

Walk as He Walked

(1 John 2:1-14)

Expository Lessons from the First Letter of John

I. Recap from Prior Lesson

- i. Followers of Christ have been given wonderful assurance of their salvation. However, we must recognize that these assurances are *not* unconditional. It is based on the condition of our remaining faithful to Christ. We noticed a number of “*if we*”- type statements: both encouraging promises and sober warnings, related to what God expects of us if we are to remain in a saved relationship with Him. For example:
 - 1. “*If we* say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness...”
 - 2. “*If we* walk in the light...”
 - 3. “*If we* say we have no sin...”
 - 4. “*If we* confess our sins...”
 - 5. “*If we* say that we have not sinned...”
- ii. John began this letter with a call for us (Christians) to acknowledge and to confess our sins.
 - 1. Since the previous lesson was given, I have received much feedback, first and second hand, about Christians who were convicted that they have sins that they need to confess (brothers confessing to trustworthy brothers, and sisters to sisters).
 - 2. I had no plan or agenda to talk about confessing sin, however that was what John started off with; in reviewing the lesson and notes, I was convicted as well; and was moved to speak with other brothers about sins and temptations in my own life that I needed to bring into the light.
 - 3. I feel spiritually lighter and cleaner as a result; and I encourage all Christians to consider the same things and confess their sins to others, as well.

II. The Sign that We Know Jesus (Read 1 John 2:1-6)

- a. John is urging us to live righteous lives, and to not sin.

- b. However, John also says that if we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father (**1 John 2:1**), Jesus Christ the righteous. Consider passages from **Hebrews** that speak more about this:
 - i. “For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” (**Hebrews 2:16–18**, NKJV)
 - ii. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (**Hebrews 4:14–16**, NKJV)
- c. Jesus is referred to as the “*propitiation*” for our sins. That term, used in many translations of the Bible here, means *a sin offering* or *sacrifice of atonement*.
 - i. The same Greek word ἱλασμός (hilasmos) first appears in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament generally quoted by the apostles) in **Leviticus 25:9**. There this word it is used within the expression “the Day of *Atonement*”.
 - ii. The idea expressed here: Jesus *paid the price for our sins*, and for those of the whole world.
- d. If we don’t keep Jesus’ commandments, *we don’t even know Him!*
 - i. If anyone says ‘I know Jesus’ and does not keep His commandments, *that person is a liar; there is no truth in him*.
 - 1. This is a statement we should commit to heart, for our own benefit and for the benefit of others.
 - a. The world is awash in the false religion of evangelical Protestantism, coming out of the Protestant Reformers like Luther and Calvin.
 - i. This is extremely popular in the US and Western countries.
 - ii. I have been shocked to see this false religion spreading into the Middle East (technically in Asia) as well, in my travels.
 - b. How we see it today: just believe in Jesus and sing songs about: how wonderful He is, His love for us and His mercy toward us. Yet there is

no call to repentance from sin; no call to righteousness and to obeying His commands.

2. Jesus spoke about those who know him in **John 10**, when teaching about His being the Good Shepherd".
 - a. "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." (**John 10:14–15**, NKJV)
 - b. Jesus further describes His sheep: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (**John 10:27**, NKJV)
3. Jesus said similar things in His teaching in **John 15** on the Vine and the Branches.
 - a. "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." (**John 15:10**, NKJV)
 - b. Jesus further explained, "You are My friends *if you do whatever I command you*." (**John 15:14**, NKJV)
4. The problem: most professing Christians in the West today do not obey the commands of Jesus. Some believers are unaware (untaught) regarding many of the commands of Jesus. However, based on what I have seen over the years, most believers in the West have *no intention* of obeying all the commands of Jesus! That especially pertains to the challenging, counter-cultural teachings of Jesus on matters such as:
 - a. Sexual purity (adultery, fornication, homosexual relations, pornography, lust, dressing modestly so as to not encourage lust in others, etc.)
 - b. Permanence of marriage
 - c. Loving your enemies (war, nonresistance, lawsuits, being reconciled quickly)
 - d. Materialism and greed
 - e. Worry
 - f. Living for pleasure; laziness
 - g. Drunkenness and drug abuse

- h. Swearing
 - i. Honoring and taking care of our parents and grandparents
 - j. Always telling the truth
 - k. Devotion to God; to prayer and to His Word
 - l. Being workers in the harvest field, seeking and saving the lost
 - m. Separation from the world.
- ii. Points of application from this principle established in **1 John 2**:
1. Realize that we can have an imaginary (not real) relationship with Jesus, thinking and saying we know him, yet not knowing the real Jesus at all, if we do not keep his commands.
 2. There are many believers who are religious, yet they *do not know Jesus at all*. They have an imaginary relationship with an imaginary Jesus, that exists only in their minds. If they don't repent, they will find out who the real Jesus is when it is too late: *on the Day of Judgment*.
 3. The first thing we need to do is *take inventory of our own lives*. Do you *really* know Jesus, according to what John says here (obeying His commands); or are you actually *a liar*?
 4. After that, we should lovingly confront others who are religious believers who are deceiving themselves. Confront them with the commands of Jesus, and this passage from **1 John 2**. If they say they know Jesus but do not follow His commands, they are liars.
 - a. There are many who are unaware of some of the specific commands of Jesus, either because they were never taught, or they were taught incorrectly. Those things need to be explained to them patiently and carefully.
 - b. However, if someone *knowingly* disobeys the commands of Jesus yet claims to know Him, we should respectfully confront that and have the boldness to call out this brother or sister as *a liar*. And let us recall what the Bible says about liars:
 - i. Jesus said in **John 8:41-44** that Satan is a liar and *the father of lies*.
 - ii. Also, from the One sitting on the throne in **Revelation 21**: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake

which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
(**Revelation 21:8**, NKJV)

- e. There is a promise that those who keep the words of Jesus (who follow His commands) will have the love of God perfected (made complete) in them.
- f. Walking as Jesus walked.
 - i. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to *walk just as He walked.*” (**1 John 2:6**, NKJV)
 - ii. Some try to reduce following Jesus into simply a long list of rules to follow. However, while the kingdom of God *does* include many commands we must follow, it calls us to *so much more than that!* It is described as a way of life, walking in the light he provides, following Him and His example in all things.
 - iii. Jesus Himself taught the same thing.
 - 1. “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” (**Luke 9:23**, NKJV)
 - iv. If we truly understand this, this is the spiritual challenge of a lifetime!
 - v. This is how the apostles saw the Christian life (as following the example of Jesus, walking as He walked), as we can see throughout their letters. Some examples where they taught foundational principles based on this concept include:
 - 1. Be willing to do good and suffer through it.
 - a. Read **1 Peter 2:18-25**
 - b. “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For *to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*” (**1 Peter 2:20–21**, NKJV)
 - c. Peter says that one of the reasons Christ suffered on the cross *was to provide an example for us.*
 - d. Here, we are called to follow that example, in doing good and being willing to suffering patiently for it.
 - 2. Bearing with one another, striving for unity and accepting one another despite our differences.

- a. Read **Romans 15:1-7**.
 - b. “*Even Christ* did not please Himself” (**Romans 15:3**)
 - c. “Therefore receive one another, *just as Christ also received us*” (**Romans 15:7**)
 - d. Here Paul points to the example of Christ: He accepted all kinds of people, so we are to do likewise.
3. Have an attitude of lowliness and humility toward others.
- a. Read **Philippians 2:1-8**
 - b. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ...[*who*] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant...”
 - c. In this passage Paul calls Christians to follow the example of Christ: willing to humble ourselves below others, to serve them.
- vi. The better we know Christ, the clearer the picture we have of Him, the better we will be able to see what it means to “walk as He walked”.
1. We learn about the character of Christ not only from the New Testament, but *also from the Old Testament*.
- a. In the examples we just looked at, note how Peter pointed to **Isaiah 53:9**, in **1 Peter 2:21-22**), and Paul quoted from **Psalms 69:9** (designated **Psalms 68:10** in the LXX) in **Romans 15:3**, to illustrate characteristics of Jesus.
 - b. This is one of the many reasons it is important for us to read the Old Testament: *to better understand the character of Jesus*.
 - c. We should strive to meditate on the life of Christ *from all angles*, drawing from perspectives in the gospels and the New Testament letters, as well as from the prophets in the Old Testament.
2. We can only answer the question “What would Jesus do?” if we know who Jesus really is. Every Christian religious group tends to emphasize certain aspects of Jesus’ character, while minimizing or ignoring others. We must go beyond that, and strive to see the whole picture, by studying all the Scriptures and meditating on His life and multi-faceted character. There we will find:
- a. His wisdom (beyond that of Solomon, **Matthew 12:42**).

- b. Concern for the poor and downtrodden; yet concerned for saving souls.
- c. His holiness and righteousness in the face of temptation.
- d. His boldness toward some, yet gentleness and compassion toward others.
- e. His being a good shepherd, willing to lay down his life for the sheep.
- f. His desire to have the message spread, to save souls.
 - i. I have been asked about developing a “study series”, to help lay a foundation to prepare seekers for baptism. One question I have been asked in connection with that: How do we teach new disciples the critical importance of personal evangelism, of each disciple being committed to *seeking and saving the lost*?
 - ii. In a church I was involved in previously, personal evangelism definitely was a great strength. It seemed that evangelism was taught in practically every lesson. However, *sometimes Scriptures were taken out of context* and twisted in an attempt to reinforce the noble goal of emphasizing the need for all to reach out to others.
 - 1. Unfortunately, regardless of how good our ultimate objectives may be, this is *never* justification for taking Scriptures out of context. Misusing the Word of God is like touching the high voltage “third rail” on a subway track. *Just don’t do it!*
 - iii. We do find clear commands that Jesus made *to the apostles*, for them to take the gospel to all nations (**Matthew 28:18-20** and **Mark 16:15-16**).
 - 1. On the other hand, I have heard of Christian groups arguing over whether those commands applied *to all Christians* or whether they were just *directed to the apostles*.
 - 2. Although I was taught for many years that the Great Commission applies to every single disciple, I can see someone making the case for the other point of view.
 - iv. To me, *the most compelling case for all Christians to be evangelistic* is based on what it says in **1 John 2:6**, that we must walk as He walked. Consider the driving motivation in Jesus’ life, His mission.

1. Jesus said, “for the Son of Man has *come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” (**Luke 19:10**, NKJV)
 2. Recall how Jesus also said, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, *pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*” (**Luke 10:2**, NKJV)
 3. Look at the life, mission and driving purpose of Jesus’ time on the earth: what He did while he was here and His focused instructions to the disciples left behind. After He rose from the dead, he continues to be concerned about spreading the message of the kingdom. It is clear to me that if I am walking as He walked, *I must be consumed with concern about saving souls and doing all I can to help non-Christians enter the kingdom of God.*
- g. Of those Christian groups that hold to the importance of obeying the commands of Jesus:
- i. Some church groups put their main emphasis on holiness and separation of the world, but they neglect evangelism and reaching out to the lost.
 1. This is like a sports team that has a great defense, but no offense.
 - ii. Other groups have the opposite problem. They take evangelism seriously, but neglect the teachings of Jesus on holiness, separation from the world, etc.
 1. This is like a team that has a great offense, but no defense.
 - iii. For all of us, regardless of the groups we have come from, our objective should be to conform to all aspects of the character of Christ, neglecting nothing! We must strive to have both a strong spiritual “offense” as well as “defense”.
- h. The goal is to know Christ and to become like Him (not just to follow a set of rules), so that we can participate in eternal life with Him.
- i. That is how Paul understood the Christian life; this is what he was striving for. (Read **Philippians 3:7-11**)
 1. Paul discounts all his past achievements and accomplishments.
 2. He wants *to be conformed to the life of Christ*, even to be perfected through suffering.
 3. Paul wants *to be conformed to Christ*, so that he can attain the goal: resurrection of the righteous and eternal life.

III. Don't Hate Your Brother (Read 1 John 2:7-11)

- a. He writes to them "*not a new command*, but an old command they had from the beginning".
 - i. Then he says it *IS* a new command. It seems to me that Paul is using puzzling language here to convey a mystery. This command is both an old command (not new) and yet it is a new command (in another sense) as well.
 - ii. I assume, in context, that John is referring to the command that Jesus gave in **John 13**, which Jesus referred to as "a new commandment". On the other hand, this command the Christians had from the beginning of the church (John was not introducing a new command to the Christians).
 - iii. Recall that Jesus had said, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (**John 13:34-35**, NKJV)
- b. Anyone who hates his brother is walking in darkness; and does not know where he is going.
 - i. He may say he is in the light, but actually he is in the darkness.
 - ii. He is (spiritually) blinded by the darkness.
 - iii. Recall this was the first sin Jesus addressed in Sermon on the Mount (even before He addresses lust, the permanence of marriage and nonresistance).
 1. Read **Matthew 5:21-26**.
 - a. First be reconciled with your brother, before offering gift to God.
 - b. Settle matters quickly.
 - c. For those few radical Christians who are serious about obeying all the commands of Jesus, the teachings about loving our brothers and being unified with them may be the hardest of all of Jesus' teachings to follow!
 2. "If it is possible, *as much as depends on you*, live peaceably with all men." (**Romans 12:18**, NKJV)
 - a. We need to do everything we can to strive for peace and unity.

- b. Sometimes true unity and peace may be impossible to achieve with certain people. However, we must strive to have clear conscience that we have done everything we could (without violating other commands of Jesus), on our part, to be unified with all of our brothers.
- 3. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;" (**Hebrews 12:14-15**, NKJV)
 - a. John Wesley called this the most unpopular passage in Scripture to preach, in his day.
 - b. While this passage is familiar for those who seek to live holy lives, it *also* calls us to be at peace with all, and to not allow any root of bitterness to defile many.
- 4. **Question:** Stop and consider. Is there anyone you are not reconciled with? Do you have a clear conscience that you have done everything possible to be unified with others?

IV. To Fathers, Young Men and Children (Read **1 John 2:12-14**)

- a. A poem, that appears to be addressed to people in three stages of spiritual life:
 - i. The fathers (mature)
 - 1. They have known Jesus.
 - 2. They are old, but Jesus is from the beginning!
 - ii. The children (new to the faith)
 - 1. They are children; but have known the *true Father*.
 - 2. Their sins have been forgiven (reminds me of **John 3:3-5**; they have been spiritually born again).
 - iii. The young men (zealous spiritual warriors, striving against Satan)
 - 1. They are engaged in a fierce battle against Satan.
 - 2. They have overcome the evil one.
 - 3. They are strong, and the word of God abides in them.

- a. Personal note: Even in my mid-60's, I would like to think of myself in this category (among the young men, rather than among the 'fathers'); like Caleb, the old warrior who at the age of 85 said:
 - i. "As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me [*when Caleb was 40*]; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." (**Joshua 14:11-12**, NKJV)
- b. We need many more spiritual warriors, men who know how to wield the spiritual sword to defeat Satan and to liberate those taken captive.
- c. We do not engage in the wars of this world nor with the weapons of this world. However, we are not (strictly speaking) called to be *pacifists*. Rather, we are called to be *warriors* who fight (and win) *another war*. That involves real *spiritual battles* against a powerful foe, using *spiritual weapons* (**Ephesians 6:10-20**). "Young men" of God are called to be meek like Christ, but not passive!