

## 1 John 2:3-6

### “Two self-tests of walking in the Light”

- I. Intro
- II. Vs. 3 Progression of progress
- III. Vs. 4-6 Experience, union, and abiding

#### I. Intro

It is generally thought that in this section John begins a new thought as he starts the section with the phrase “NOW by this we know”. Yet I would argue the force of this phrase is a continuation of what he has been writing about as all we need to do is ask “By what do we NOW know?” Clearly John is referring to that which he NOW believes they NOW KNOW as he has just written on it. It is my opinion that what John is doing is offering a twofold test to the believer as to see if they are indeed NOW KNOWING. It seems to me that John is anticipating the question of those that are reading this letter in which he has just identified Jesus as the believer’s “assurance” “advocate” and “propitiation” while at the same time writing about those who are mere “professors” of fellowship with Jesus while in actuality they are only “pretenders”. How can a person distinguish their true position? By the use of the phrase “In HIM” I believe John offers “two tests” that will indicate our position as possessors of Jesus or only “professors” of Christ. Of course, they involve the transformative work of Christ in the life of the believer.

#### Test 1: 2:3-6 Obedience

#### Test 2: 2:7-11 Love

The person who has come into contact with Christ will experience relational transformation which will be seen in our obedience to Christ and truth. Secondly, it will impact us as we relate to our fellow “earth walkers”, and this will be seen in how we treat them in Love as Christ has

treated us. The Apostle offers ample tests both that are negative as well as those that are positive. He does so to make certain that the person reading this would not be self-deceived and remain in the state of self-deception but neither did he want them to lack the assurance offered in Christ.

## II. Vs. 3 Progression of progress

Vs. 3 John starts out with this phrase so that the believer can enjoy the assurance of their abiding relationship: “**By this we know that we know Him**”! The emphasis is the assurance too ourselves that we have a true relationship with Jesus. “**Are you**,” John asks, “**Enjoying a personal conscience relationship with Jesus?**” By this statement John is making sure that his readers are not ONLY connected to Jesus by “**intellectual knowledge**” as in a belief in a theory but instead connected to Christ by “**experiential knowledge**” that has put into practice what they know is true. *An artist is not one that has learned how to mix paints and learned the rules of perspective...no, **an artist is one who has put brush and paint to the canvas**.* Skill come with practice. Rembrandt was once asked by one of his students when he would become as skilled to which he replied, “**Try to keep putting the things you have learned in practice and in good time you will discover the hidden things you seek.**” We will only truly know that we know Jesus when we endeavor to continually KEEP His Word! The Greek word KEEP is one that means to “**attend carefully**”. **I speaks not only of the act of obeying but that of valuing His words so much that we don't want to miss the opportunity of not obeying all of them!** There are things that we eat because we know they are “**good for us**” **but we don't feel guilty if we miss them as we don't care for their taste.** Then there are those things that aren't very good for us, but they taste so good that we won't waste a bit and even lick the plate. **The Apostle uses a Greek word that combines the benefit of the first with the pleasure and taste of the second.** The “Commandments” that John is referencing is not the LAW but instead the words of Christ that

were either given by Jesus or the writers of the New Testament. Obedience to Gods word is usually a progression in maturity that center upon what it takes to motivate us:

- A. **Baby Christians**: View obedience as a “**have to**” as if they are a “**slave**” responding to a master. They view obedience in terms of what will happen to them if they don’t obey. ***If they don’t obey they will be punished.***
- B. **Immature Christians**: View obedience as a “**need to**” as if they are an “**employee**”. He may not enjoy his work, but he does enjoy being rewards with a paycheck! ***If they don’t obey they won’t be rewarded!***
- C. **Mature Christians**: View obedience as a “**want to**” because the relationship between God and him is one of love. Jesus said this in John 14:15 “If you LOVE ME, keep My commandments.”

We most likely started our relationship with God viewing obedience as “**I have to**” and then graduated to “**I need to**” but maturity happens when the “**I have to**” and the “**I need to**” becomes “**I want to**”! ***Immaturity is only motivated to obedience by warning and reward instead of being motivated to obey because we love Him!***

## II. Vs. 4-6 Experience, union, and abiding

The progression of maturity seen in the attitude of what motivates the believer from “**I have to**” to “**I need to**” and finally “**I want to**” will also be seen in the growth of our relationship. Johns describe this by using three words that indicate a deepening relationship with God and then speaks in terms of how this will progress through our obedience to the Words of Christ.

- A. Vs. 4 “**I know Him**”’: The word used by John here is the same as in verse 3 and speaks not of theoretical or intellectual knowledge but personal and experiential knowledge. The Greek renders the question of verse 3 as “***we***

*are continually getting to know by experience that we have experienced and still do experience Him*". It is in this first part of our relationship that we progress by imitation of Him...we "Keep His commandments" developing a habit that seeks to do so. This becomes "practical obedience" and is contrasted here against the person who 'claims' to have experienced Christ but isn't heeding the duty of even "I have to" that person who isn't even "having to obey" is demonstrating that they are a counterfeit Christian not a real one. It doesn't matter what the WORDS of their evaluation it is the ACTIONS and in this case the lack of practicing obedience that is the proof that they have no relationship with Jesus.

- B. Vs. 5 "***We are in Him***": Here John describes the deeper relationship with Christ that is one of a UNION between us, a ONENESS that occurs. Here the maturity comes about through obedience that is changes from the "Practical" to the "Principle" of obedience. John states it this way in verse 5 "*But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.*" The word "keeps" indicates a continual habitual practice who becomes more concerned with missing out of the benefits of God's word than the rigors of it. John says that the person who has transitioned into this "oneness" with Christ begins to realize what the "Love of God" is all about in their life. The motivation of obedience is no longer "***I have to***" as it has become "I need to". Love is becoming the primary reason for obedience but notice that this love is first from the perspective of His love for us before our action of obedience is our love for Him.

C. Vs. 6 “***He abides in Him***”: Finally, John describes the maturity of the believer that has continued to progress in their maturity to “abiding in Christ”. The word means to “remain” and describes a continual connection more than it does a position. This connection is the saint’s manner of life that views obedience as “***loving obligation***” as ***the love of Christ*** ***constrains us*** (2 Corinth 5:14). Not only are we united with Christ, but we are seeking to continually enjoy that relationship by remaining in that place by making it our home! Here obedience is a “Walk with Christ” where we seek to go where He is going, living the way He is living in us. It’s more than our duty it’s an expression of our devotion as John writes in verse 6 “Ought to walk just as He walked.” It’s a joint participation which we are so close to Him as to match His steps with ours as His nature is what we order our life around! It is what Paul said in Gal 2:20 “Christ lives in me”!