

The Lifestyle of Those Who Know God 1 John 2:1-6

Introduction

"My little children"—that's the way the apostle John addresses those he writes. His language reveals his tender care for them as one who is far along in his life's journey and deeply concerned for those who follow. He writes with family affection, with the compassion of a father looking out for his dear children. His tone reminds us that the wise warnings he gives come from a heart of love.

The truth is that all of us are on our first journey through life. We may be in the early or late stages, but it's still our first time. We need the compassionate guidance of God, the tender shepherding of Christ and His apostles, and the comfort and direction of the Spirit to navigate our way through the minefield of life in this world.

It's much easier to receive the counsel of someone you know cares about you than to listen to those who are just barking orders. The apostle of John is known as the apostle of love for good reason. This morning he gives loving guidance to us regarding the lifestyle of those who truly know God.

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone

does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1. Aversion to Sin (1-2)
2. High Regard for God's Word (3-5a)
3. Imitation of God's Son (5b-6)

1. Aversion to Sin (1-2)

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

John has just declared in 1 John 1:9
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But John does not want us to jump to the conclusion that sinning is consequently no big deal. There were legalists who falsely charged that the gospel the apostles preached sanctioned and promoted sinful living. They

argued that the Christian gospel led to the logical conclusion that since God will forgive me through Christ, it's okay if I yield to sin, even pursue it.

The false teachers John is confronting are those who actually believed what the legalists falsely charged the apostles with preaching—that it's okay to pursue sin, because God will forgive us anyway. They preached not law but license. But such false teaching expresses an unrepentant spirit regarding sin. How can you love God who is light, and also love darkness?

Both these false teachers and the legalists completely fail to account for the miraculous change of disposition regarding sin that happens when a person is born again. The indwelling Spirit of God energizes our desire to live in a way pleasing to God. *Even though we still face temptations, our love affair with sin is over. We have come to know full well that our sin is killing us, damning us, and wrecking our relationship with God and with others.* We now know that any appeal sin makes to us that somehow we'll be better off to live in sin is a toxic lie. We want the peace and joy that healthy relationships bring us, not the devastation sin brings. Because of love for God and for others we want to do right.

And that's why people who truly belong to Christ have an aversion to sin and sinning. They know what danger and damage sin presents. They love God not sin.

These false teachers also failed to appreciate the purpose of God's offer of forgiveness and cleansing. When human beings have no hope, they lose the will to fight. *Legalism thrives on exaggerating man's power to fight sin and minimizing sin's power to dominate us.* Those who try to make it by keeping the law either become proud because they've deceived themselves into thinking they've achieved righteousness on their own, or despair when they can't reach the goal no matter how hard they try.

The false teachers tried to quell that despair by teaching that sinning doesn't really matter. But what they were promoting was not victory over sin but surrender to it. Not fighting sin but accommodating it. God's promise of forgiveness and cleansing is necessary to our fighting against sin. *We can't fight effectively against sinning if we have no hope of breaking free.* To feel there's no way back to God, no way to restore a relationship broken by sin, is to make sin's stranglehold on us all the stronger. If it's no use, why try? If God did not welcome us to come to Him for forgiveness and cleansing, we would be too

afraid to come to Him for help. And without His help, we can never live clean.

"The gospel is not just a comfort; the gospel is a call. . . . You cannot accept the comfort of the gospel without also accepting its call."
Paul Tripp preaching on Psalm 15, June 29, 2008

God's provision of forgiveness and cleansing is not to give us freedom to sin more but to give us strength to sin less.

Hope of victory strengthens our resolve and perseverance in the battle against sin.

But even those with an aversion to sin and who battle against it fall to it sometimes. It is not their pattern, but it happens. Our hatred for our sin makes grieve all the more when we do fall to it. What then? How do we keep the guilt from crippling us? John goes back to the truth he articulated in 1:7 and 1:9.

1 John 2:1b-2 But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus the Messiah, the God-man Savior-king is the key to restoring us.

Advocate—paraclete—with the Father; Jesus is our defense attorney, interceding with the Judge of all the earth on our behalf.

The Righteous—Jesus has completely fulfilled the righteousness God’s law demands. Sinless with no sin to atone for of his own.

The propitiation—the blood sacrifice of Jesus on the cross completely satisfies the righteous wrath of God on sinners for their rebellion. Jesus bore the divine punishment in His own body on the cross. He has paid the penalty in full.

Not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world—no matter what time and place sinners belongs to, Jesus is the only One who can be a propitiation for their sin. This is not a culture-bound solution; it is not just a Western religion, nor only mid-eastern religion where Christianity originated; it is for all ethnicities. The satisfaction of the wrath of God that Jesus’ self-sacrifice achieves is infinite in its sufficiency. But only those who trust in Him to cleanse them benefit from what He has done.

People who truly know God show an aversion to sin in the way they conduct their lives.

Proverbs 28:13-14

13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. **14** Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Because of our reverent love for God, who is light, we have an aversion to the darkness of our own sin. So a believer is marked both by a desire to avoid sin and a desire to make things right when he or she does sin.

What is your response to sin? Not the sin of others—your own?

Are you giving yourself a pass, allowing it to take up residence? It has no claim. Kick it out of the house. You are owner-occupied by the Holy Spirit. You need to hear the call of the gospel to holy living.

Are you beating yourself up with guilt? You need the comfort of the gospel. The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin.

2. High Regard for God's Word (3-5a)

3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

We know (assurance) we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments.

Know—experiential knowledge of God; not just know about Him. Know Him.

The commandments of God reveal His will for us and tell us what pleases Him.

Keep—watchful care of something we count valuable—guard, observe; the opposite of neglect, apathy, devaluing, disregard, disobedience

Not speaking of sinless perfection—that would contradict what John has been teaching. Rather John refers to a heart disposition of watchful care of His commands with a desire to observe/obey them.

Jesus uses this word in the great commission: Matthew 28:20
Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.

A false teacher or fake Christian says, “I know him,” but does not treat His commands this way. He or she does not exercise watchful care over them to hold on to them and observe them. Such a person is a liar. The truth is not in him—else it would have turned his/her heart toward valuing God’s commands and observing them.

In contrast to this liar in whom the truth does not reside is the one who keeps His word—not just His commands. Such a person treasures all God has said.

1 John 1:5a

But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

God's truth has captured this one's heart. And God's love has accomplished its intended goal. God's love for us evokes our love for Him and whatever He has to say. We treasure the words of those we love. And when those words reveal what pleases God, we want to obey them. How could it be any different? Love drives obedience. Love fulfills the law.

Proverbs 28:9

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

Why is that? If you have a relationship of trust and love with God, it makes no sense that you would want to talk to Him but have no desire for Him to talk to you or to tell you what He wants you to do.

"The proof of love is loyalty." Fritz Rienecker

Psalms 1—the blessed (happy) man delights in God's law, meditating in it day and night.

How are you making God's commands/Word your delight? In what ways are you exercising watchful care over it so that you can carry out His revealed will. What a privilege to actually know what God wants you to do—to be shepherded through life by God Himself!

3. Imitation of God's Son (5b-6)

By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

By this we may know—assurance—that we are in him—a living connection with Jesus; in Him a characteristic way of describing someone who is relying on Jesus as one relies on a boat to keep from sinking and drowning.

Abide—to remain; to stay; living your life in connection with Jesus

John is using language like Jesus used in John 15:4-5, 8

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

So what does it look like if you are living life abiding in Him?

When the NT writers want to describe one's everyday, ordinary lifestyle, they use the term walk—literally, to walk about. The idea is that wherever you are and whatever you do in your walkabout life, you live like this.

“Ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

What do we know about how Jesus lived His daily life when He was on earth?

Prayerful—stayed in communion with the Father

Truthful—teaching God's word and sharing the good news wherever He went

Did not pursue wealth, power, glory from men
On mission for God

Discipled others

Humble service—washing feet, touching lepers

Compassionate toward the needs of others

Sacrificed himself for the good of others

Had time for people often overlooked and undervalued, if not despised—women, children, Samaritans, the poor, known sinners ostracized

Spent time with sinners without participating in their sin—holy

You can't be indulging in your sin and at the same time be enjoying closeness to Jesus.

You must choose—moment by moment, day by day, step by step.

Sometimes the reason we fail so miserably in fighting our sin is that we are trying to do it without being close to Jesus. If you will stay close to Jesus, you can say no to sin. "If you walk in the Spirit, you won't fulfill the desires of the flesh."

And when we are close to Him, we turn our energies toward the kinds of things He devoted His life on earth to do. When we use our time to do what's wrong, we are depleting the resources God has given us to do what's right. Life is made up of time. Waste your time, waste your life.

Are you walking your journey of life on your own or with Jesus, following Him each step of the way?

That means denying yourself and taking up a cross to follow Him, but it's worth it!

Practicing an awareness and a trust in Jesus to lead you each hour of the day. He has promised to be with you all the days until the consummation of the age. And then eternal joys!

Conclusion

Those who truly know God show these hallmarks:

1. Aversion to Sin (1-2)
2. High Regard for God's Word (3-5a)
3. Imitation of God's Son (5b-6)

Discussion Questions

1. What does John's addressing his readers as "my little children" communicate about the apostle's (and God's) heart toward those who believe, and how does that encourage you?
2. How does 1 John 1:9 and 2:1b-2 give you courage to come to God with your sins, and hope that fighting them is worth the struggle?
3. What is the danger of imagining that available forgiveness gives me freedom to sin more without consequences?
4. When does someone need the comfort of the gospel, and when does someone need to hear the call of the gospel?
5. What are some practical ways you live out your aversion to sin as one who knows God?
6. When do you find your heart hungering for and treasuring God's commands and God's Word, and when do you find it pulling back?
7. What are some ways you integrate God's Word into your life throughout the day?
8. What are ways you have found help you abide in Christ?

9. What are some patterns in Christ's earthly life that have helped you align your daily life to His?