

KNOW THE WONDER AND GREATNESS OF SALVATION

1 JOHN 01:10–02:02

Introduction

Sin is a terrible thing. We see it blazed across the headlines of news reports every day: murder, mayhem, assault, fraud, cheating, lying, deceit, adultery, divorce, fighting, wars. Sin is so corrupt and common that every conceivable sin is seen or heard about in one form or another practically every day. Sin is so much a part of human life that we hardly pay attention to it unless it is some major crime or else it involves our own lives and families. Sin is just everywhere. No matter where we turn we see people mistreating others — criticizing, back-biting and gossiping about them. We see people verbally tearing other people down. We see husbands and wives living together but lacking true love. They are just together, living in coldness and being withdrawn from one another. We see all kinds of selfishness in children and fellow workers. We see lying, deception, stealing, cheating and all sorts of sexual immorality. We see people dressing in tight clothes or else exposing parts of the human body in order to attract attention, and then we see all kinds of promiscuity and rapes, assaults and murders. The list of sins and shortcomings in life could fill a book.

But the point is this: some people say they have not sinned. Despite all the sin in the world — all the sin that swirls around and engulfs human lives and society — some persons say that they can become righteous on their own. They say they can become so righteous that God will approve their behaviour — that God will accept them because of their own righteousness and sinlessness. They say they do not need a Saviour; they are able to save themselves. They say that the Son of God does not need to die for the sins of man because man can become righteous and sinless enough on his own, righteous and sinless enough to become acceptable to God.

This is the subject of the present passage. There are those who object to the idea that Jesus Christ *had to die* for the sins of man. They object to the preaching of sin, the idea that they are sinners, to the idea that they need the blood of God’s Son to cleanse their sins. They object and declare that man can become righteous and sinless on his own.

- I. We can become righteous and sinless on our own (v. 10).
- II. The truth: we are sinful, but we should not sin (Ch. 2:1).
- III. The provision is made if we do sin (vv. 1-2).
 - a. Jesus Christ, the Advocate.
 - b. Jesus Christ, the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, for our sins.

I. *John 02:10 Sin, Self-righteousness*

The misconception is forcefully stated — “we have not sinned.” How could any person conceivably claim this? Who would claim such a thing in light of all the sin that swirls

and engulfs man and society? Many people! There are many people who object to being called sinners, and they are insistent in their objection. They believe they are righteous and sinless enough that God would never reject them. They believe they can become good enough and sinless and righteous enough for God to accept them. They accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher and as the founder of Christianity, one of the great religions of the world. And they claim to be Christians; they follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. But they reject His deity, the fact that He is the Son of God who had to die for the sins of the world. They look upon the death of Jesus Christ as the death of a martyr, as a great man who was showing us how we should be willing to pay any price for what we believe — even death.

Who would make such a claim? Who would say “we have not sinned”? Who is it that objects to being called a sinner?

=> There is the *religious perfectionist*. This is a person who actually believes that he can achieve a state of sinlessness. Often he believes in Christ, but he believes that once he is saved, he can live so righteous and so pure a life that he can achieve a state of sinlessness and righteousness before God. He believes that the Holy Spirit will help him to *walk perfectly* before God.

=> There is the *social perfectionist*. This is a person who is a social Christian, who accepts Jesus Christ as a great teacher but rejects Him as the Saviour from sin. He objects to being called a *sinner*; he objects to the fact that he is sinful enough that he can be termed a *sinner*. He believes that he is righteous and sinless enough for God to accept, that God would never reject them. He believes he is too good for God to reject. He cannot accept the fact that he is bad enough and sinful enough for God to condemn him.

Note what the problem is with these two objectors. They just do not have a clear view of what sin is. To them sin is the gross violation of law and morality, the thing that society looks upon as gross sins: murder, fraud, and abuse — the kind of things that would grab a neighbour’s attention and cause talk. They fail to see what sin is to God. God is perfect; therefore, to God:

=> Sin is any imperfection.

=> Sin is falling short of God’s glory.

=> Sin is missing the mark of God’s perfection.

This is the reason no person can ever live with God. God is perfect; therefore, only perfection can live in His presence. Man is imperfect and short of God’s glory; he is sinful. Therefore, man can never live in God’s presence. This is what the objector needs to see. To God man is a *sinner*, a person who is ever so short of God’s glory, a person...

- who fails to use his mind to the fullest degree and who focuses it upon evil.
- who sometimes thinks impure and wrong thoughts and who commits impurity.

- who sometimes acts unlovely and mean to people.
- who sometimes acts impatiently and abuses others.
- who sometimes acts selfishly and steals.
- who sometimes owns too much and banks and hoards instead of living sacrificially to meet the desperate needs of the world.

All men are short in so much — short in worshipping God like they should, short in praying and fellowshiping and communing with God. No person obeys God perfectly all the time. All men come short of loving others like they should, short in witnessing and sharing Christ and in sacrificing and reaching out to help everywhere they should. No person is perfect; all are ever so short and sinful, so sinful that to God we are all sinners. We are sinners who need a Saviour, the very Son of God Himself, to save us from our sins. Now, note what the verse says:

If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. (v. 10)

God's Word plainly tells us that we are sinners, and it tells us often. If we, therefore, deny sin, we make God out to be a liar. In addition, we show that God's Word is not in us; that is, we are not acceptable to God. No matter what we may claim, we are not acceptable to God...

- if God's Word is not in us.
- if we call God a liar.
- if we say we do not need God's Son to save us from our sin.
- if we say we can become good enough and righteous enough and sinless enough to be acceptable to God.

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Titus 3:3 *At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

Eccl 7:20 *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*

Gen 6:5 *The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

Psa 53:3 *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Prov 20:9 *Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?*

Isa 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

Isa 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

II. **John 02:01 The Believer's Spiritual Struggle**

The truth is that we are sinful, but *we should not sin*. This is a tender exhortation: John addresses the believers “my dear children.” They are very, very dear to him. He was their pastor, their spiritual father; and they were his spiritual children, the ones under his care. He loved them with the love of a strong and caring father. Therefore, he must exhort them. He must exhort them in the areas where they needed strength. Where was that? In sinning. Note exactly what John says:

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.*

“I write this” refer to the things John has just said, to the fact that all have sinned and all do sin. Because of man’s nature, the very fact that he lives within a corruptible world, he *cannot keep from sinning*. But note the strong exhortation: “I write this to you so that you will not sin.” The believer lives in a corruptible world, and he is housed in a body of flesh that is so easily aroused and attracted to eat more, take more, have more, be more and receive more. But the believer is to struggle and fight against sin. He is not to give in to sin. He is to *cast down imaginations, demolish arguments* and struggle to captivate every thought for Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). He is to do all he can to become more and more like Christ and to be a stronger and stronger witness for righteousness in the world. He will never achieve perfection; he will never be sinless so long as he is in the flesh and in this corruptible world. But he is to struggle to be as good as he can. He is to be as righteous as possible and he is to gain ground; he is to grow in righteousness. The believer is to become more and more like Christ as long as he is on earth.

Thought 1. Believers must prove they are sincere when they come to Christ for forgiveness of sins. Christ has no patience with hypocrisy and no place for half-hearted commitment. He can look at our lives and tell whether we love Him or not, whether we are sincere or not. He can watch our struggle against sin and tell if we really want to follow Him or not. The genuine believer struggles against sin; he fights, wrestles and wars against sin with every ounce of energy he has. He does all he can to please God and to receive God’s approval.

Isa 1:16 *Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.*

John 5:14 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

John 8:11 *“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.*

Job 11:14 *If you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Eph 4:22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

Heb 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

III. **John 02:01–02 The Death of Jesus Christ**

There is the great provision. The believer is not to sin, but if he sins he has the most wonderful provision — that is Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself. Two things are said about Jesus Christ that show the wonderful provision God has made for us.

1. Jesus Christ is our “Advocate” (parakleton), the one who speaks to the Father in our defence. The word “*advocate or defender*” means someone who is called in to stand by the side of another. The purpose is to help in any way possible. (This is the word [parakletos] used of the Holy Spirit. See *Comforter*, Jn. 14:16.)

=> There is the picture of a friend called in to help a person who is troubled or distressed or confused.

=> There is the picture of a commander called in to help a discouraged and dispirited army.

=> There is the picture of a lawyer, an advocate called in to help a defendant who needs his case pleaded.

There is no one word that can adequately translate paracletos. The word that probably comes closest is simply *helper*. Sin causes the believer to be distressed and confused, discouraged and dispirited. Sin separates the believer from God and makes him guilty of transgression and worthy of condemnation and punishment. But Jesus Christ is

the believer's *Advocate*. Jesus Christ stands before God and pleads the case of the believer. Note two significant points.

- a. What is it that gives Jesus Christ the right to plead the case of the believer? Note exactly what the verse says: Jesus Christ is *the righteous One*. He is the Son of God who came to earth and lived a sinless life as man. He is the One who secured the *perfect and ideal righteousness* for man. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the *only Person* who has the right to stand before God. Why? Because God is perfect, and only a perfect person can stand in God's presence. This is the reason man must approach God through Jesus Christ: He alone is perfect and righteous. He alone has the right to stand in the court of God as the Advocate or attorney to represent man. There is no other righteousness, no other goodness that is acceptable to God; only the perfect and ideal righteousness of Christ has been approved to stand as the advocate in the court of heaven.

This means a most wonderful thing. God will never turn down a person who has Jesus Christ as his advocate. The person who has Jesus Christ to approach God for him will never be turned down, for Jesus Christ has the right to stand as the advocate before God in the court of heaven.

- b. What is it that Jesus Christ pleads?

=> He does not plead the reputation of the believer.

=> He does not plead the good works of the believer.

=> He does not plead *not guilty*, that the believer did not commit sin.

=> He does not plead the personal righteousness of the believer.

=> He does not plead that the believer has been as good as he can be.

What is it that Jesus Christ pleads? Again, note the verse:

1 John 2:1 *We have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

He pleads His own righteousness. How can He do this? This is the discussion of the next point.

Rom 8:34 *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

Heb 2:17 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

Heb 4:14-15 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:25-26 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

Heb 8:1 *The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.*

Heb 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

2. Jesus Christ is the *propitiation, the atoning sacrifice for our sins*. “Atoning sacrifice” (hilasmos) means to be a sacrifice, a covering, a satisfaction, a payment, an appeasement for sin. It means to turn away anger or to make reconciliation between God and man. Remember: God is holy and just. He is perfect love, but He is also perfect holiness and justice. Therefore He must execute justice against the sinner. He must judge and condemn sin. His justice must be perfectly satisfied. Now there is only one way God's justice can be perfectly satisfied: His justice has to be cast against the perfect sacrifice. If there was a Perfect and Ideal Man, then that Man could accept the guilt and punishment for sin. The Perfect Man could step forward and bear the punishment for sin and satisfy the justice of God.

This is the glorious gospel, the wonderful love and provision of God. Jesus Christ is the Ideal and Perfect Man. Therefore, He sacrificed His life for man and His sacrifice covered all men. As the Ideal Man, Jesus Christ accepted the guilt and punishment of sin for all men. He died for all men. When He died, He died as the perfect sacrifice for sins. Therefore, God accepts His death...

- as the *sacrifice* for our sins.
- as the *covering* for our sins.
- as the *satisfaction* for our sins.
- as the *payment* for the penalty of our sins.
- as the *appeasement* of His wrath against sin.

When Jesus Christ carries a man's case before God, He pleads His own righteousness and death, and God accepts His righteousness and death for man. It is by this, by the sacrifice of His death for our sins, that we become acceptable to God.

Note one other point: Jesus Christ is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the *whole world*. He is the eternal Son of God, the Ideal and Perfect Man. Therefore, all that He ever did covers eternity. His sacrifice for sin covers the first man ever born and spans all of time over to the last man, and then continues right on throughout all of eternity. Jesus Christ paid the penalty of sin for all sinners of all generations. He died for the sins of all people, no matter who they are or what they have done.

But note a critical fact: a person has to come to Jesus Christ and trust Him to be his advocate before God. Jesus Christ is the only Person who has the right to stand as an advocate in the court of God's perfect justice. He is the only Person who can present man's case before God and have man declared righteous. Therefore, a person is not covered by the advocacy of Christ unless he comes to Christ and has Christ represent him before God.

Heb 2:17 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1 John 4:10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ■*

JOHN 02:02

ATONING SACRIFICE; PROPITIATION (HILASMOS)

*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. **John 02:02***

To sacrifice in order to appease; to satisfy; to cover; to pay the penalty for. It is a sacrificial word. In the Old Testament when a man sinned or something went wrong, he brought a sacrifice to God. The idea was that the sacrifice would appease and pacify and satisfy God. He thought God would be gracious to him and place the punishment for his sin upon the animal. When things go wrong, man has always offered to fast and pray and serve with renewed vigour, or else he has offered to give up some meaningful pleasure or possession. There is a feeling that this kind of denial or renewed sacrifice appeases and satisfies God.

It is true that God told Israel to offer sacrifices. But He did it for a reason: to teach Israel, and through them the world, that the answer does not lie in human or animal sacrifice. A human sacrifice cannot bring about a right relationship with God. Man's problem is too deep for human sacrifice; his contamination too severe; his disease too terrible; his infection too deadly. The paraphernalia of earthly sacrifice can never put things right with God.

The reason is simply stated. Man's sin has cut him off from God, severed his relationship with God, put God out of *arm's reach*. Man instinctively senses this. Thus, when man fails to get satisfaction from his sacrifice, he often returns to his former behaviour and practices.

What man needs is to be disinfected, to have his sins covered. He needs to know beyond a doubt that God does accept him and is satisfied with him. And then he needs a power to live for God.

This comes about through propitiation. Four things need to be said about propitiation.

1. God is the One who has to be appeased, satisfied and propitiated. The Bible is not speaking of reconciliation. The Bible never says that God has to be reconciled to man. God is already the friend of man; He loves man. It is man who needs to be reconciled to God. Man is the one who holds enmity, who ignores, neglects and rejects God. Thus, God is the One who has to be appeased or propitiated (cp. Lk. 18:13).

There is another thought here as well. God is righteous and holy, and His righteousness and holiness have to be satisfied. He can only accept a person who is perfectly righteous and holy. It might be said that anything less than perfection would contaminate the very atmosphere around God. And the presence and dwelling place of God would no longer be the utopia which God has prepared for the believer and for which man dreams.

2. Jesus Christ is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, the satisfaction for sins. Christ was completely righteous and holy; therefore, He was the perfect and ideal Man. This means that His death was the perfect and ideal sacrifice. God was able to satisfy His justice against sins by casting it against Christ. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ completely satisfied and appeased the righteousness of God (1 Jn. 4:9-10).
3. Propitiation means *coverage*. Christ covers our sins so that God no longer can see them (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; Jn. 2:2).
4. Propitiation finds its type in the mercy seat, that is, in the lid of the ark (Heb. 9:5). God had said that man was to approach Him through the sacrifice of an animal, through the shedding of blood. The lid or covering of the ark was sprinkled once a year with the blood of a perfect animal. This signified that the life of the people was being offered to God in the blood of the victim. God was thereby appeased and satisfied. (Cp. Lk. 18:13; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10.) □

TEST 1: OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS

1 JOHN 02:03–06

Introduction

How do we know if we really know God? We live in a day when many people are not even interested in knowing God. They could care less about knowing God. They want to live like they want and get all the possessions and enjoy all the pleasures of the world they can. To know God is the furthest thing from their minds. But this is dangerous ground, for if God really exists then the rejecters of God are going to miss out:

=> They are going to miss out on the purpose, meaning, and significance of life; they are going to miss out on real love, joy, and peace and the abundance of a rich and full life both now and eternally. If God really exists and they fail to know Him, they are going to miss out on all of what life really is. Why? Because God created life and He knows what life should be. Therefore, if we do not know God, God who gave us life, then we miss out on everything that God meant life to be. But this is not all that the rejecters will face if they do not know God.

=> If God exists, then it means that all those who reject Him must face His holiness and justice. They must stand before Him having rejected Him and face His judgment.

The point is clear: we must know God. But how can we tell if we really know Him? There are seven tests that will show us. The first test is the discussion of this passage: Do we obey God's commands?

- I. The test: do we obey God's commands (v. 3)?
- II. The professing man: says he knows God but does not obey His commands (v. 4).
- III. The obedient man: obeys God's Word (v. 5).
- IV. The responsible man: lives up to his profession (v. 6).

I. *John 02:03 Commandments and the Knowledge of God*

How do we know if we really know God? There is a test that will show us. Do we obey God's commands? Man faces an enormous problem, a problem that any thinking and honest person can see. If God really exists, man can never know it — not by his own reasoning and energy or effort. No matter how much thought or creative thinking and *inner feelings* man may have, man can never know for sure if God exists — not in and of himself. There is a clear reason for this. Man lives in a physical and material world, and the physical and material world cannot penetrate or cross over into the other world, that is, into the spiritual world. If man is ever to *know* the spiritual world, if he is ever to know God, then God has to enter the physical and material world and reveal Himself to man. And note: this is exactly what God has done. God has sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to tell man the truth: the truth about God, about man himself, about the world in which man lives, and about the world to come. This is exactly what Jesus Christ and His followers said time and again. This is exactly what Jesus Christ and Scripture declare:

⇒ No man has ever crossed over into the spirit world and returned, no man but Jesus Christ.

John 3:13 *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.”*

John 6:50-51 *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 6:33, 38 *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

John 13:3 *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.*

John 17:5 *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

⇒ Jesus Christ came to save man from perishing and to give man a full, abundant life both now and eternally.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

⇒ Jesus Christ said that God had sent Him to make God known.

John 5:38 *“Nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.”*

John 12:45 *“When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.”*

John 6:29 *Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*

John 7:28 *Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him.”*

John 8:26 *“I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”*

John 14:7 *“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

John 16:15 *“All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”*

Col 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

This means something very significant: if we are to know God, we must know Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself and made Himself known through Jesus Christ and through Christ alone. Therefore, to know God we must know Jesus Christ whom He has sent. How do we know if we know God? If we know Jesus Christ, then we know God.

Now, note exactly what the verse says.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. (v. 3)

This verse says explicitly that we know God if we obey God's commands. What are God's commands?

1 John 3:23 *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*

God's chief command is this: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. There are two things said here.

1. First, to know God we must believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. If we believe in Christ, then we come to know God, for Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God. By believing in Jesus Christ we keep God's commandment.
2. Second, to know God we must love one another. Love covers all the commandments of God. If we love one another, we will not hurt or cause pain for one another; we will not offend or sin against one another. We will be obeying all the commands of God. This is exactly what Scripture declares.

Rom 13:8-10 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.*

The point is this: How do we know if we know God? Take a test: Do we obey God's commands? If we obey God's commands, then we believe in Jesus Christ, that He is God's Son, and we love one another. We surrender all we are and have to Jesus Christ and to loving one another. Unless we are doing these two things, we do not know God. No matter what a person may say, he does not know God if he has never given his life to Jesus Christ. And he does not know God if he criticizes, grumbles and backbites his brother and commits adultery, kills, steals, lies, covets or does anything else against his brother. If a person really knows God, then he wants to please God. He wants to know more and more about God, and the only way he can know more and more about God is to follow God. He has to do the things that God does, to walk and love as God walks and loves. The more we walk and love as God does, the more we will come to know God. Therefore, if we obey His commands, we know Him. This is the way we can tell if we know Him, the only way.

John 7:16-17 *Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."*

John 8:31 *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."*

John 8:51 *"I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

1 John 2:3 *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*

Hosea 6:3 *"Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."*

Thought 1. Some people seek to know God. They seek after God, but they do it in the wrong way.

- 1) Some speculate about God. This is the route most people take in trying to know God. They imagine what God is like and hold that image in their mind and try to live by what they imagine. They have their own teachings and their own images of what God is like, and they govern their lives by that image.
- 2) Some try to seek and know God by mystical or emotional experiences. They seek to know the spiritual world and its focus through spiritists, astrology, seances, magic and a host of other man-made mystical experiences.

II. **John 02:04 False Profession**

There is the man who makes a false profession. Scripture is direct and pulls no punches:

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (v. 4)

It is absolutely impossible to know God and not to obey His commands. Why? For one clear reason: if God really exists, then He created us. We came from God. He created us for some purpose; He put us on earth for some reason. Therefore, He is bound to tell us why He created us; He is bound to tell us what He wants us to do and exactly how to do it. He would defeat His purpose if He did not. Therefore, God would never leave us in the dark, groping and grasping and trying to find out the truth. He would be a God of hate if He left us in the dark, and He is the farthest thing from hate. Jesus Christ has shown us that God is love, that God loves us so much that He has given us the Holy Scriptures to tell us what to do. But more than this, God has shown us His love by giving His Son to live the truth out right before our eyes. God has not only given us His written Word that tells us how to live, He has given us the *Living Word* in the life of His Son. God has sent His very own Son to live the perfect and ideal life upon earth so that we might know how to live. Jesus Christ lived out the will of God; He lived just like God commands man to live. Therefore, He knew God perfectly. He had perfect communion and fellowship with God.

The point is this: if a person says that he knows God and does not obey God's commands, he is a liar. The only way a person can know God is to follow Jesus Christ, to walk in fellowship with God just like Jesus Christ did. A person has to follow the perfect and ideal life of Jesus Christ. The person has to walk and live as Jesus Christ walked and lived: he has to follow Jesus Christ and do exactly what Jesus Christ says in order to know God. This is what Jesus Christ did: He obeyed all the commands of God; therefore, He knew God perfectly. This is exactly what man must do. Man must follow Jesus Christ and do exactly what Christ did: obey the commands of God. When man obeys the commands of God, then he will come to know God.

But note: the converse is also true. If a man does not obey God's commands, then he does not know God. This is exactly what this verse says. Note it again.

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (v. 4)

Note: this person makes a false profession. His knowledge of God — what he thinks God is like — is false. His image of God and the ideas within his mind of God are not true. They are false, counterfeit, not genuine. The person does not know God at all. How can we tell? Because he does not obey the commands of God. He has not truly believed in Jesus Christ, nor is he loving his brother like God commands. He is not walking like Jesus Christ walked, not obeying God nor doing what God says to do. The verse is clear; note it: the person is a liar and the truth is not in him. He is making a false profession.

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Mark 7:6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'"

John 13:35 “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Eph 5:1-6 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Ezek 33:31-32 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

Psa 78:35-36 They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues.

III. John 02:05 True Profession and Obedience

There is the obedient man. The obedient man obeys God's Word and knows God and loves God. Note how obedience is tied to knowing and loving God. All these things are involved in knowing anyone. The only way to know anyone is...

- to get near them.
- to study them, learn all about them — all about their will, desires, and wants, their nature and thoughts and behaviour.

The same is true with God. The only way to know God is to get near Him and study Him, learning all we can about His will, desires and wants; all about His nature and thoughts and behaviour. But how can we do this when God is in the spiritual world, another whole dimension of being, a world that is far removed from this world? By Jesus Christ. Remember: Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God and to show us how to draw near God. Therefore, to know God, we must draw near Jesus Christ and follow the example He left us. We must follow the Word of Christ; we must keep the Word of Christ, living exactly as He lived. This is the person who knows God.

Note a most wonderful result: the person who obeys God's Word has God's love made complete in his life. What does this mean? When we draw near God and begin to obey

His Word, we begin *to establish a relationship* with God. It is just like a boy who meets a girl and begins to draw near her. He begins to know her and to develop affection for her, and the more he associates with her, the more he loves her. So it is with God. The more we draw near Him and obey His Word and please Him, the more we learn about Him and love Him. The word “obeys” (terei) is continuous action. It means to continue on and not to stop. It means day by day obedience. If we obey God's Word day by day, then we learn more and more about God; we learn to love Him more and more. His love becomes completed and fulfilled in us.

The obedient person is the person who knows God and loves God. He is the person who knows the love of God; he knows all the fullness of life that God's love brings. No matter what a person may profess — no matter how religious a person may be — if he does not obey God, he does not know God. Neither does he love God.

Mat 7:25-27 “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Mat 12:50 “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

John 7:17 “If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

John 15:14 “You are my friends if you do what I command.”

John 14:31 But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. “Come now; let us leave [that I may die].”

John 15:10 “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”

Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

Deu 5:29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

IV. John 02:06 True Believer Lives up to his Profession

There is the responsible man, the man who lives up to his profession. The word “walk” (peripatein) is continuous action. It means to keep on walking: to continuously walk. If a person says that he abides in Christ, he must be a responsible person. He ought to walk as Jesus Christ walked. In fact, the word *must* means debt, constraint, obligation. The person

who professes Jesus Christ, who claims that he knows God, is obligated to walk as Jesus Christ walked. He is in debt to walk as Christ walked. How did Christ walk upon earth? He walked...

- believing and trusting God
- worshipping and praying to God
- fellowshiping and communing with God
- giving and sacrificing all He was and had to God
- seeking and following after God
- teaching and telling others about God
- loving and caring for others just as God said to do
- obeying all of God's commands

This is the responsible man, the man who lives what he professes. If he professes to know God, he walks even as the Lord Jesus Christ walked upon earth. He believes and trusts God; he worships and prays to God, and he does all the other things that Christ did. He walks in the footsteps of Christ, doing exactly what Christ did. This is the person who knows God.

***Rom 6:4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

***2 Cor 5:7** We live by faith, not by sight.*

***Gal 5:16** So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

***Eph 4:1** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*

***Eph 5:2** And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

***Eph 5:15** Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise.*

***1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

***1 John 2:6** Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

***Mat 16:24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

***John 13:15** "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."*

***Phil 2:5** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

***Col 3:13** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Heb 3:1-2 *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.*

1 Pet 2:21 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ■*