

## **“WALK IN THE SAME WAY HE WALKED.”**

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### **Scripture Texts: I John 2:1-6**

#### **Introduction.**

Nine years ago Patrick and I went on a road trip to a church conference in Moscow, Idaho. Patrick drove using his GPS. When we got to Pullman the GPS sent us on a route that I knew was wrong and had to talk Patrick into turning around and going a different way. We have had GPS arguments ever since.

On-line there are whole websites devoted to GPS disasters.

A woman in England following her GPS drove her \$175,000 Mercedes into a river. Three Japanese tourists in Australia drove their rental car down a gravel road into the Pacific Ocean.

A retired couple in Germany followed their GPS off the road and literally right into a church.

People have followed their GPS onto railroad tracks, down flights of stairs, and up such a narrow mountain path they had to be rescued by helicopter. And yes, there have been several deaths from blindly following GPS.

You can end up going where you don't want to go if you don't pay attention to the signs. Paying attention to signs is important even when you have GPS.

I John is a book of signs, three signs actually, that tell us if we are on the right path going the right direction. We will see all three signs in chapter two, but they reappear in later chapters as well.

The first sign is the moral sign in 2:3-6. This sign is about obeying the commands of God.

The second sign is the social sign in 2:7-11. This sign is about loving the people of God.

The third sign is the doctrinal sign in 2:18-27. This sign is about having faith in God.

So these three signs in John can be our GPS to help us be sure we are on the right path going the right direction, signs that we are a Christian and that we are on the path of Christ.

## **I John 2:3-6, By this we know, the moral test.**

John is concerned about false teachers and antichrists and those who are leading Christians astray. He deals with the problems on two fronts, exposing who are false and showing who are true. He begins with a moral test.

### ***Keeping the commandments is proof we know God.***

Notice how carefully John words it, by this we know (present tense) that we have come to know him (perfect tense, meaning completed in a time in the past).

The completed action in the past is our conversion, our coming to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. The present action is our on-going sanctification by keeping the commandments.

There is a past knowledge, a starting point, and now that knowledge is a continuing, growing reality.

Keeping the commandments doesn't save us, it shows we are saved. Keeping the commandments is not the condition on which we are saved, but it is the consequence of our being saved. The saved tree will produce fruit.

Keeping is more than just outward behavior, more than just checking off the rules. It is a heart obedience, a love for the rules and a genuine desire to follow them and a true sadness and regret when we don't.

The question here is do you know Him? Not do you know about Him, but do you know Him?

Do I know God? Do I know Jesus? I mean really know Him. Well, OK, so I can't completely know Jesus, but am I growing in my personal knowledge of Jesus? Do I know Him better this year than last year? Can I actually have a conversation with Jesus that lasts more than a couple of minutes? Can we talk?

To know Him means intimacy, which is a scary word, but it implies personal acquaintance, being on close speaking terms, a genuine interest in and special regard for.

***What is the major objection to what John seems to be saying?***

But there is a problem. Who can do this? No one perfectly obeys the commandments, so I guess everyone is a liar. It sounds like John is giving us an impossible command to follow. Right? Wrong.

How do you know that's the wrong way to interpret what John is saying? How do you know John isn't talking about perfect or complete obedience to the commandments?

First, it contradicts what John just wrote in chapter one when he said if anyone says he is without sin he deceives himself.

Second, John wrote that we are to continually confess our sins.

Third, John wrote that when we sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus. Clearly he understands we are all sinners and we all sin, we all need an advocate and we all need forgiveness.

He is not talking about sinless perfection, but striving according to our fallen capacity to conform to God's law. A striving or yearning or pressing on according to God's grace.

I like the way we make our vows in the CRC. I do, God helping me. I do, God enabling me by humble reliance on His grace. By His enabling grace we are making some progress, having some measure of success, some fruit. Maybe it's one step back and two forward, but it's movement. It's not flawless obedience but it's faithful consistency. Our love isn't perfect but it is being perfected.

Why obey? To get favor, to get grace, to get God's approval? Of course not. We obey out of love, because of the Father's love for us. Like the child who so wants to please his father.

I remember a time when a son did something wrong and I said to him how disappointed I was in what he did. And he said to me he wished I hadn't said that, he wished I would just get mad, but that when I said I was disappointed it stung more deeply, he was sad that he hurt me.

So it is with God. When we sin against Him, He doesn't respond with wrath because Jesus bore the wrath of God for sin, it is removed. But when we sin we can cause the Father displeasure. He still loves us, nothing can change that, we are already His son or daughter and that is non-negotiable.

Our love is never in question, but our relationship is effected and hurt by our sin. This is why we need to be quick to repent. That shows our heart, that we put our

love for God as a higher priority than our own pride or sense of shame or guilt. We are most sorry for our sin because of what it does to our Father.

***Then John gives the negative side of the coin, the “on the other hand.”***

If someone says he knows him but doesn't keep the commandments then his words and actions don't match, he is living a contradiction, or to say it more bluntly, he is a liar. Ouch, harsh words. But true.

There is a lot of this today. Everywhere in our culture there are people who are saying they are Christians, they know God, they are very religious, they believe the Bible, but they keep living the way they want to and engage in behavior contrary to God's Word. And if we confront this, they say we are being judgmental to question their words, we are being intolerant, we are the ones not being Christian.

But they are liars, their conduct contradicts their claim. We see this in the final piece of this moral test.

***True knowledge of God produces not only obedience but also imitation - 2:5b-6***

**I John 2:5b-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.

The key word here is this word ***abiding***.

This particular Greek word is used 113 times in the NT, 67 of which are in John's writings and 23 of those are in I John. I mention this to say we are going to run into this word a bunch more times so we need to get a good idea what it means.

Jesus defines it pretty well for us in John 15 when He talks about vines and branches.

Abiding is what a branch does with the vine, it remains and continues to be connected to, attached to. The spiritual life of the vine flows through the sap into the branch, the life of Christ is seen in us. When Christ's Word abides in us, the Word leaks out and is seen, the Word becomes fruit.

What if Jesus had used a different analogy. Be attached to me the way a transmission is attached to the engine. Be attached to me the way a cart follows the horse. That would be mechanical and impersonal.

The vine and the branch points to an organic relationship, a living relationship, a sharing of life.

Abiding is staying connected to the vine.

Abiding is yielding, less of us and more of Him.

Abiding is desiring less of our will and more of His will.

Abiding is detaching more from the world so we can connect more with Christ.

Abiding is obeying God's Law, not out of duty or fear, but as the best path to fruitfulness.

How will you know? John adds one more explanatory illustration. *To abide in is the walk in.*

Have you ever wondered why when Christ saves us He doesn't take us straight to heaven? Because He wants to conform us to His image by making us walk as He walked. Christ wants the pattern of His life to become like the pattern of our life.

Jesus lived a life on earth that He gave as an example to be followed. Abiding means walking, it means following. In other words, it means making progress on a path, following the signs, passing the mile markers. Does my life increasingly reflect Jesus? Do I love what Jesus says and do I love doing it?

This is more than just keeping a list of rules. That's duty and we must rise above that to desire, to love the rules because we love the rule giver and know that what He says is the very best we could want for ourselves.

**I John 2:5-6** 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.

Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. God told Abraham, "Walk before me, and be blameless."

God created us to walk with Him in the garden in the cool of the evening, and Jesus by His redemption and reconciliation restores us to the beautiful privilege.

Walk with Christ by walking in Christ. Follow His example, emulate His demeanor, reflect His character, be the branch that looks like the vine. Live so you are accused to having been with Jesus.

Like the Sanhedrin said about the apostles, they could tell they had been with Jesus. It should just be obvious. You can tell Seahawks fans by the clothes they wear, you can tell a person from Alabama by their accent, you can tell an Asian by

their looks, and you should tell a Christian by their Christ-likeness. Being a Christian should be obvious.

They consider others before themselves, they make allowances, they forgive, they give, they are humble. And they walk with a limp. They know they are forgiven sinners.

**John 15:5, 8-11** 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. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

I can promise you and guarantee you that if you cultivate and increase the desire to know and love the most incredible person in the universe, you will experience the fullness of joy and the best pleasures forever more.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, saturate our souls with the Spirit of Christ and enlarge our capacity to receive the full measure of your Spirit and your love. Give us the fullness of Christ that overflows in great love for you and in great love for each other and in great fruitfulness for your glory.