

I John 2:3-11 • Knowing Christ

Ryan Perz • February 7, 2021

Obedience and Disobedience; Love

Intro: What is the best way to describe Christianity? Is there one phrase that catches it? Is there a pithy way to state what we are about?

The best way to describe Christianity seems to be, “Knowing Christ”.

A Christian is a person who knows Christ.

—It’s how Jesus defined eternal life.

John 17:3 ESV

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

or Paul, being an earnest, Christ-centered man

Philippians 3:10 CSB

My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death,

But how? What does it look like?

- The word *know* is used 42 times in this letter; so we need to know something about knowing.
- The way we use “know” usually is tied to facts and information.

Oxford English Dictionary:

“To have in the mind, be able to recall”

E.G. “He knows Spanish”; “she knows how to sew”.

Yet the way the Bible uses the phrase *Knowing God* means to be in covenant relationship with him.

**This is behind the New Covenant—the covenant age we live in.

Jeremiah 31:34 ESV

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

*Knowing Christ—means claiming to be in a covenant relationship with him.

But how do we know we are in a relationship with Christ?

- Remember, the main reason for this letter is assurance.

***1 Jn is designed to stabilize weak assurance but strip away any sense of false assurance.*

- Last message dealt with people who have weak assurance—so it was heavy on the cross.
- The emphasis of this passage is *false assurance*.

| It reminds me of a video of an infomercial I saw once. The salesman-actor was advertising a ladder. He went on about the great benefits of the ladder and how safe it was to operate. As he went to climb on it, you could see clearly it was not locked in place, so it ended up collapsing and he fell, smacking his head off the ladder.

In a sense, this passage is meant to do the same: expose false assurance.

I was asked by the pastoral search team 3 years ago what word would describe the main emphasis in my preaching. I said grace. I'd say the same thing today several years later.

But...grace does not abolish God's law; grace does not do away with Christ's commands...rather they sink into the heart.

John 14:15 ESV

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Authentic faith is marked by obedience and love.

Show your obedience (4-6)

- Knowing Christ is marked by obedience (v3)
- (v4) Poor example who shows no obedience. Talk is cheap.

| We all probably have someone in our life who is mostly talk, or all talk. They are a dreamer.

When I worked at UPS back around 2006, a new part-time employee was hired. I asked him a simple question of why he took the job. He replied: he wanted to be CEO someday. He wasn't joking either.

I get it, UPS CEO pays well...14 million a year.

But it was talk.

› **Spiritually, if we are all talk and no walk, we should not have any sense of assurance.**

- The next two examples are positive—they should strengthen assurance.

(2:5)—Whoever keeps his word, in him the love of God is perfected.

“Love for God” (NIV) —In other words, the only evidence that we really love God is found in obedience.

John Stott “The proof of love is loyalty.”

—That simply means that obedience is the path to growth and maturity—*which is the goal of discipleship*.

Again, Jn 14:15

(2:6)—Whoever says they know Christ must walk as he walked.

- Obedience *must have a standard*.

What is your standard? Who is your standard? Who do you ultimately look up to, want to be like?

I'm a child of the 80's...there was a commercial “I want to be like Mike” —Michael Jordan. Every boy in the day who bounced a basketball wanted to be like Mike.

› **For those who claim to know God, the standard is Jesus.**

Christians: I want to be like Christ.

How do we know how Jesus walked? We walk with him in the Word of God—specifically the gospels.

I can't urge you strongly enough the read through the gospels—at least once a year.

But read through prayerfully: I want to walk like Jesus.

Jesus's walk can be boiled down to a few key elements:

Love, obedience, humility, and self-sacrifice.

>E.G. Turn to John 13: 1-7, 12-17

That is how Jesus walked, even to the time of his death.

It sets the bar very high for sure.

I heard a story once of a pastor who was asked by a family to baptize their younger child.

The wise pastor, before agreeing, asked the parents to do one thing: tell the child to go home and clean her room.

The parents admitted that it would not go well. There will be protests and pushback.

The pastor said—then your child is not ready for baptism...if they can't follow through with a simple act of obedience and self-denial, how will be able to follow Jesus and his greater demands of self-denial.

This is not a call to some works-based confidence.

It's simply what God's Word says about authentic faith in Jesus.

And it warns those whose talk is cheap.

Titus 1:16 ESV

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Knowing God in Christ is shown by obedience.

Show your love (7-11)

- Knowing Christ is also known by love—genuine love for other Christians.
—Old commandment from the beginning = most likely a reference to Lev 19:18.

At the beginning, God's people were called to love their neighbor. Jesus emphasizes that.

Gal 5:14 sums up the entire law this way.

Galatians 5:14 ESV

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

—New commandment

John 13:34 ESV

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

The new commandment is love in a Christ-directed way...specifically a sacrificial, self-giving love that is directed towards Christ's people and for his glory.

Our knowing Christ is not merely a doctrine test that is passed—

knowing Christ is measured by how much of a loving-sacrifice we are willing to make for others.

- › The command is new in the quality and extent Jesus gave to it us in his example.

Or simply put, the new command has a cross standing behind it.

When we want to understand Christian love, we don't need a long definition—we simply look to the Cross.

The cross is the display of what true love looks like.

Some do very heavy lifting in this area...others seem to not be willing to even lift their pinky finger.

**This also gets to the core of our motives—the church is a great place to serve, be visible. It can also be a trap for big egos.

- › Is loving, self-sacrifice really my motive?

Chew on Jn 13:34 for a few days....

- The final 3 verses draw out the theme of light/darkness.
 - It's a picture of conversion—there is no great area, no middle ground.
- › The reality is that every single one of us is either in light or darkness. Either In Christ or not
- It connects us back to the larger unit —or main point: God is Light.

The picture is pretty clear. The light shines on our path so we can walk without tripping or stumbling.

In darkness, you are very likely to fall and stumble (v11)—and bring others down with you.

That is likely behind the warning in Mt 18:6.

Matthew 18:6 NASB95

but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

*NASB/NIV makes the connection that the same word “stumble” used in Matt is used in 1 Jn.

There is a strong warning here. People can stumble, and also bring others down with them.

Picture this. You slip on something: ice, banana peel, or your kid’s toys on the floor.

As you slip, another person is standing by you. You grab ahold of them. If they are not stable—they are going down with you.

But there is a better way...

- That's the way of 1 Jn 2:9.

It's the way of love,

- Another disciple, who walked with Jesus personally, understood that authentic faith is linked with love...*earnest love*.

1 Peter 4:8 ESV

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Summary: Our profession must match our practice.

Our confession needs to shape our conduct.

Conclusion:

Why do we need this? Isn't it so basic? You may be tempted to say, “I heard it 100 times before.”

—Mt 24:10-13

When Jesus was asked about signs indicating the end of the age, he mentioned various things we see. Many fall away (stumble), are led astray...then:

Matthew 24:12 ESV

And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

*That almost seems like an apt description of the times we live in?

Yet note the final promise: the one who endures to the end will be saved.

God is calling a people to know Him; who profess to know Christ... truly know Him through obedience and love.