and positional.
- 3. If we don't obey God but claim to know God, we're **lying**. (2:4)
  - a. But what if someone says, "I've come to know Him" – I'm a Christian! I'm saved! I'm a believer! – but they do not keep His commandments?
    - i. He's a liar and the truth is not in Him.
      - 1. **1 John 3:9a** No one who is born of God practices sin
    - ii. What if they were baptized, either as a baby or as a professed believer, but there is no pattern of wanting to obey?
    - iii. What if they attend church a couple times a month, but there is no pattern of wanting to obey?
      - 1. The passage seems pretty clear and it will be repeated over and over again in 1 John. There might be times when you feel like I'm giving the same message on repeat because John keeps it on repeat.
- 4. **Loving** God leads to **obeying** God. (2:5)

- a. Keeps his word as parallel to keep His commandments
- b. Is “love of God” talking about our love for God or His love for us?
  - i. Both are true and both are taught in scripture
    - 1. **John 14:15** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
    - 2. **1 John 4:9-11** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.  
<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
  - ii. Our love for God probably fits best with the context.
- c. How is our love for God perfected in our obedience?
  - i. “perfected” is from a word that means to accomplish or bring to the intended goal.
    - 1. **John 4:34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.
  - ii. True love for God is not expressed in sentimental language or mystical experiences or Instagram posts. It is expressed in loyalty.
    - 1. We know this in other relationships.
    - 2. Imagine a husband/wife or a boyfriend/girlfriend who says, “I love you!” but consistently belittles, mocks, frightens, or abuses. It is unsettling and confusing for the person because they think, “This doesn’t match your claim to love.”

## 5. To obey God is to live like Jesus (2:6)

- a. This gives one more compelling reason for the Christian to obey – Christ obeyed so shouldn’t we walk in the same manner as He walked?
- b. One of the best-selling works of fiction in history is *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon. It’s a best seller because of it’s simple and compelling story, but also because an error in copyright register meant anyone could print and publish as many copies as they want.
  - i. In the novel the pastor challenges the church not to do anything without first asking the question, “What would Jesus do?”
  - ii. The question become popular again as a fad in the 90’s with WWJD bracelets that seem like they’re making a comeback again.

## 6. Applying the Word

- a. Obedience is an evidence of salvation not a means of salvation.
  - i. We are only saved through faith in our advocate, the propitiation for our sins, Jesus Christ the righteous.
- b. Examine yourself honestly.
  - i. **2 Corinthians 13:5** Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?
  - ii. *Do I have a growing desire to obey God?*
  - iii. *When was the last time I changed my behavior out of obedience to God?*



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Image: Christianity Today

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