

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Obedience of
God’s Commands”

1 John 2:3–6

OVERVIEW

- “Assurance is the conscious confidence that we are in a right relationship with God through Christ” (Sinclair Ferguson).
- Assurance is “the conviction that one belongs to Christ through faith and will enjoy everlasting salvation” (Joel Beeke).
- Assurance is not the same as salvation itself; one may have confidence and yet not be saved; one may lack confidence and yet be saved.
- Assurance is something that comes after salvation, can wax and wane due to trials and temptations, but increases over time.
- Assurance is a gift God wants His children to enjoy.

REVIEW

- **1 John 1:1–4 – “Assurance and the Historicity of Christ”**

 *Do you believe that the biblical testimony about Jesus Christ is true?*

- **1 John 1:5–10 – “Assurance and the Confession of Sin”**

 *Are you deeply aware of your sin and do you acknowledge it to God?*

- **1 John 2:1–2 – “Assurance and the Sufficiency of Christ”**

 *Do you believe that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for your sin?*

“Assurance and the Obedience of God’s Commands”

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

—1 John 2:3–6

“By this we know that we have come to know Him,
if we keep His commandments.

The one who says, ‘I have come to know
Him,’ and does not keep His commandments,
is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

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of God has truly been perfected.

By this we know that we are in Him: the one who
says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the
same manner as He walked.”

I. The Test
Revealed
(v. 3)

II. The Test
Related
(vv. 4–5a)

III. The Test
Restated
(vv. 5b–6)

—1 John 2:3–6

I. The Test Revealed

1 John 2:3

*"By this we know that we
have come to know Him,
if we keep His
commandments."*



“By this we know that we have come to know Him,
if we keep His commandments” (2:3).

- “**We . . . we . . . we . . .**” – John includes himself in the test he is about to give, indicating it is not limited to a category of Christians but is *universal* in application.
- “**By this**” – refers to what John says at the end of the sentence: “if”
- “**We know**” – describes a present state of knowing (“confidence”) that has developed through a process of learning; this is *experiential knowledge*.
 - A kind of *factual* knowledge.

“By this we know that **we have come to know Him**,
if we keep His commandments” (2:3).

- “**We have come to know**” – the content of this factual knowledge; John uses the same verb “know,” but with a different nuance.
 - This is a knowledge that has significant implications for the knower; it is *life-changing* knowledge.
- “**Him**” – this knowledge is not merely factual; it is *personal*.
 - The pronoun could refer to Jesus Christ (the focus of vv. 1–2, 6), but as a formal assertion, it more likely refers to God (1:5).
 - **John 17:3** – “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

**“By this we know that we have come to know Him,
if we keep His commandments” (2:3).**

- To paraphrase, John is saying, **“This is how we know we are saved:”**
- **“If we keep”** – the content of the test; “keep” is a stronger word than “obey”; it means “to persist in obedience.”
 - It “goes far beyond mere conformity to law. It expresses a zealous desire to adhere to God’s will” (Derickson, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 135).
 - It “denotes sympathetic obedience to the spirit of the command, rather than the rigid carrying out of its letter” (Brooke, *Johannine Epistles*, 30).



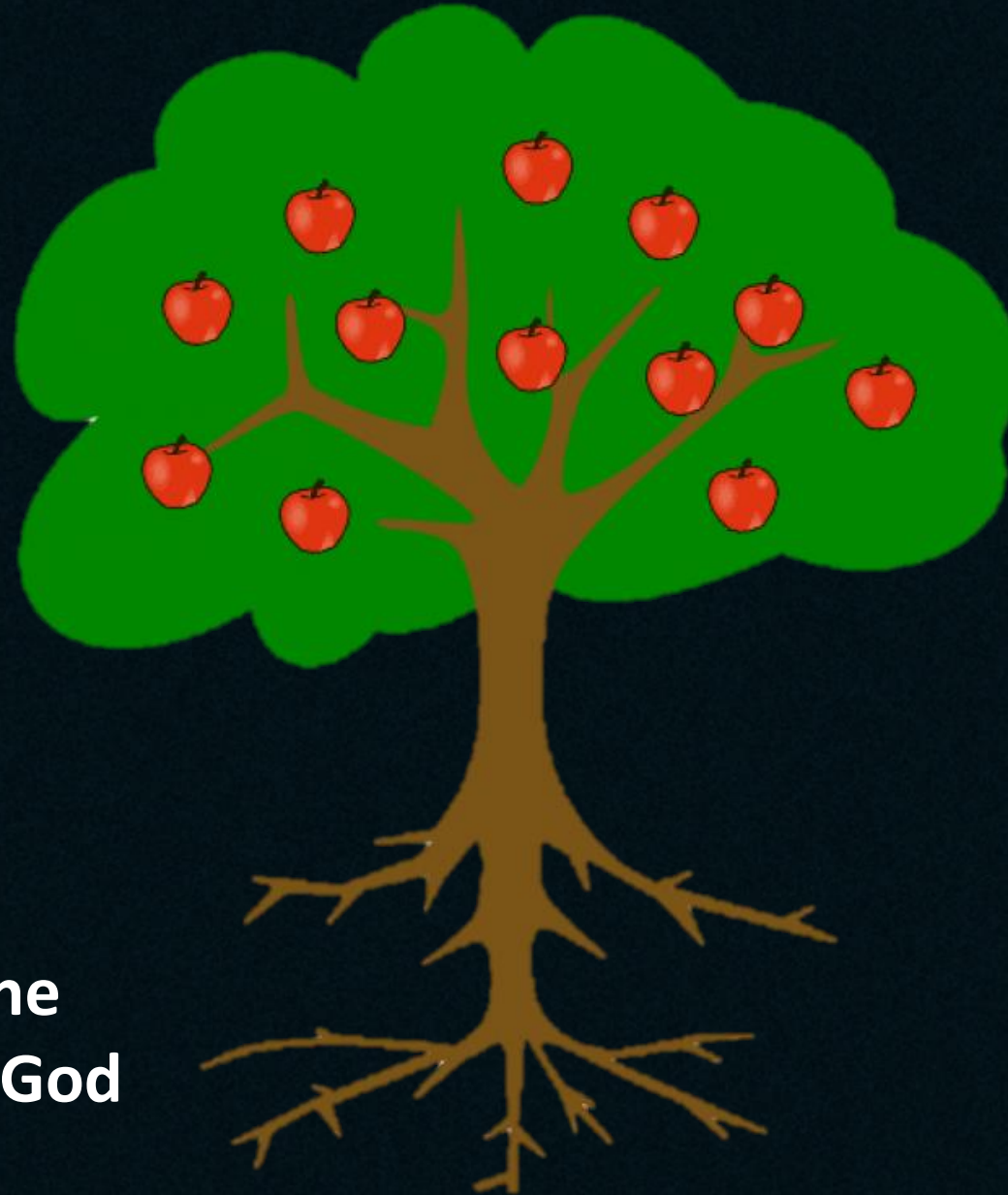
“By this we know that we have come to know Him,
if we keep **His commandments**” (2:3).

- “**His commandments**” – synonymous with “His word” in v. 5; a general term, but in the context that follows (vv. 7ff), John will narrow it specifically to the commandment “to love.”
- Thus, in order *to know* that we *know God savingly* (in order to have assurance of salvation), we must examine our commitment to *obedience*.
 - *Am I serious about God’s will for my life as He has revealed it in His Word, and am I zealous to follow it?*
- This is not the *only* test for assurance, but it is one of the primary ones.

- **John 14:15** – “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
- **John 14:21, 23** – “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
- **John 15:10** – “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.”
- **1 John 5:3** – “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROOTS AND FRUITS

ROOTS:
Faith in the
promise of God



FRUITS:
Obedience to the
commands of God

Men of the Word

II. The Test Related

1 John 2:4–5a

“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.”



A. The False Confessor

“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (2:4).

- **“The one who says”** – John connects this test to a particular *confession*; just like he did in 1:6–10, he begins with the *false confession* first.
- **“I have come to know Him”** – the same language as in v. 3; a claim to *salvation*—the saving knowledge of the one true God (John 17:3).
- **“Does not keep”** – does not persist in obedience, is not zealous for God’s commands; at best goes through the motions *externally*, without regard for the spirit of the commandment.

“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, **is a liar**, and **the truth is not in him**” (2:4).

- “**Is a liar**” – he is not merely deceived, but he actively advocates what is false—a false *confession* that he is saved.
- “**The truth is not in him**” – synonymous with the first assertion but repeated now as a *denial* for emphasis.
- **1 John 1:6, 8** – “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. . . . If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”



B. The Genuine Confessor

“but **whoever keeps His word**, in him **the love of God** has truly been perfected” (2:5a).

- **“Whoever keeps His word”** – John doesn’t even mention any confession but immediately goes to the heart of the matter—*committed obedience*.
- **“The love of God”** – could be *God’s love for the believer*, but based on parallels, it is best to understand it as *the believer’s love for God*.
- **John 14:21, 23** – “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him” (see also **1 John 5:3**).

“but whoever keeps His word, **in him** the love of God **has truly been perfected**” (2:5a).

- “**Has been truly perfected**” – “made complete,” “brought to maturity”; committed obedience is the logical, necessary manifestation of love for God.

Truth & Love

- “**In him**” – for the false confessor, “the truth” is not “in him,” but for the true confessor, it is assumed “the truth” is “in him”—but even more, “the love of God” is “in him.”
- Assurance of faith can be considered *true* when it is backed up by a commitment to obedience, for that commitment to obedience manifests love for God—a fruit of regeneration.

III. The Test Restated

1 John 2:5b–6

*“By this we know that we
are in Him: the one who
says he abides in Him ought
himself to walk in the same
manner as He walked.”*



“By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (2:5b–6).

- With slightly different language, John restates the test for assurance which he introduced at the start of the paragraph (v. 3).
- **“By this we know”** – parallels the beginning of v. 3; points ahead to what is in the second half of the sentence; John again speaks of *assurance*.
- **“We are in Him”** – the language of *spiritual union* (John 14:20–24); a second synonym for salvation in this text (see “we know Him” in v. 3).
- **“He abides in Him ”** – the language of *spiritual dependency* (John 15:1–11); a third synonym for salvation.

“By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him **ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked**” (2:5b–6).

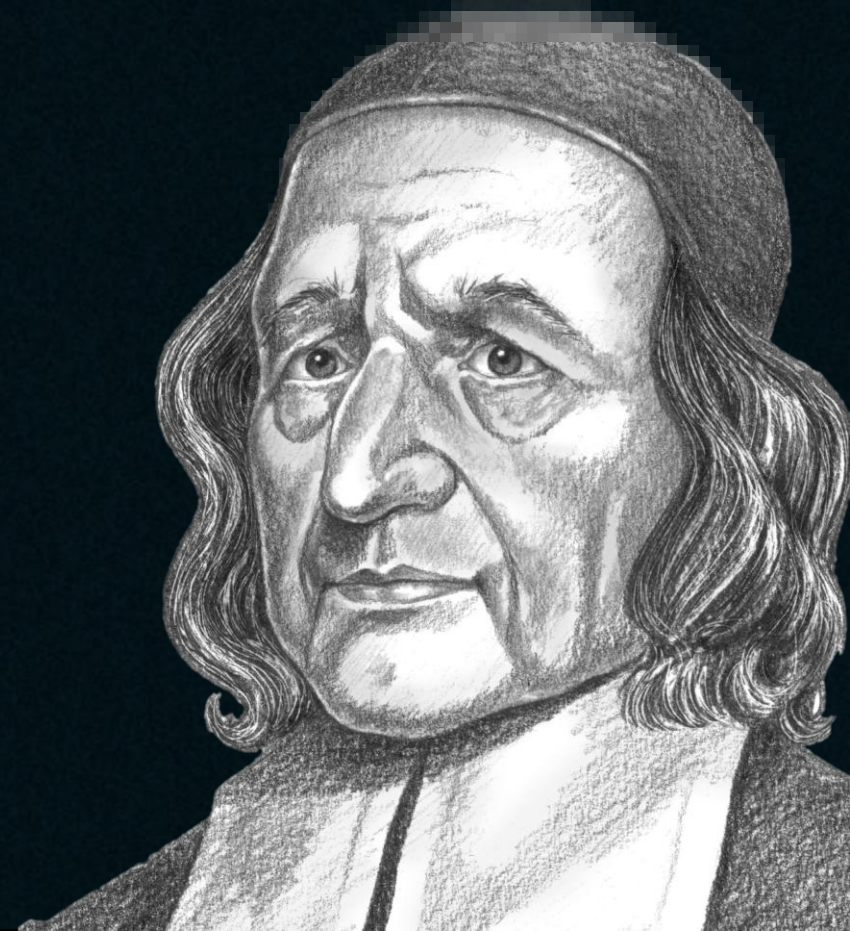
- “**Ought**” – “to be under obligation to meet certain social or moral expectations” (BDAG, 743.2); even greater than *logical* necessity; this is a *moral* duty.
- “**To walk**” – a figurative expression describing daily behavior.
- “**In the same manner as**” – emphasizes the standard of comparison.
- “**He walked**” – a clear reference to the behavior of the Incarnate Son of God as He walked in the flesh on this earth.
- This is “far more profound than merely mimicking externals or even obeying Christ’s expressed will in a formal way” (Yarbrough, 88).



Men of the Word

“A lazy Christian will always lack four things . . . comfort, contentment, confidence, and assurance.”

—Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, 111



THAT YOU MAY **KNOW**

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Talk is cheap.
- ✓ Assurance is dependent upon a lifestyle of obedience.
- ✓ You can know God—and you can know that you know God.
- ✓ Obedience is a precious means of testifying to the reality of our faith.