

How do I know I am really a Christian? 1 John 2:3-5

Intro: If you could ask God one question only and he would answer you, what would it be? I have one question above all others that I would ask him, because there is one thing I care about more than anything else I could care to ask. **Will I certainly attain to eternal life?** The names of the elect are written in the book of life, but the Bible does not contain the book of life. It contains conditions, promises, contingencies. There is nowhere in the Bible where it says, 'Scott is saved'. I must deduce it from other texts. Do I trust Christ? Am I bearing fruit of a living faith? Even when it says that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children, it is in accord and not out of accord with the rest of Scripture. Here is one of God's answers to my question. **Increase your assurance by increasing your obedience!**

T: To begin we must establish the relationship between knowing Christ and keeping his commands.

1. Fact of the relation – There IS a relation between knowing Christ (being saved) and keeping his commands

- Indeed it is necessary –*a priori* John knows having never met the person (2:19)
- **Mt 7:13; 13:23; Lk 6:46; Jn 14:15, 21-24; 15:10,14; Rev 22:14; Titus 1:16; Mt 7:21-27**

T: Since there is indeed a relationship between your salvation and obeying God's commands, let us look at what these commands are.

2. Content of the relation – keeping His commands – what are the commands?

- **3,4** "His commandments" – plural and unqualified
- **5** "His word" – singular, but collective, broader & parallel with 'commandments' (Apostles **4:6, 1Thess 4:1-2**)
- **6** "ought himself also to walk just as He walked" – Jesus kept all of God's law – he was without sin.
- **7** "No new commandment, word you heard from the beginning" **2Jn 1:5-6**, (the old new language **John 13:34-35**)
- **9-11** After commands, he goes into a discussion about loving and hating one's brother (light and dark).
- **2:29-3:10** It is also called practicing righteousness
- **3:11** this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
- It therefore means his moral law –all his commands & his Apostle's commands

T: How is it then that John can be so assertive and certain that we will keep God's moral law?

3. Causes of the relation – many but related to the new birth

- **Ezekiel 36:26-27** –God's promised it
- Salvation is substantial – new Birth **2:29; 3:9, 14; 4:7; 5:1-4,18**
- Spirit's presence **3:24, 4:13, Gal 5:22**
- His work **3:5,8 ;Eph 2:10, Titus 2:11-14**
- Fruit not root – **Mt 7:15-20; Jn 8:47; 10:27**
- Sanctified dependent effort **Phil 2:12-13**- God's promised it, but this promise does not produce apathy

T: As we recognize that the new birth produces righteous lives, we must beware of resting on that righteousness and seeking it as our salvation, and we must beware of ignoring the relationship

4. Cautions regarding the relation –what it does *not* mean, and how *not* to apply it

- Not inconsistent with the rest of the letter – not sinless perfection – we sin, repent, confess, are forgiven
- Do not invert the relation –Justification is not by obedience **Gal** – you will fear it is, it is proof fruit, not root
- *Indicative* leads to *imperative* not to idleness –not a jettison of the imperative (complex real life)
- More for yourself, than others. Not same with others as with self [present the condition, not assert the conclusion- unless you are a church court **Mt 18:17**]

T: Now that we know what to avoid regarding the fruit of the new birth, how can we positively apply it?

5. Applications of the relation –examine yourself by it & seek assurance by it

- Do you obey his commandments? Sermon on the Mt. <beware of knee jerk>
- If you are found wanting don't seek justification by law.
- Flee to Christ and repent – Never forget the Gospel!
- Seek assurance actively not passively. (Biblical dynamic)
- You are meant to hear this and actively increase your obedience – [– romanticism]
- There are people who have assurance who should not

T: God very often places responsibility for things he gives us in our hands, we have the choice to pursue or neglect assurance, we ought to pursue it, neglecting it is neither comfortable nor safe.

Conclusion: summary Increase your assurance by increasing your obedience.