

# 1 John 2:1-6 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[1 John 2:1](#)  
[1 John 2:2](#)  
[1 John 2:3](#)  
[1 John 2:4](#)  
[1 John 2:5](#)  
[1 John 2:6](#)  
[1 John 2:7](#)  
[1 John 2:8](#)  
[1 John 2:9](#)  
[1 John 2:10](#)  
[1 John 2:11](#)  
[1 John 2:12](#)  
[1 John 2:13](#)  
[1 John 2:14](#)  
[1 John 2:15](#)  
[1 John 2:16](#)  
[1 John 2:17](#)  
[1 John 2:18](#)  
[1 John 2:19](#)  
[1 John 2:20](#)  
[1 John 2:21](#)  
[1 John 2:22](#)  
[1 John 2:23](#)  
[1 John 2:24](#)  
[1 John 2:25](#)  
[1 John 2:26](#)  
[1 John 2:27](#)  
[1 John 2:28](#)  
[1 John 2:29](#)

## FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an

**Greek:** Teknia mou, tauta grapho (1SPA)I humin hina me hamartete. (2PAAS) kai ean tis hamarte, (3SAAS) parakleton echomen (1PPAI) pros ton patera, lesoun Christon dikaion;

**Amplified:** MY LITTLE children, I write you these things so that you may not violate God's law and sin. But if anyone should sin, we have an Advocate (One Who will intercede for us) with the Father—[it is] Jesus Christ [the all] righteous [upright, just, Who conforms to the Father's will in every purpose, thought, and action]. ([Lockman](#))

**ESV:** 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.

**KJV:** My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

**NIV:** My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

**NLT:** My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely.

**Phillips:** I write these things to you (may I call you "my children" - for that's how I think of you), to help you to avoid sin. But if a man should sin, remember that our advocate before the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous,

**Wuest:** My little children [born-ones, bairns], these things I am writing to you in order that you may not commit an act of sin. And if anyone commits an act of sin, One who pleads our cause we constantly have facing the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** My little children, these things I write to you, that ye may not sin: and if any one may sin, an advocate we have with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one

- **Little children:** 1Jn 2:12,13 1Jn 3:7,18,4:4, 1Jn 5:21 Jn 13:33, 21:5 1Co 4:14,15 Ga 4:19
- **These things:** 1Jn 1:3,4 1Ti 3:14
- **So that:** Ps 4:4 Eze 3:21 Jn 5:14, 8:11 Ro 6:1,2,15 1Co 15:34 Eph 4:26 Tit 2:11-13 1Pe 1:15-19, 4:1-3
- **And if:** 1Jn 1:8-10
- **We have:** Ro 8:34 1Ti 2:5 Heb 7:24,25, 9:24
- **Father:** Lk 10:22 Jn 5:19-26,36 6:27, 10:15, 14:6 Eph 2:18 Jas 1:27, 3:9
- **Righteous:** 1Jn 2:29, 3:5 Zec 9:9 2Co 5:21 Heb 7:26 1Pe 2:22, 3:18
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## I AM WRITING EXPRESSES PURPOSE

**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin**- What is John's purpose? Not what we would be sinless, but that we would sin less! As noted below the designation **My little children** indicates John is addressing them as the children of God (cf Jn 1:12, 1Jn 3:1). In 1Jn 2:12 he affirms that they are believers "I am writing to you, **little children**, because your sins have been forgiven you for His Name's sake."

**Barclay** - The first thing to note in this passage is the sheer affection in it. John begins with the address, "My little children." Both in Latin and in Greek diminutives carry a special affection. They are words which are used, as it were, with a caress. John is a very old man; he must be, in fact, the last survivor of his generation, maybe the last man alive who had walked and talked with Jesus in the days of his flesh. So often age gets out of sympathy with youth and acquires even an impatient irritableness with the new and laxer ways of the younger generation. But not John, in his old age he has nothing but tenderness for those who are his little children in the faith. He is writing to tell them that they must not sin but he does not scold. There is no cutting edge in his voice; he seeks to love them into goodness. In this opening address there is the yearning, affectionate tenderness of a pastor for people whom he has known for long in all their wayward foolishness and still loves. ([Barclay](#))

**My little children** (5040) (**teknon** diminutive of **teknon**) is literally My "born ones", the diminutive expresses affection accounting for some of the translations as "**my dear children**."

**Teknon** designates a little child and is used by John to address those who are true followers of Jesus. From John's repetitive use of

**teknon** in this epistle, one might say it is an epistle for little children! But the subjects with which John deals are not "child's play," but have serious implications regarding one's spiritual life, now and in eternity future! The Apostle John used **teknon** in warning his readers of spiritual dangers. Clearly the 8 NT uses of **teknon** strongly infer that the recipients of this title are genuine born again ones.

**TDNTA** says **teknon** "is a nursery term for a "small child." It is a term of affection used by a teacher to His disciples under circumstances requiring a tender appeal, as when Jesus addressed His Twelve disciples just before His death.

In the Textus Receptus (but not in the Nestle Aland) Paul, used **teknon** Paul in Gal 4:19 to warn of the deadly errors of Judaism which were infiltrating the Galatian churches and blunting the Gospel of Grace.

Most of the uses of **teknon** by the apostle John. Jesus used this word when he spoke to His disciples at the Last Supper (Jn 13:33, cf Jesus' manner of addressing them after His resurrection Jn 21:4 [paidion]). John used it to address that generation of disciples to which he ministered when he was approximately ninety years old (1Jn 2:1, 12, 28 3:7, 18; 4:4 5:21).

Here are the 8 uses of **teknon** in the NT (Nestle-Aland - NASB)...

John 13:33 "**Little children**, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

1 John 2:1-note **My little children**, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

1 John 2:12-note I am writing to you, **little children**, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

1 John 2:28-note Now, **little children**, **abide** (present imperative - calls for the little children to be continually in Christ, their very life!) in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1 John 3:7-note **Little children**, **make sure no one deceives** (present imperative - calls for them to be continually on guard for error, and by implication on the "flip side" hold fast to the Word of Truth by which subtle error is detected!) you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

1 John 3:18-note **Little children**, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

1 John 4:4-note You are from God, **little children**, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

1 John 5:21-note **Little children**, **guard** (aorist imperative) yourselves from idols.

**NET Note** makes an interesting observation on John's change of terms to describe his readers...

**My little children.** The direct address by the author to his readers at the beginning of 1Jn 2:1 marks a break in the pattern of the opponents' claims (indicated by the phrase **if we say** followed by a negative statement in the apodosis, the "**then**" clause) and the author's counterclaims (represented by **if** with a positive statement in the apodosis) made so far in 1Jn 1:6-10. The seriousness of this last claim (in 1Jn 1:10) causes the author to interrupt himself to address the readers as his faithful children and to explain to them that while he wants them not to sin, they may be assured that if they do, they can look to Jesus Christ, as their advocate with the Father, to intercede for them. After this, the last of the author's three counter-claims in 1John 1:5-2:2 is found in the **if** clause in 1Jn 2:1b.

**I am writing these things** - In 1Jn 1:4+ it was "**we**" write, but now John is more personal - **I** am writing." This begs the question "What things?" Some might answer this refers to the entire letter. Others like **Hiebert** feel "**These things**" apparently looks back to 1Jn 1:5-10+, which portrays the tragic effects of sin. **Steven Cole** feels "**These things**" refers to the message that God is holy (1Jn 1:5) and to the importance of walking in the light, not in the darkness (1Jn 1:6-10). It also refers to what he writes in 1Jn 2:1-2." ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**I am writing** ([1125](#)) (**grapho**) is used in 10 verses in this epistle - 1 John 1:4- 1 John 2:1- 1 John 2:7- 1 John 2:8- 1 John 2:12- 1 John 2:13- 1 John 2:14- 1 John 2:21- 1 John 2:26- 1 John 5:13-. The first "we write" referred to fulness of joy, but now it is a call to utter separation from sin.

1 John 1:4+ These things we write, so that ([hina](#)) our joy may be made complete.

1 John 2:1+ **My little children**, I am writing these things to you so that ([hina](#)) you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

1 John 2:7+ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

1 John 2:8+ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

1 John 2:12+ I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

1 John 2:13+ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

1 John 2:14+ I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:21+ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

1 John 2:26+ These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 5:13+ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that [hina](#) you may know that you have eternal life.

**So that (2443) ([hina](#))** is a conjunction (sometimes rendered "in order that") which expresses purpose or goal. BDAG says hina is a "marker to denote purpose, aim or goal." You may be saying "That's great, but *so what* about *so that*?" The answer is that "so that" and similar phrases beg the natural question "What is the purpose, goal or aim of this verse?" (or other **5W/H questions**) This question will always "force" you to **Pause and Ponder** (you are in essence are performing **inductive Bible study** and in so doing you are practicing **Biblical Meditation**, a blessed discipline that is not easily practice in our fast paced society and high energy churches). When you interrogate the text, you will usually be led by the Spirit your Teacher to review the **context**, sometimes the preceding text, but at other times following text. Since there are 979 "**so that**" phrases in the NAS (612 in the ESV), you will have many wonderful "opportunities" to pause and ponder the text and allow the Spirit to illuminate the Word and renew your mind!

**THOUGHT-** From 1 John 2:1, what is one of John's purposes for writing his epistle? Just let the text speak for itself.

**May not sin** - So what should be a benefit we might derive from reading, receiving and heeding First John?

**Christians are not sinless,  
but they should sin less.**

**A T Robertson** - John has no patience with professional perfectionists (1:8-10), but he has still less with loose-livers like some of the Gnostics who went to all sorts of excesses without shame.

**Hiebert** - "**That you may not sin**" does not imply that his readers were living in sin; the aorist tense indicates that they must not condone even a single act of sin. John wanted them to realize that "sin is so heinous in the sight of God that it may not be indulged in even once." "**And if anyone sins**" recognizes the awful possibility of sin. The conjunction "**and**" implies that John also wanted to make them aware of this sad fact. He was fully aware of human frailty and the seductive power of sin and Satan. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary - D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (See also the online resources listed above).

**William MacDonald** has a comforting comment...

John gives us God's perfect standard for His people, and His gracious provision in the event of failure. The little children refers to all the members of the family of God. God's perfect standard is then set forth in the words these things I write to you, that you may not sin. Because God is perfect, His standard for His people is absolute perfection. He would not be God if He said: "These things I write to you so that you sin just as little as you can." God cannot condone sin in the least degree, and so He sets perfection before us as the goal. The Lord Jesus did this with the woman who was caught in the act of adultery; He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

At the same time, the Lord knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust, and so He has graciously made provision for us in the event of failure. This is expressed in the words, "if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." An advocate is one who comes to the side of another person in time of need in order to help. This is exactly what the

Lord Jesus does for us when we sin. He immediately comes to us in order to restore us to fellowship with Himself. Notice that it does not say, "If any man confesses his sins ..." As our Advocate, the Lord seeks to bring us to the place where we do confess and forsake our sin. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#) - borrow one hour)

**MacArthur** - Although a Christian must continually acknowledge and confess sin (1Jn 1:9 **Ed:** Where "confess" is present tense), he is not powerless against it. Fulfilling the duty of confession does not give license to sin. Sin can and should be conquered through the power of the Holy Spirit (see Ro 6:12-14; 8:12, 13; 1Co 15:34; Titus 2:11, 12; 1Pe 1:13-16). ([MacArthur study Bible](#) - borrow for 1 hour)

**Glenn Barker** - Lest any conclude from his previous statements that sin must be considered inevitable in the life of the believer and not a matter of urgent concern since forgiveness is present by confession and the blood of Christ, John hastens to add, "I write this to you so that you will not sin." There is no question at all in his mind that sin and obedience to God are irreconcilable. Sin is the enemy. It removes the believer from the light. It prevents fellowship with God and it destroys fellowship with the children of light. The principle of sin as the power of darkness must be excluded from the believer's life, and individual acts of sin must be resisted. Where failure occurs, the sin must be confessed before the body and the Lord and then abandoned. And always the intent of the believer remains the same—not to commit sin! If any of his children should fail and commit sin, the author is anxious that they neither deceive themselves about it nor lie about their action nor give up walking in the light. The answer to lapsing into sin is not self-deceit but the forgiveness of God made available through Jesus Christ. He has been designated the believer's advocate, the counsel who speaks in our defense. His worthiness to perform this function rests on the fact that even as God is righteous (1:9), so Jesus Christ also merits the title "The Righteous One." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**James Smith** - "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin."

1. This is a message to "My dear children," to those who had become so through Christ Jesus.
2. Being God's children through faith in Christ Jesus, the victorious life should be their own possession and enjoyment. "I write. . . because ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jn 2:13).
3. Alas, we do sin. For sinners there is an Advocate.
4. "Advocacy is that work of Jesus Christ for sinning saints which He carries on with the Father whereby, because of the eternal efficacy of His Own Sacrifice, He restores them to fellowship" (Scofield).
5. The late Dr. Griffith Thomas has a nice and helpful word on this subject: "There is a perfect propitiation provided: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate.' There is no allowance for sin, but a perfect provision in case we do sin: no need to sin, no right to sin, no compromise with sin, no license, but a provision in case we, do. On board ship the provision of life-belts is not associated with any intention to have a shipwreck, but they are there in case of need. When it is said, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate,' it is the provision in case of need. As you know, there are two Advocates. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Advocate with the Father; and the same word is used of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel—He is the Advocate within. There is Christ's perfect provision for us, and there is the Holy Spirit's perfect provision in us." (Handfuls on Purpose)

**Steven Cole** - Every time I see the bumper sticker, "Christians are forgiven, not perfect;" I want to add another line, "But, they're striving for holiness." As it stands, the bumper sticker seems to say, "God accepts me, faults and all, so you need to accept me, too!" Okay, but please give me some assurance that you're working on things! As the author of Hebrews states (Heb 12:14ESV-note), we are to "**strive for**...the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Holiness is not an optional accessory that you may add to your Christian life at some point, if you so choose. Holiness is essential. If you are not striving to grow in holiness in the sight of God, you need to examine whether you know Christ as Savior at all. Every blood-bought child of God desires to please the Lord Jesus who gave Himself on the cross to save us from our sins. ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**THOUGHT:** As an aside, "**strive for**" is not a suggestion but is a command in the **present imperative** which calls for this "striving" to be one's general lifestyle (AND ANOTHER 'AS AN ASIDE' - see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). What is the "general direction" of your life beloved? Is it moving toward holiness and heaven or toward the unholy and hell? This question calls for an honest, thoughtful assessment of our life! Mine included!

**Sin** ([264](#)) (**hamartano**) means to literally miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Hamartano as used in our present passage means to act contrary to the will and law of God.

John does not want Christ followers to become blasé about sin, as if it is no "big deal." After all, we can just confess to God (1Jn 1:9-note) and we're "good to go." We have too low a view of sin, because we have too low a view of holiness of God and the effect of sin on the Father's heart (and the grieving of His Spirit). The **Puritans** wrote a great deal about sin because they grasped the depths of their depravity and the destructiveness of sin to our souls (cp 1Pe 2:11-note regarding the ongoing war against our souls).

**THOUGHT** - Pause a moment and ponder what these cross references teach about sin - Ps 4:4, Ezekiel 3:21, Jn 5:14, Jn 8:11 Ro 6:1,2-note, Ro 6:15-note 1Co 15:34, Eph 4:26-note Titus 2:11-12-note, Titus 2:13-note,

**Hamartano** means to **err** (**err** is from Latin *errare* = to wander or to stray. Interesting!) which in turn means to wander from the right way, to deviate from the true course or purpose and so to violate an accepted standard of conduct. To err is to miss the right way, to deviate from the path or line of duty, to stray by design or mistake, to stray from God and/or His commandments, to swerve from the truth, to turn aside from the straight course charted by the Word of Truth. In short hamartano means to miss the mark of God's perfect standard of righteousness (right attitude, right living, vertically and horizontally, before God and man!).

### Knowledge involves obedience Union involves imitation

**Barclay** - His object in writing is that they may not sin. There is a two-fold connection of thought here--with what has gone before and with what comes afterwards. There is a two-fold danger that they may indeed think lightly of sin. John says two things about sin. First, he has just said that sin is universal; anyone who says that he has not sinned is a liar. Second, there is forgiveness of sins through what Jesus Christ has done, and still does, for men. Now it would be possible to use both these statements as an excuse to think lightly of sin. If all have sinned, why make a fuss about it and what is the use of struggling against something which is in any event an inevitable part of the human situation? Again, if there is forgiveness of sins, why worry about it? In face of that, John, as Westcott points out, has two things to say. **First**, the Christian is one who has come to know God; and the inevitable accompaniment of knowledge must be obedience. We shall return to this more fully; but at the moment we note that to know God and to obey God must, as John sees it, be twin parts of the same experience. **Second**, the man who claims that he abides in God (1 John 2:6) and in Jesus Christ must live the same kind of life as Jesus lived. That is to say, union with Christ necessarily involves imitation of Christ. So John lays down his two great ethical principles; **knowledge involves obedience, and union involves imitation**. Therefore, in the Christian life there can never be any inducement to think lightly of sin. ([1 John 2 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**And if anyone sins** (*if anyone* = 1Jn 2:1, 1Jn 2:15-note, 1Jn 5:16-note) - As is possible/probable because we still possess the fallen flesh nature, even though it is no longer our "Master" (Ro 6:11-13-note, Ro 6:14-note).

By using the **aorist tense**, John pictures the act of sin as an isolated one, not as one's state (one's lifestyle, one's continual practice as would characterize a non-believer).

**John MacArthur** - The verb is an aorist subjunctive third-class conditional that conveys the strong probability of actual occurrence. John's expression could be translated "if anyone sins, and it will happen." Immediately following his emphasis in the first part of verse 1 that believers do not have to sin, the apostle acknowledges that they definitely will (cf. 1Jn 1:8-note, 1Jn 1:10-note). (The pronoun **we** encompasses the apostle with the "**little children**," also referred to earlier in 1Jn 2:1, showing that the apostle has to be referring to the sins of true believers. ([NT Commentary on 1, 2, 3 John & Jude](#))

#### James Smith - Sin

I. Its Definition. John gives two of the seven definitions of sin in the Bible, viz:

1. Transgression. Stepping over the Law., i.e., lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness, i.e., the absence of all authority, and the denial of all obligation to God.

2. Unrighteousness. Not coming up to the Law (1 John 3:4; 1 John 5:17).

II. Its Universality (1 John 1:8, 1 John 1:10). What plain language.

III. Its Destruction. Why the Lord Jesus came? To "take away" sin (1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:5; 1 John 4:10). This means more than to cover sin-it is putting it away, taking it away, blotting it out.

IV. Its Confession (1 John 1:9).

V. Its Cleansing (1 John 1:7).

VI. Its Victory (1 John 2:1; 1 John 3:8-9). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin" (R.V.). "In order that ye may not sin" (Wey). 1 John 3:8-9 have troubled many of the Lord's dear children. But observe the following rendering: "He who is habitually guilty of sin is a child of the Devil" (W.). "Whosoever is born of God doth not practice sin," i.e., doth not continue sinning. It is God's good will that we be daily more than conquerors over sin, over the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

VII. Its Secret. The secret of constant victory over sin is abiding in Christ (1 John 3:6), and "being kept" (1 John 5:18, R.V.). ([Handfuls On Purpose](#))

**Grant Richison** has some interesting thoughts for believers to consider when they do commit sin...



John does not write so that his readers have justification for their sin (1Jn 1:6, 8, 10) but that they might conquer sin. Although Christians sin (1Jn 1:10), they can conquer sin - "so that you may not sin." John writes with the purpose that his readers will have a safeguard against sinning. If we practice sin, we will become more proficient in it. That is how we were before we received Jesus as our Savior. Now, it is altogether different; we have Someone to live for. John's desire is that his readers will not sin at the point of temptation. Although believers are not free from sin they can overcome sin.

Temptation never becomes a sin until we allow our negative volition to yield to sin. There is no sin in being tempted but it is a sin to yield to temptation. Once the temptation becomes a sin, there is a danger of entering into carnality and dominance of sin unless we confess the sin.

Although we are not in a state of carnality when we commit an act of sin, we do step out of fellowship with the Lord. If we go on without confessing, we make ourselves vulnerable to domination of our sin capacity. Because God is absolute, spirituality must be absolute (1Jn 1:5). We cannot be 50% spiritual and 50% carnal. At any point of time, either the Spirit controls us or our sin capacity controls us.

Before we came to Christ sin was the rule rather than the exception. Now when the child of God falls into sin, he grieves the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus. He even grieves himself. That is why we do not remain in sin with a clean conscience. The believer who wants to stay in tune with God confesses his sin immediately (1John 1:9-note). He restores fellowship as soon as possible. He keeps short accounts with God.

Many believers get into a zigzag orientation in their daily walk with God. All of us have had this experience. It is one thing to commit individual acts of sin and immediately confess them but another thing to cave into the power of our sin capacity. The cross gives victory over the power of sin. By confession, we appeal to the cross and have the right to fellowship with God. Jesus broke the back of our sin capacity on the cross. ([1John 2 Commentary](#))

**We have (echo)** is in the [present tense](#), indicating that Jesus is our continual "possession," our AAA, our "triple A," our ever **Available Appointed Advocate**, so to speak. How sad that we "possess" all of Him (Col 2:10-note, cf 1Cor 1:30, 31, Gal 3:27, cf **in Christ**), but because we retain the taint of rebellious flesh, we fight God's seeking to possess all of us (so often seeking to hew our own broken cisterns that can hold no water, so to speak - Jer 2:13)! We need an Advocate to defend us from sin and aid our recovery when we do sin.

We have an **Advocate** Who is also our **Intercessor**!

Ro 8:34-note who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **Who also intercedes for us**.

Heb 7:25-note Hence also (This should cause us to Pause and Ponder the context - Heb 7:24-note) He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**.

**Spurgeon** commenting on our completeness in Christ writes that "You are like vessels filled up to the brim. You are like warriors thoroughly furnished, fully armed for the fight: "Ye are complete in Him."

**J Vernon McGee** commenting on the believer's completeness in Christ adds that "'Complete' is a nautical term, and it could be translated in this very vivid way: You are ready for the voyage of life in Him. Isn't that a wonderful way of saying it? You are ready for the voyage of life in Christ, and whatever you need for the voyage of life you will find in Him. This is where we say that Christ is the answer. What is your question? What is it you need today? Are you carried away by human philosophy? Then turn to Christ. Are you carried away by enticing words? Are you carried away by the systems and traditions of men? Turn to Christ. (Thru the Bible Commentary)

**We have an Advocate** - Only believers can make this statement, one they should never forget. Our Advocate is our Brother, our Bridegroom, our Lord, our King, our Friend, Who sits right at this very moment at the right hand of His Father in heaven. And there Jesus our "substitutionary" Advocate pleads our cause with the Father. We are saved but we still sin and grieve the Father's heart and outside of Christ would deserve to die at that very moment. But praise God that in His great wisdom, He ordained that the Perfect Son would be our Great Defender. O, how we need to thank our Father for this gracious, undeserved provision and thank Jesus for His willingness to plead our cause with His Father. I don't think we fully grasp the gravity and the preciousness of this grand truth (I certainly do not)!

**THOUGHT** - May the Spirit open the eyes of our heart to see the riches of the glory of this aspect of our priceless inheritance in Christ. Amen.

**Hiebert** - Having fallen into some sin, the believer is not left to his own poor efforts to effect restoration. God has made effective

provision in Christ....In writing "**we** have an Advocate," instead of the expected "**he** has an Advocate," John made clear his own need for this Advocate. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary - D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (See also the online resources listed above).

**Advocate** (3875) (**parakletos** from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = to call) is the noun cognate of the verb **parakaleo** (see study) (cf also **paraklesis**) and literally means one called alongside. **Parakletos** describes one who stands by to help or render aid (especially in a court of law) or one who is summoned to the side of another to help, comfort, encourage, counsel, or intercede for, depending on the need.

#### Related Resource:

- [Interesting article from Wikipedia on Paraclete](#)

The KJV, YLT translate **parakletos** as **Comforter**, the RV retains the word **Comforter**, but the margin gives **Advocate** and **Helper** and notes that the Greek is paraclete. The HCSB and RSV translate it **Counselor**. J. B. Phillips translates it someone to stand by you. Knox translates it he who is to befriend you. NAS, ESV, Moffatt, Torrey and 20th Century NT all translate it **Helper**. NET, NLT and NAB translate it as **Advocate** (even Jn 14:16). As the **NET Note** below amplifies, none of these Names are perfect. I would suggest that the Spirit might also be called our **Enabler**, that is, the One Who supernaturally energizes (enables) us for Christ-like life and ministry. The point is that we don't just need a little "*help*" (cp Name "Helper") or a little *push*, but we need Him to give us both "**the desire and the power**" (NLT paraphrase of Php 2:13-note) to work out our salvation (Phil 2:12-note), whether in everyday Christian living or in specific ministries to which He has assigned **each** and every believer. I personally believe there are **no "bench players"** on God's team, but that every believer is called to be on the field so to speak, activity involved in the great game of redeeming men's soul's from hell to heaven!

[See 3 page discussion of parakletos in the Dictionary of NT Theology, page 88, volume 1-](#) Excerpt - paraklētōs is a cognate of the vb. parakaleō, the meanings of which in cl. Gk. range from call in, send for, summon, to exhort, encourage, comfort, console. The noun paraklētōs is derived from the verbal adj. and means called [to one's aid]. It is first found in a legal context in the court of justice, meaning legal assistant, advocate (Demosthenes, 19, 1; cf. Lysurgus, Frag. 102). "There is no instance of paraklētōs, like its Lat. equivalent advocatus, being used as a tt. for the professional legal advisor or defender of an accused person in the same sense as syndikos or synēgoros. But the use of paraklētōs for representative is to be understood in the light of legal assistance in court, the pleading of another's case, Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom., XI, 37, 1" (J. Behm, TDNT V 801). The existence of the Lat. legal term advocatus may have led early Christian writers to use it to translate paraklētōs (cf. Tert., Adv. Prax., 9; Cyprian, Ep. 55, 18; Novatian, De trinitate, 28, 29; Augustine, Tract. in Ioan., 94; cf. Arndt, 623). In the history of religions numerous helpers are known. In the Mandaean writings dating from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. there are several helpers, including Yawar (means helper) which has some features in common with the Johannine paraklētōs (TDNT V 808).

**NET Note** says **Advocate** "or **Helper**" or **Counselor**"; Grk "**Paraclete**," from the Greek word parakletos. Finding an appropriate English translation for parakletos is a very difficult task. No single English word has exactly the same range of meaning as the Greek word. "**Comforter**," used by some of the older English versions, appears to be as old as Wycliffe. But today it suggests a quilt or a sympathetic mourner at a funeral. "**Counselor**" is adequate, but too broad, in contexts like "marriage counselor" or "camp counselor." "**Helper**" or "**Assistant**" could also be used, but could suggest a subordinate rank. "**Advocate**," the word chosen for the NET translation, has more forensic overtones than the Greek word does, although in John 16:5-11 a forensic context is certainly present. Because an "advocate" is someone who "advocates" or supports a position or viewpoint and since this is what the **Paraclete** will do for the preaching of the disciples, it was selected in spite of the drawbacks.

See article in old International Standard Bible Encyclopedia - [Paraclete](#)

**Oswald Chambers** - Call the **Comforter** by the term you think best—**Advocate**, **Helper**, **Paraclete**, the word conveys the indefinable blessedness of His sympathy; an inward invisible kingdom that causes the saint to sing through every night of sorrow.

In ancient Greece **parakletos** was often used of a defense attorney called in to defend someone under accusation. Today we are accused of a crime (in fact our crime spiritually speaking was against the holy God! Ro 3:23-note), we need an attorney (an Advocate) to come to our aid and plead our case before the judge's bench (God the Father). And so John reminds us that Jesus pleads our case with His Father. The sinless Son stands in for sinning sons! Glory! Thank You Jesus!

Jesus our **Advocate** approaches the Father for us defending us from Satan our **Accuser** (**kategeo**). In the Revelation, John describes that great day when the **Accuser** is cast out of the divine court room, so to speak "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the **accuser**



of our brethren has been thrown down, who **accuses** them before our God day and night. (Rev 12:10 [note](#))

**A T Robertson** - The Holy Spirit is God's **Advocate** on earth with men, while Christ is man's **Advocate** with the Father.

**Louw-Nida** gives us a very interesting word picture of **parakletos**- The traditional rendering of Comforter is especially misleading because it suggests only one very limited aspect of what the Holy Spirit does. A term such as Helper is highly generic and can be particularly useful in some languages. In certain instances, for example, the concept of Helper is expressed idiomatically, for example, "the one who mothers us" or, as in one language in Central Africa, "**the one who falls down beside us,**" that is to say, **an individual who upon finding a person collapsed along the road, kneels down beside the victim, cares for his needs, and carries him to safety.** A rendering based upon the concept of legal advocate seems in most instances to be too restrictive. Furthermore, there may be quite unsatisfactory connotations associated with any word which suggests a lawyer, especially since in so many societies, a lawyer is thought of primarily as one who bribes the judges or can speak two truths or, as in one language, is a professional liar. ([Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament- Based on Semantic Domains](#))

**William MacDonald** - When Satan brings some accusation against a believer, the Lord Jesus can point to His finished work on Calvary and say, "Charge that to My account." ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#) - borrow one hour)

**Barclay - Parakletos** itself is a word which is passive in form and literally means someone who is called to one's side; but since it is always the reason for the calling in that is uppermost in the mind, the word, although passive in form, has an active sense, and comes to mean a helper, a supporter and, above all, a witness in someone's favour, an advocate in someone's defence. It too is a common word in ordinary secular Greek. Demosthenes (De Fals. Leg. 1) speaks of the importunities and the party spirit of advocates (**parakletoi**) serving the ends of private ambition instead of public good. Diogenes Laertius (4: 50) tells of a caustic saying of the philosopher Bion. A very talkative person sought his help in some matter. Bion said, "I will do what you want, if you will only send someone to me to plead your case (i.e., send a **parakletos**), and stay away yourself." When Philo is telling the story of Joseph and his brethren, he says that, when Joseph forgave them for the wrong that they had done him, he said, "I offer you an amnesty for all that you did to me; you need no other **parakletos**" (Life of Joseph 40). Philo tells how the Jews of Alexandria were being oppressed by a certain governor and determined to take their case to the emperor. "We must find," they said, "a more powerful **parakletos** by whom the Emperor Gaius will be brought to a favorable disposition towards us" (Leg. in Flacc. 968 B). So common was this word that it came into other languages just as it stood. In the New Testament itself the Syriac, Egyptian, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions all keep the word **parakletos** just as it stands. The Jews especially adopted the word and used it in this sense of advocate, someone to plead one's cause. They used it as the opposite of the word accuser and the Rabbis had this saying about what would happen in the day of God's judgment. "The man who keeps one commandment of the Law has gotten to himself one **parakletos**; the man who breaks one commandment of the Law has gotten to himself one accuser." They said, "If a man is summoned to court on a capital charge, he needs powerful **parakletoi** (the plural of the word) to save him; repentance and good works are his **parakletoi** in the judgment of God." "All the righteousness and mercy which an Israelite does in this world are great peace and great **parakletoi** between him and his father in heaven." They said that the sin-offering is a man's **parakletos** before God. **So the word came into the Christian vocabulary.** In the days of the persecutions and the martyrs, a Christian pleader called Vettius Epagathos ably pled the case of those who were accused of being Christians. "He was an advocate (**parakletos**) for the Christians, for he had the Advocate within himself, even the Spirit" (Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History, 5: 1). The Letter of Barnabas (20) speaks of evil men who are the advocates of the wealthy and the unjust judges of the poor. The writer of Second Clement asks: "Who shall be your **parakletos** if it be not clear that your works are righteous and holy?" (2 Clement 6: 9). **A parakletos has been defined as "one who lends his presence to his friends."** More than once in the New Testament there is this great conception of Jesus as the friend and the defender of man. In a military court-martial the officer who defends the soldier under accusation is called the prisoner's friend. Jesus is our friend. Paul writes of that Christ who is at the right hand of God and "who intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ as the one who "ever lives to make intercession" for men (Hebrews 7:25); and he also speaks of him as "appearing in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). The tremendous thing about Jesus is that he has never lost his interest in, or his love for, men. We are not to think of him as having gone through his life upon the earth and his death upon the Cross, and then being finished with men. He still bears his concern for us upon his heart; he still pleads for us; Jesus Christ is the prisoner's friend for all. ([1 John 2 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Synonyms for **parakletos** include - consoler, comforter, helper, legal assistant, defense, defender, pleader, advocate, one who pleads another's cause.

Notice that John's designation of Jesus as our **Advocate** is the same Greek term Jesus Himself used for the Spirit, which speaks of the equality and divinity of the Holy Spirit and Jesus. Christ is our Helper before the Father and the Spirit is our Helper in the world (and against the devil and our flesh = **F.L.E.S.H.** ~ Following Long Established Sinful Habits!).

**Johannes Behm** says that "the history of the term in the whole sphere of known Greek and Hellenistic usage outside the NT yields

the clear picture of a legal advisor.:

**Moulton and Milligan** define **parakletos** as "a friend of the accused person, called to speak to his character, or otherwise enlist the sympathy of the judges."

**Cleon Rogers** - In rabbinical literature the word (parakletos) could indicate one who offers **legal aid** or who **intercedes on behalf** of someone else. ([The new linguistic and exegetical key to the Greek New Testament](#) borrow one hour)

When the **KJV** uses **parakletos** to refer to the Holy Spirit, it is translated as "**Comforter**", but most modern translators agree that this is not the primary idea of this Greek word in John 14-16. Keep in mind however that **parakletos** is derived from **parakaleo**, a verb used in the Septuagint clearly to convey the picture of comfort (see Ge 37:35, Isa 61:2), not to mention Jesus' use in Mt 5:4-**note**.

**Vine** says that **parakletos** is "primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another's cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in 1John 2:1, of the Lord Jesus. In the widest sense, it signifies a succorer, comforter. Christ was this to His disciples, by the implication of His word **another** (allos, = another of the same sort, not heteros = different) Comforter, when speaking of the Holy Spirit."

**Harris** - Goodspeed concludes that the word meant a person called to someone else's aid in court, a helper, intercessor, pleader, or character witness. 'Defender' comes very close to being equivalent, but more than just a defense witness is in view. Jesus' statements about the coming Paraclete teaching and reminding the disciples go beyond this meaning and call for a broader translation. Goodspeed suggests 'Helper' for a translation in the Fourth Gospel and 'one who will intercede for us' in 1 John 2:1. (W Hall Harris III - John Commentary)

**Parakletos** - 5x in 5v - translated in **NAS** as **Advocate**(1), **Helper**(4).

John 14:16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may be with you forever;

**Comment:** Note the Holy Spirit's permanent (forever) presence! This means eternally! So even in the Millennium and the following New Heaven and New Earth, the Spirit will be our "Helper." Hallelujah! Notice also that "**another**" is not the Greek word **heteros** (another of a different kind or quality) but is **allos**, signifying that Jesus is saying the Spirit will be just like Himself in His divinity. The Holy Spirit is a Paraclete because He in a real sense acts as Christ's substitute on earth while Christ is not in the world as the God-Man in bodily form. This is what the fearful disciples needed -- an assurance that Jesus' Crucifixion and subsequent Ascension would not leave them as "spiritual orphans." (Jn 14:18) The sending of the Spirit was Jesus' **antidote** for their **anxiety** and He (the Spirit) is still the **antidote** for our **anxiety** in a world that is becoming increasingly opposed to Jesus and His followers. (cp John 14:27, John 16:33, Php 4:6-**note**, Php 4:7-**note**)

Think of the Holy Spirit as "Jesus in the Spirit" (cf Ro 8:9-**note**, Acts 16:7, Php 1:19-**note**, Gal 4:6, 1Pe 1:11-**note**) or as Jesus with us in and through His Spirit which forever indwells believers. Beloved, in the day of trouble or affliction or trial (we are all in them, just coming out of one or getting ready to enter one!) there need be no fear, for no less of a Person than the omnipotent, omniscient Spirit of Christ stands ready to enable us to walk through the troubling times! Do you, like a trusting little child (yea, even a teknon), lean hard on His everlasting arms, pressing in to Him, when you are in the spiritual storm?

John 14:26 "But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

**Comment:** While Helper is a good name for the Spirit, this name can be a bit misleading in regard to His role in our daily spiritual walk (process of sanctification). In other words, if I think that all I need is a little help, a little "push" so to speak, to live the supernatural Christian life, I am missing the truth that left to my own natural strength, I can do nothing (cf Jn 15:5, 2Cor 3:5,6-**note**). It follows that I do not just need a little "help" to live a victorious Christian life, I need enablement. In short, I need the Enabler Who indwells me to continually empower me to live righteously (not self-righteously)! Does this subtle distinction make sense?

**Vance Havner:** They (Peter, et al, in Acts compared to the Gospels) were not the same men and never were again. What happened? The Lord JESUS CHRIST had come from the grave with a new body, had promised them His Presence, had returned to the Father, had sent them the Paraclete. **No other explanation can account for the early church**, a fact second only to the life of our Lord. **Ed:** And

frankly no other provision has been made for the modern church! Have we missed Him? I'm not even talking about "charismatic," but about His necessary enabling power that is absolutely mandatory for any church to function supernaturally, be they Bible church, Baptist church, Charismatic church, modern "Gospel centered" church, etc. Same power Source is necessary as fueled the "First Church at Jerusalem"!)

John 15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

**Comment:** Note the Spirit's purpose as He relates to Jesus - to testify about Jesus and to glorify Jesus in Jn 16:14. While He is clearly God, we must always be careful not to glorify the Spirit at the expense of the Son! The Spirit of truth would "guide" the disciples into all truth, as to what to do and enable them to do it!

John 16:7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the **Helper** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you (cp the emphasis on need for Jesus to ascend so Spirit might descend = John 14:12, Jn 7:37-39-**note**).

**Illustration:** On a particularly rough airplane flight, a lady became very airsick. Her shoulders drooped, and her head slumped forward—she was totally wiped out. The stewardess came by to help her. "Come, come now," she said, "buck up and get control of yourself. Sit up and take courage." She put her arm under the lady's arm and helped her sit upright in her seat, gave her gum to chew, and then went to get her some water. With the help of the stewardess, the lady finished the trip in far better condition than she began it in. This is like the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He comes alongside to help us when we are in hopeless defeat. He admonishes us, encourages us, and restores hope and faith in our lives. (**Ed comment:** As mentioned earlier, we don't just need "*help*" though -- help implies we can do something supernatural in our own power, which we can't. We need an "**Enabler**"! He initiates and He empowers supernaturally charged "**Good Deeds**!")

**J I Packer's illustration of Spirit's role to glorify Jesus-** The Holy Spirit's distinctive role is to fulfill what we may call a floodlight ministry in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as this role was concerned, the Spirit "was not yet" (John 7:29, literal Greek) while Jesus was on earth; only when the Father had glorified him (John 17:1, 5) could the Spirit's work of making men aware of Jesus' glory begin. I remember walking to church one winter evening to preach on the words, "He will glorify me" (John 16:14), seeing the building floodlit as I turned a corner, and realizing that this was exactly the illustration my message needed. When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are placed so that you do not see them; in fact, you are not supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you can see it properly. This perfectly illustrated the Spirit's new covenant role. He is, so to speak, the hidden floodlight shining on the Savior. Or think of it this way. It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder on to Jesus who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, "Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me", but always, "Look at him, and see his glory; listen to him and hear his word; go to him and have life; get to know him and taste his gift of joy and peace." The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together. (James Packer, Your Father Loves You)

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

**William Barclay** remarks that **parakletos**...

is really untranslatable (*So common was this word that it came into other languages just as it stood. In the New Testament itself, the Syriac, Egyptian, Arabic and Ethiopic versions all keep the word parakletos just as it stands*). The AV renders it Comforter, which, although hallowed by time and usage, is not a good translation. Moffatt translates it as Helper. It is only when we examine this word **parakletos** in detail that we catch something of the riches of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It really means someone who is called in; but it is the reason why the person is called in which gives the word its distinctive associations. The Greeks used the word in a wide variety of ways. A parakletos might be a person called in to give witness in a law court in someone's favor, or an advocate called in to plead the cause of someone under a charge which would issue in a serious penalty; an expert called in to give advice in some difficult situation, or a person called in when, for example, a company of soldiers were depressed and dispirited to put new courage into their minds and hearts. **Always a parakletos is someone called in to help in time of trouble or need.** Comforter was once a perfectly good translation. It actually goes back to John Wycliffe, the first person to use it in his

translation made in the fourteenth century. But in his day it meant much more than it means now. The word comes from the Latin *fortis*, which means brave; and a comforter was someone who enabled some dispirited creature to be brave. Nowadays *comfort* has to do almost solely with sorrow; and a comforter is someone who sympathizes with us when we are sad. Beyond a doubt the Holy Spirit does that, but to limit His work to that function is sadly to belittle Him. We often talk of being able to cope with things. That is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit. He takes away our inadequacies and enables us to cope with life. The Holy Spirit substitutes **victorious** for **defeated** living. So what Jesus is saying (in Jn 14:16) is: 'I am setting you a hard task, and I am sending you out on a very difficult engagement. But I am going to send you someone, the Parakletos, Who will **guide** you as to what to do and **enable** you to do it.' ([The Gospel of John - Online](#))

**Barclay adds** "Xenophon, the Greek historian (Anabasis, 1:6:5), tells how the Persian emperor Cyrus the Younger summoned (parakalein) Clearchos into his tent to be his counsellor, for Clearchos was a man held in the highest honour by Cyrus and by the Greeks. Aeschines, the Greek orator, protests against his opponents calling in Demosthenes, his great rival, and says: 'Why need you call Demosthenes to your support? To do so is to call in a rascally rhetorician to cheat the ears of the jury' (Against Ctesiphon, 200)."....Philo tells how the Jews of Alexandria were being oppressed by a certain governor and were determined to take their case to the emperor. 'We must find', they said, 'a more powerful paraklētōs by whom the Emperor Gaius will be brought to a favourable disposition towards us' (In Flaccum, 968 B)....

The Jews especially adopted the word and used it in this sense of **advocate**, someone to plead one's cause. They used it as the opposite of the word **accuser**, and the Rabbis had this saying about what would happen in the day of God's judgment. 'The man who keeps one commandment of the law has got to himself one paraklētōs; the man who breaks one commandment of the law has got to himself one accuser.' They said: 'If a man is summoned to court on a capital charge, he needs powerful paraklētoi [the plural of the word] to save him; repentance and good works are his paraklētōs in the judgment of God.' 'All the righteousness and mercy which an Israelite does in this world are great peace and great paraklētōs between him and his father in heaven.' They said that the sin offering is a person's paraklētōs before God. ([The Letters of John and Jude](#))

**David Smith** entitles 1Jn 2:1-2 "**The Remedy for the Sins of Believers**" adding

"Observe the sudden change in the apostle's manner. His heart is very tender toward his people, and he adopts an affectionate and personal tone: (1) he passes from the formal 'we' to 'I.' (2) He styles them '**my little children**'... his favorite appellation (compare 1Jn 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). Not only was it very suitable on the lips of the aged teacher, but it was a phrase of Jesus (John 13:33). St. John had caught the phrase and its spirit. He remembered how the Master had dealt with His disciples, and he would deal with his people after the same fashion and be to them what Jesus had been to himself—as gentle and patient.

"He assumes this tone because he is about to address a warning to them, and he would fain take the sting out of it and disarm opposition. He foresees the possibility of a two-fold perversion of his teaching: (1) 'If we can never in this life be done with sin, why strive after holiness? It is useless; sin is an abiding necessity.' (2) 'If escape be so easy, why dread falling into sin? We may sin with light hearts, since we have the blood of Jesus to cleanse us.' 'No,' he answers, 'I am not writing these things to you either to discourage you in the pursuit of holiness or to embolden you in sinning, but, on the contrary, in order that (hina ( να )) ye may not sin.' Compare Augustine: 'Lest perchance he should seem to have given impunity to sins, and men should now say to themselves, 'Let us sin, let us do securely what we will, Christ cleanses us: He is faithful and righteous, He cleanses us from all iniquity'; 'he takes from thee evil security and implants useful fear. It is an evil wish of thine to be secure; be anxious. For He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, if thou art always displeasing to thyself and being changed until thou be perfected.' As a physician might say to his patient: 'Your trouble is obstinate: the poison is in your blood, and it will take a long time to eradicate it. But I do not tell you this to discourage you or make you careless; no, on the contrary, to make you watchful and diligent in the use of the remedy'; so the apostle says: 'My little children, these things I am writing to you in order that ye may not sin.'

**THOUGHT** - BELOVED THERE ARE MANY OF US (US INCLUDES ME!) WHO NEED TO READ DAVID SMITH'S COMFORTING COMMENT! -- "If, however, we fall into sin, let us not lose heart, for we have an Advocate with the Father one called to your side," so, in a forensic sense, "one who undertakes and champions your cause," "an advocate"... Our Advocate does not plead that we are innocent or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents His vicarious work as the ground of our acquittal. He stands in the Court of Heaven a Lamb as it had been slain (Rev 5:6-[note](#)), and the (Ed: His scars, His covenant marks - see Covenant- The Oneness of Covenant - Scar and Covenant) marks of His sore Passion are a mute but eloquent appeal: 'I suffered all this for sinners, and shall it go for naught?' ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**With the Father** - The Greek for "with" is **pros** which more literally is "facing" the Father! John used "pros" in Jn 1:1 declaring that "the Word was with God" indicating that Jesus our Advocate was and is always before ("facing") the Father.

**Father** ([3962](#))(**pater**) refers to God of course and John's use of this specific word speaks of his acknowledgment of their (and our) sonship. While God is the Creator of all men, not all men have the family privilege of addressing Him as Abba! Dear Father! (Ro

8:15-note, Gal 4:6) even as did the Dear Son (Mk 14:36), just before He paid the price to make it possible for believers to have confident, eternal and "familial" access to God the Father.

**Hiebert** "'The Father" recalls believers' status before Him as errant sons."

**Steven Cole** - Whenever we need Him (which is always!), He is there, coming to our aid. When we sin, Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10-note; Zech 3:1-5), charges us as guilty before God. Jesus Christ, our Defense Attorney, steps to the bench, but He does not enter a plea of "*not guilty*." That would not be true. We have sinned. Rather, He enters a plea of *guilty*, but then He argues for pardon because He paid the penalty for that sin by His substitutionary death. Therefore, His client is not liable for punishment. And, although we should confess our sins (1Jn 1:9-note), John does not say, "*If we confess our sins, we have an Advocate*." Rather, he says, "*If anyone sins, we have an Advocate*." Our forgiveness and our standing with God do not depend on anything **we** do, but rather on the finished work of Christ. **If** we are His children through the new birth (Jn 3:3, 7-8), He is there before the Father on our behalf, pleading His blood, even **before** we confess our sins! (**Ed: Thank You Lord Jesus!**) ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

The writer of **Hebrews** alludes to Jesus' "advocacy" on our behalf...

Heb 7:25 Hence, also, He is able (See brief study on the phrase "God is Able") to save (**Ed:** Remember that there are "[Three Tenses of Salvation](#)" - in a sense believers will forever be dependent on Him for "salvation") forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

**Cole** comments: Because Jesus Christ is perpetually in heaven presenting His shed blood, every person that draws near to God through Christ can know that the accuser has no grounds for conviction. We are guilty as charged, but the penalty has already been paid by our Substitute, who pleads our case for us! ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**Calvin** comments that "The intercession of Christ is a continual application of his death for our salvation.

#### Related Resources:

- Abba
- [What does it mean that God is our Abba Father? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Adoption
- [What does the Bible say about adoption? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Wuest** sees the truth in this verse as a strong deterrent to saints to soberly remember when in the midst of strong temptation to commit sin, writing that...

Our Advocate is always in fellowship with the Father in order that if the saint loses fellowship with Him through cherished and unconfessed sin, He might plead our cause on the basis of His precious blood, and bring us back into fellowship again. The word "**facing**" brings us to this solemn thought, that when we saints sin the Lord Jesus must **face** the Father with us and our sin.

The saint has been saved in His precious blood so that he may be able to keep from sinning, and when he does sin, he wounds the tender heart of the Saviour, and forces Him to face God the Father with that saint whom He has saved in His precious blood. How that should deter us from committing acts of sin! ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Jesus Christ the Righteous** - More literally this is "Jesus Christ a Righteous (One)". This truth is the grounds for unrighteous men (all men and women ever born = Ro 3:10) to be declared righteous (= justified Ro 3:22, 2Cor 5:21) when they repent and believe (Mk 1:15) in the Righteous One's substitutionary sacrifice for them. The NLT picks up on the importance of the righteousness of Christ describing Jesus as "the One Who pleases God completely."

**Steven Cole** dissects the names of Jesus as they relate to salvation "Each name points to an essential part of our forgiveness. In the first place, we needed a human Savior, **Jesus**. Only man could atone for the sins of people. Jesus was completely human, not just in appearance, as some of the heretics maintained, but in His nature. But, we also needed a divine Savior. Jesus is the **Christ**, God's anointed one, sent to bear our sins (Isaiah 53:3-6). A mere man's death would only pay for his own sins. But as God in human flesh, Jesus' death had infinite merit to atone for the sins of all that the Father had given to Him. But, also, He is Jesus Christ the righteous. Jesus had to be "a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1 Pet. 1:19). If He had sinned, He would have had to die for His own sins. But He fully kept God's law, in dependence on the Father. His righteousness is freely imputed to the one who trusts in Him. As Paul wrote (2 Cor. 5:21), "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This means that Jesus Christ alone is an adequate Savior. He is all that we need to stand before the holy God, not in a righteousness of our own, "derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God



on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:9). We can add nothing to what Christ has done. ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**Righteous** (1342) ( **dikaio**) defines that which is in accordance with high standards of rectitude. It is that which is in right relation to another and so in reference to persons defines the one who is morally and ethically righteous, upright or just. The Amplified has "Jesus Christ [the all] righteous [upright, just, Who conforms to the Father's will in every purpose, thought, and action]."

**A T Robertson** - As dikaios (righteous) Jesus is qualified to plead our case and to enter the Father's presence (Heb. 2:18-note).

The one who habitually (not perfectly) does what is **right** is **righteous** (dikaio). A righteous **character** expresses itself in righteous **conduct**. If a man knows God, he will obey God. A man cannot claim genuine salvation if he is habitually living in sin. On the other hand, a man can only practice genuine righteousness because he possesses the nature of the One Who is righteous, "the Spirit of Christ" (Ro 8:9), the only way a man can "put to death the deeds of the body" (Ro 8:13-note). Notice carefully that the practice of righteousness is not what makes the individual "righteous" (that would be a "works based" righteousness, which Jesus alluded to in Mt 5:20-note), but reveals the inner nature of the one who is practicing righteousness. One practices righteousness because of his righteous character and the indwelling Spirit of the Righteous One! While works do not earn righteousness, good (supernatural) works are clear evidence of salvation. As Jesus reminded His audience...

You will know them by their fruits (Mt 7:16-note).

An individual's **conduct** is certain evidence of his **nature**. The one who practices righteousness does so because he has been granted the righteousness of God and the Spirit of God.

John alludes to importance of **righteousness** several times in this pithy epistle...

1John 2:29-note If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1John 3:7-note Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

1John 3:10-note By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1John 3:12-note (1Jn 3:11) not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

**Hiebert** - "**Righteous**", used without the article, is descriptive of His character. "The efficacy of His ministry is guaranteed by the righteousness of His Person." Being personally conformed to all the righteous demands of God's law, He pleads the believers' case in keeping with the requirements of a holy law. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary - D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (See also the online resources listed above).

**Steven Cole** - John's thought here (in line with Paul) is that you need to realize that God graciously has forgiven you completely in Jesus Christ. He is at the right hand of the Father, pleading your case, even when you sin. Your standing before God does not depend on your performance, but rather on Jesus' blood and righteousness. **Properly understanding that truth will not lead you to sin more, but rather, to sin less.** The key to holiness is to understand God's grace that was lavished upon you when Jesus Christ died for your sins. (([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#)))

**David Smith** quotes Rothe - "Only the righteous One, the guiltless, the One that is separate from sin, can be the Advocate with God for sinners, in general, the Mediator of salvation, and makes His friendship for us prevalent with God, because only such a one has access to God and fellowship with God (Heb. 7:26; 1Peter 3:18-note; John 16:8, 10)," and Taylor, "What better advocate could we have for us, than He that is appointed to be our Judge." ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

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**HOW TO FAIL SUCCESSFULLY:** Inventor Charles Kettering has suggested that we must learn to fail intelligently. He said, "Once you've failed, analyze the problem and find out why, because each failure is one more step leading up to the cathedral of success. The only time you don't want to fail is the last time you try."

Kettering gave these suggestions for turning failure into success: (1) Honestly face defeat; never fake success. (2) Exploit the failure; don't waste it. Learn all you can from it. (3) Never use failure as an excuse for not trying again.

Kettering's practical wisdom holds a deeper meaning for the Christian. The Holy Spirit is constantly working in us to accomplish "His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13), so we know that failure is never final. We can't reclaim lost time. And we can't always make things right, although we should try. Some consequences of our sins can never be reversed. But we can make a new start, because Jesus died to pay the penalty for all our sins and is our "**Advocate with the Father**" (1 John 2:1).

Knowing how to benefit from failure is the key to continued growth in grace. According to 1 John 1:9, we need to confess our sins—



it's the first step in turning our failure into success. - Dennis De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Onward and upward your course plan today,  
Seeking new heights as you walk Jesus' way;  
Heed not past failures, but strive for the prize,  
Aiming for goals fit for His holy eyes.  
—Brandt

Failure is never final for those who begin again with God.

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**AN ADVOCATE:** If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1Jn 2:1. When Abraham Lincoln was President, his son Robert had a close friend who entered the army as a private. Robert sent word to his friend, saying, "Write to me, and I will intercede with Father and get you something better." A few years went by before Robert heard from the soldier again. When they got together, Lincoln's friend said, "I never took advantage of your offer, but you do not know what a comfort it was to me. Often after a weary march I would throw myself on the ground and say, 'If it becomes beyond human endurance, I can write to Bob Lincoln and get relief; and I would rather have his intercession than that of the President's cabinet, because he is the President's son.' "

We too know a Son to whom we can go for help Jesus Christ, our Advocate. An advocate is one who can assist us, either by pleading on our behalf or by giving evidence that supports our case. Jesus can do this for us because of His position at God's right hand. Praise God! We have a Friend in the court of heaven. —P R. Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

THE ONE WHO DIED AS OUR SUBSTITUTE  
NOW LIVES AS OUR ADVOCATE.

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**Theodore Epp** - First John 2:1 could be translated: "These things write I unto you that ye do not commit a single act of sin." John was not dealing with habitual sin but with single acts of sin.

This is a high standard, and you may wonder if it is possible for a child of God to successfully live this way. We need to realize what Christ has actually done for us.

In the light of our experience, however, this may well cause us to despair, for we realize that we do commit acts of sin. The next phrase in 1 John 2:1 says, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

When we do commit an act of sin and Satan would accuse us before the Father, there is no way he can reach us because we stand before God in the righteousness of Christ, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (Rom. 3:22).

So Jesus has become our righteousness, and He stands in the presence of God on our behalf.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Ro 8:34). ([Back to the Bible](#))

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**1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (NASB: Lockman)**

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**Greek:** kai autos hilasmos estin (3SPA1) peri ton hamartion hemon, ou peri ton hemeteron de monon alla kai peri holou tou kosmou.

**Amplified:** And He [that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world. ([Lockman](#))

**KJV:** And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

**ESV:** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

**KJV:** My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

**NIV:** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

**NLT:** He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

**Phillips:** the one who made personal atonement for our sins (and for those of the rest of the world as well).

**Wuest:** And He himself is an expiatory satisfaction for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** and he -- he is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world

- **He Himself is:** 1Jn 1:7 4:10 Ro 3:25,26 1Pe 2:24 3:18
- **for the:** 1Jn 4:14 5:19 Jn 1:29 4:42 11:51,52 2Co 5:18-21 Rev 12:9
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## OUR ETERNAL PROPTIATION

**And (kai)** - Marks continuation of John's thought about Jesus and His vital role in our lives when we do commit sin. Verse one focuses on what He does for us now in God's presence, whereas verse two focuses on what He has done in the past (He Himself was the sacrifice) to make possible His present Advocacy on our behalf when we commit sin.

**Kruse** sees it slightly different explaining that John "emphasizes that Jesus Christ is not only our advocate who speaks in our favor in the presence of God despite our sins, but that he is also the atoning sacrifice for those sins. In the first case he appears as an advocate in court, in the second as a sacrificing priest in the temple. ([The Letters of John - Pillar New Testament Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** notes that John is explaining "the means whereby sins are covered and remitted. Had John written that Jesus is the "Propitiator," half the truth would have been lost. Then His work would have been comparable to that of the high priest on the Day of Atonement when he sprinkled sacrificial blood on the mercy seat to cover the sins of the people so that God could again deal with them in mercy. Unlike the Old Testament high priests, Jesus Christ is Himself "the atoning sacrifice" (NIV) in that He offered Himself as the sacrifice whereby the barrier which sin interposes between God and man is removed. Pagans might think of offering sacrifices to appease their offended gods as a means of regaining their favor, but Scripture presents God Himself as taking the initiative in sending His Son as the propitiation for sins (4:10); the cause of the estrangement between God and man lies with man, not God. In making "Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor 5:21) God achieved the true and lasting solution to the sin problem; the perfect sacrifice of the incarnate Christ enables God to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary - D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (See also the online resources listed above).

**He Himself** - Jesus Christ, righteous in character.

**Vincent** - The He is emphatic: that same Jesus: He himself.

**Is (estin)** is in the **present tense** signifying that Jesus is continually the propitiation. This is good news for sinners such as myself who are daily in need of an Advocate Who is qualified. Indeed, He sits in His glorified body even now at the right hand of the Father and not only pleads for mercy for us but also intercedes for us. (Ro 8:34, Heb 7:25) O, what a Savior, what a Lord!

**The propitiation** (NAS marginal note = "Satisfaction") ([2434](#)) (**hilasmos** akin to **hileōs** = merciful, propitious) in the NT (only here and 1Jn 4:10) refers to a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God and thereby makes God propitious (favorably inclined or disposed, disposed to be gracious and/or merciful, ready to forgive) toward us.

Keep in mind as you read this note on hilasmos that it is very difficult to discern the differences between **propitiation** (satisfaction) and **expiation** in a number of scholarly resources consulted. Kenneth Wuest's paraphrase seems to try to cover both camps so to speak rendering it "He himself is an **expiatory satisfaction** for our sins." ([Wuest](#))

**ESV Study Bible** says Hilasmos "here means 'a sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor' which is 'also the meaning of the English word propitiation.'"

See [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery discussion](#) of imagery associated with Atonement.

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### QUESTION - [What is propitiation?](#)

**ANSWER** - The word *propitiation* carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction, specifically toward God. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to him.

The necessity of appeasing God is something many religions have in common. In ancient pagan religions, as well as in many religions today, the idea is taught that man appeases God by offering various gifts or sacrifices. However, the Bible teaches that God Himself has provided the only means through which His wrath can be appeased and sinful man can be reconciled to Him. In the New Testament, the act of propitiation always refers to the work of God and not the sacrifices or gifts offered by man. The reason for this is that man is totally incapable of satisfying God's justice except by spending eternity in hell. There is no service, sacrifice, or gift that man can offer that will appease the holy wrath of God or satisfy His perfect justice. The only satisfaction, or propitiation, that could be acceptable to God and that could reconcile man to Him had to be made by God. For this reason God the Son, Jesus Christ, came into the world in human flesh to be the perfect sacrifice for sin and make atonement or "propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

The word *propitiation* is used in several verses to explain what Jesus accomplished through His death on the cross. For example, in Romans 3:24-25 believers in Christ have been "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." These verses are a key point in Paul's argument in the book of Romans and are really at the heart of the gospel message.

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul makes the argument that everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, is under the condemnation of God and deserving of His wrath (Romans 1:18). Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All of us deserve His wrath and punishment. God in His infinite grace and mercy has provided a way that His wrath can be appeased and we can be reconciled to Him. That way is through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ, as the payment for sins. It is through faith in Jesus Christ as God's perfect sacrifice that we can be reconciled to God. It is only because of Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection on the third day that a lost sinner deserving of hell can be reconciled to a holy God. The wonderful truth of the gospel is that Christians are saved from God's wrath and reconciled to God not because "we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). The only way for God's wrath against sinful man to be appeased and for us to be reconciled to God is through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. This truth is also communicated in 1 John 2:2, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." An important part of Christ's saving work is deliverance from God's wrath; Jesus' propitiation on the cross is the only thing that can turn away God's divine condemnation of sin. Those who reject Christ as their Savior and refuse to believe in Him have no hope of salvation. They can only look forward to facing the wrath of God that they have stored up for the coming day of judgment (Romans 2:5). There is no other propitiation or sacrifice that can be made for their sins. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### Related Resources:

- [Why would the aroma of a sacrifice be important to God?](#)
- [Propitiation - See Atonement - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Expiation, Propitiation Propitiation](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Propitiation](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Propitiation \(2\) Propitiation](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Propitiation](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Propitiation](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Propitiation](#)
- Mercy Seat, Propitiation ([2435](#)) hilasterion -
- [What is the mercy seat? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Make propitiation (be merciful) ([2433](#)) hilaskomai

**Martin Manser** writes that **propitiation** is "The satisfaction of the righteous demands of God in relation to human sin and its punishment through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, by which the penalty of sin is cancelled and the anger of God averted. (Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies)

Note that some definitions of **hilasmos** list expiation as a meaning. **Expiation** strictly speaking refers to the removal or cancellation

of sin or guilt. While this is a component of the NT idea of atonement, expiation is not a fully adequate translation of hilasmos. **Hilasmos** is the means of satisfying the righteous wrath of a Holy God. God is never presented as changing His mind toward the sinner or the sin that estranged the sinner from Him. Man is never said to be able to *appease* God with any of his offerings, as in the pagan rituals where man offered gifts in an attempt to assuage the anger of the "god".

**John MacArthur** links **hilasmos** with the mercy seat in the Old Covenant...

The term propitiation, in definition and application, is most notably a biblical and theological word. It is a translation of hilasmos, which means "appeasement," or "satisfaction." Christ's sacrificial death on the cross satisfied the demands of God's justice, thus appeasing His holy wrath against believers' sins. Several related words provide additional understanding of the nature of propitiation. The verb hilaskomai, "to make satisfaction for," occurs in Luke 18:13 and Hebrews 2:17. **Hilasterion** refers to the sacrifice of atonement required to placate God's wrath (cf. Rom. 3:25). The translators of the **Septuagint (Lxx)** used this term (hilasterion) to designate the **mercy seat**, which establishes propitiation's link to the Old Testament sacrificial system (Read Ex 25:10-22, esp Ex 25:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22)

The **mercy seat** was the lid or cover of the ark, situated between the divine Shekinah glory cloud above the ark and law tablets inside the ark. Because the priests sprinkled the seat with blood from the (animal) sacrifices (**Ed**: See the inefficacy of animal blood in Heb 10:4, Heb 10:11), it was the place at which atonement for sin occurred. The sprinkled blood thus stood between God (the **Shekinah**) and His broken law (the tablets). The sacrificial blood of animals never did placate God (cf. Heb. 7:26-28; 9:6-15; 10:1-18), but it pictured the future sacrifice of Christ that would fully satisfy the Father (Heb. 9:23-28; cf. Isa. 53:6, 10; Matt. 20:28; Eph. 5:2). If the Old Testament sacrificial system had appeased God's wrath once and for all, the Jews would not have continued endlessly to bring burnt offerings (Lev. 1:3-17; 6:8-13), sin offerings (Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30), and trespass offerings (Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10) over the centuries. ([NT Commentary on 1, 2, 3 John & Jude](#))

**Swanson** notes that "**expiation** focuses on the means for the forgiveness of the sin, **propitiation** would focus on God's view of satisfaction or favorable disposing. There is much debate which English word is the better rendering.

**Grudem** - Under the influence of scholars who denied that the idea of **propitiation** was in the New Testament, the **RSV** translated **hilasmos** as "expiation," a word that means "an action that cleanses from sin" but includes no concept of appeasing God's wrath.....This (appeasing of wrath) is the consistent meaning of these words (hilasmos and hilaskomai) outside the Bible where they were well understood in reference to pagan Greek religions. These verses simply mean that Jesus bore the wrath of God against sin. It is important to insist on this fact, because it is the heart of the doctrine of the atonement. It means that there is an eternal, unchangeable requirement in the holiness and justice of God that sin be paid for. Furthermore, before the atonement ever could have an effect on our subjective consciousness (**Ed**: as is seen in the concept of the word expiation), it first had an effect on God and his relation to the sinners he planned to redeem. Apart from this central truth, the death of Christ really cannot be adequately understood. ([Scroll down to page 499](#))

**NET Bible** has a lengthy note on the difficulties inherent in the Greek word **hilasmos**...

A suitable English translation for this word hilasmos is a difficult and even controversial problem. **Expiation**," **propitiation**," and **atonement**" have all been suggested.

**Leon Morris**, in a study that has become central to discussions of this topic (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 140), sees as an integral part of the meaning of the word (as in the other words in the hilaskomai group) **the idea of turning away the divine wrath**, suggesting that **propitiation** is the closest English equivalent. It is certainly possible to see an averting of divine wrath in this context, where the sins of believers are in view and Jesus is said to be acting as Advocate on behalf of believers.

**R. E. Brown's** point (Epistles of John [AB], 220-21), that it is essentially cleansing from sin **Ed**: The idea inherent in the word "expiation") which is in view here and in the other use of the word in 1Jn 4:10, is well taken, but the two connotations (**averting wrath and cleansing**) are not mutually exclusive and it is unlikely that the propitiatory aspect of Jesus' work should be ruled out entirely in the usage in 1Jn 2:2. Nevertheless, the English word **propitiation** is too technical to communicate to many modern readers, and a term like **atonement sacrifice** (given by Webster's New International Dictionary as a definition of "propitiation") is more appropriate here. Another term, **satisfaction**, might also convey the idea, but "satisfaction" in Roman Catholic theology is a technical term for the performance of the penance imposed by the priest on a penitent.

(**In Summary NET Bible Note says**) The Greek word hilasmos behind the phrase atoning sacrifice conveys both the idea of "turning aside divine wrath" and the idea of "cleansing from sin." ([1 John 2 NET Bible Notes](#))

**Criswell** feels that although the meaning of **hilasmos** is controversial " the weight of evidence affirms clearly that hilasmos portrays the placating of God's wrath toward sin; hence, Christ's death (1Jn 1:7) satisfies the just demands of God's holy judgment against sin. Thus, Christ does not simply represent believers before God (Advocate 1Jn 2:1), He also provides the grounds for their

forgiveness -- He is both **Advocate and atoning sacrifice**. Jesus' provision of propitiation does not mean that the Father is uninvolved in salvation; in actuality, God's **love** is the ultimate source of Christ's work (1Jn 4:9, 10).

**Vine on Hilasmos** - Noun Masculine akin to hileos ("merciful, propitious"), signifies "an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted." It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as "the propitiation," in 1 John 2:2; 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His Death, is the Personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. In the former passage He is described as "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." The italicized addition in the AV, "the sins of," gives a wrong interpretation. What is indicated is that provision is made for the whole world, so that no one is, by Divine predetermination, excluded from the scope of God's mercy; the efficacy of the "propitiation," however, is made actual for those who believe. In 1 John 4:10, the fact that God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," is shown to be the great expression of God's love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another. In the Sept., Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 5:8; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Psalm 130:4; Ezekiel 44:27; Amos 8:14. ([Propitiation - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

**Hilasmos** - 2x in NT and 5x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins.

Leviticus 25:9 'You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day (**yom**) of **atonement** (Hebrew = **kippur** [Yom Kippur - 10th day of 7th month, Tishri]; Lxx = hilasmos) you shall sound a horn all through your land.

Numbers 5:8 'But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong must go to the LORD for the priest, besides the ram of **atonement** (Hebrew = **kippur**; Lxx = hilasmos), by which atonement (Hebrew = kaphar = to cover over, make propitiation; Lxx = exilaskomai = to propitiate) is made for him.

Psalm 130:4 But there is **forgiveness** (Hebrew = selichah = forgiveness - 3x in OT; Lxx = hilasmos) with You, That You may be feared.

Ezekiel 44:27 "On the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his **sin offering** (Hebrew = chattath = sin offering; Lxx = hilasmos)," declares the Lord GOD.

Amos 8:14 "As for those who swear by the **guilt** (Hebrew = ashmah; Lxx = hilasmos) of Samaria, Who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,' They will fall and not rise again."

**Kenneth Wuest** adds this note on **hilasmos** "is from the verb hilaskomai. In pagan usage it meant "to appease, to conciliate to one's self, to make a god propitious to one." Herodotus says, "The Parians, having propitiated Themistocles with gifts, escaped the visits of the army." However, when the word comes over into New Testament usage, its meaning is radically changed. Canon Westcott says: "The scriptural conception of the verb is not that of appeasing one who is angry with a personal feeling against the offender; but of altering the character of that which, from without, occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship. Such phrases as 'propitiating God,' and 'God being reconciled' are foreign to the language of the New Testament." That from without which occasioned the alienation between God and man, was sin. It was the guilt of sin that separated man from his creator. Our Lord on the Cross assumed that guilt and paid the penalty in His own blood, and thus removed the cause of alienation. Now a holy and righteous God can bestow mercy upon a believing sinner on the basis of justice satisfied. Our Lord provided a satisfaction for the demands of the broken law. That satisfaction is the hilasmos. The Greek has it, "He Himself is a satisfaction." The intensive pronoun is used. The point is that the Old Testament priest offered an animal sacrifice, but not himself as the sacrifice. This wonderful New Testament Priest is both the Priest and the Sacrifice. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Steven Cole** says that **hilasmos** "was used in ancient pagan writings to refer to the appeasing of an angry god, usually by a sacrifice or offering. If you had done something to make one of the gods mad, you had to do something to placate him and get in his good graces. Because of the negative connotations of this idea, some scholars argue that the word does not focus on God's wrath, but rather on man's sins. Thus they translate the word "expiation," which means to blot out the guilt of our sins by making atonement. While we should reject any idea of God being angry in a capricious human sense, we cannot do away with the biblical concept of His wrath, which is His settled hatred of and opposition to all sin. The difference between the pagan and the biblical concepts is that in the Bible, it is never man that takes the initiative to placate God. Rather, God took the initiative to satisfy His own wrath so that His love may now be shown to the guilty sinner. Rather than man piling up good works or sacrifices to placate God's wrath, the Bible says that God did what all our good works or efforts could never do. He sent His own Son as the righteous substitute to bear His wrath on the cross. John Stott (The Epistles of John [Eerdmans], p. 88) aptly defines propitiation as "an appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God." All that we can do is trust Christ's sacrifice on our



behalf. It is all of God's grace. ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**Barclay** - John goes on to say that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. The word **ishilasmōs**. This is a more difficult picture for us fully to grasp. The picture of the advocate is universal for all men have experience of a friend coming to their aid; but the picture in propitiation is from sacrifice and is more natural to the Jewish mind than to ours. To understand it we must get at the basic ideas behind it. The great aim of all religion is fellowship with God, to know him as friend and to enter with joy, and not fear, into his presence. It therefore follows that the supreme problem of religion is sin, for it is sin that interrupts fellowship with God. It is to meet that problem that all sacrifice arises. By sacrifice fellowship with God is restored. So the Jews offered, night and morning, the sin-offering in the Temple. That was the offering, not for any particular sin but for man as a sinner; and so long as the Temple lasted it was made to God in the morning and in the evening. The Jews also offered their trespass-offerings to God; these were the offerings for particular sins. The Jews had their Day, of Atonement, whose ritual was designed to atone for all sins, known and unknown. It is with that background that we must come at this picture of propitiation. ([Click to read Barclay's lengthy discussion under the title "JESUS CHRIST, THE PROPITIATION"](#))

**For our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world**- John is not teaching universalism, all the world will be saved. See the discussion below regarding the extent of the atonement (limited or unlimited). John uses the phrase "**our sins**" thus identifying himself with his readers.

**Vincent** - "The propitiation is as wide as the sin" (Bengel). If men do not experience its benefit, the fault is not in its efficacy.

**ESV Study Bible** comments that the phrase "**for those (sins) of the whole world**" - "does not mean that every person will be saved, for John is clear that forgiveness of sins comes only to those who repent and believe the gospel (see 1Jn 2:4, 23; 3:10; 5:12; cf. John 3:18; 5:24).

**Henry Morris** holds to the following view on the atonement "The value of Christ's blood was infinite, sufficient to cover all the sins of all the men and women of every age of history. The fact that it is efficacious unto eternal salvation only for the elect (a term that includes all and only those who believe on Him) is no argument that its value was thereby limited. ([Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

**W A Criswell** who holds to unlimited atonement writes that "The universal extent of the atonement of Christ is nowhere clearer than here (1Jn 2:2, cf. John 1:29), but this does not guarantee that everyone's sin is automatically forgiven. Christ's work applies only to those who believe in Him (cf. 1Jn 4:15; John 5:24).

**Middletown Bible Church** has an article in support of unlimited atonement. ([Reformed Theology, Limited Atonement](#))

Other notable conservative evangelicals (**John MacArthur** [[Doctrine of Actual Atonement](#); [The Atonement- Real or Potential](#)] , **John Piper** [[TULIP - Limited Atonement](#)] , **Wayne Grudem** [[Limited Atonement](#), [Mp3 Lecture - scroll down to Chapter 27 - 4 lectures with lesson outlines](#)], et al) hold to **limited atonement** (Grudem calls it "particular redemption"). Clearly this is a controversial, potentially divisive doctrine. I have studied this topic and must confess that I have previously favored the unlimited atonement view, but I can see the logic of the arguments posited to support the limited atonement view. With that said, it is beyond the scope of this short note to go into a detailed discussion of "the extent of the atonement" - limited or unlimited.

**Dr Wayne Grudem** (who favors limited atonement - see links in preceding paragraph) gives us a fair and balanced summary of the two views of the extent of atonement (consult his book for the pros and cons of both views)

One of the differences between Reformed theologians and other Catholic and Protestant theologians has been the question of the extent of the atonement. The question may be put this way: when Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved?

Non-Reformed people argue that the gospel offer in Scripture is repeatedly made to all people, and for this offer to be genuine, the payment for sins must have already been made and must be actually available for all people. They also say that if the people whose sins Christ paid for are limited, then the free offer of the gospel also is limited, and the offer of the gospel cannot be made to all mankind without exception.

On the other hand, Reformed people argue that if Christ's death actually paid for the sins of every person who ever lived, then there is no penalty left for anyone to pay, and it necessarily follows that all people will be saved, without exception ([Systematic Theology- An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine- online](#) - scroll down to page 517)

While the **Doctrine of the Atonement (limited or unlimited)** will likely continue to be disputed among Biblically sound believers (and especially theologians) on both sides until Jesus returns, Grudem does us a service by emphasizing the points regarding the Atonement on which we can all agree...



1. Not all will be saved.

2. A free offer of the Gospel can rightly be made to every person ever born. It is completely true that "whoever will" may come to Christ for salvation, and no one who comes to Him will be turned away. This free offer of the Gospel is extended in good faith to every person.

3. All agree that Christ's death in itself, because He is the infinite Son of God, has infinite merit and is in itself sufficient to pay the penalty of the sins of as many or as few as the Father and the Son decreed. The question is not about the intrinsic merits of Christ's sufferings and death, but about the number of people for whom the Father and the Son thought Christ's death to be sufficient payment at the time Christ died. ([Scroll down to page 520](#))

## 1 John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [NASB: Lockman](#)

**Greek:** Kai en touto ginokomen (1PPAI) hoti egnokamen (1PRAI) auton, ean tas entolas autou teromen. (1PPAS)

**Amplified:** And this is how we may discern [daily, by experience] that we are coming to know Him [to perceive, recognize, understand, and become better acquainted with Him]: if we keep (bear in mind, observe, practice) His teachings (precepts, commandments). ([Lockman](#))

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

**KJV:** And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

**NIV:** We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

**NLT:** And how can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments.

**Phillips:** It is only when we obey God's laws that we can be quite sure that we really know him.

**Wuest:** And in this we know experientially that we have come to know Him experientially and are in that state at present, if we are continually having a solicitous, watchful care in safeguarding His precepts by obeying them. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** and in this we know that we have known him, if his commands we may keep;

- **By this we:** 1Jn 2:4-6 3:14,19 1Jn 4:13 5:19
- **We know:** Isa 53:11 Jn 17:3 2Co 4:6
- **If we:** 1Jn 3:22,23 5:3 Ps 119:6,32 Lk 6:46 Jn 14:15,21-24 Jn 15:10,14 1Th 4:1,2 Heb 5:9 Rev 22:14
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HOW TO KNOW YOU KNOW HIM

**And (kai)** - For some reason the NAS 1995 omitted translation of this Greek word kai (which the old NAS 1977 retained!). Hiebert observes that by using this "and" John "connects this paragraph (1Jn 2:3-6) with the preceding discussion concerning fellowship. John presented two closely related signs that show that fellowship is being maintained." (Ibid)

**J Ligon Duncan**, a highly respected expositor, introduces his comments on 1Jn 2:3-6 with these words - "Now, from dealing with sin then, and false teaching about sin, and dealing with the proper view of sin in the Christian life, he moves to another subject. And his subject is "How one can know that one knows God? How can you be assured that you know God? How can you be assured that you are a Christian?" And in this section that begins with 1Jn 2:3, he lays out **three tests for knowing that you are a Christian**: one of them is moral; one of them is relational; and one of them is doctrinal....How is it that a person comes to know that he or she really knows the Living God, really has a saving relationship, really has a fellowship knowledge of the Living God--doesn't just know things about Him but knows Him--is in relationship with Him? That's the question that John is asking here. And the tests that he gives are designed to help you come to a firm and certain answer to that question, to strip away any self-deception that may be in your heart, and to open your eyes to see the truth, to find out whether you don't know God or whether you do know Him.... he's not giving these so that we will begin judging the rest of our congregation as to how they stand with the Living God, but that we might look at ourselves and ask how we stand with the Living God. If we were to outline this passage today, 1Jn 2:3 would be his first expression of the test: **Do you keep God's commands?** There's the first test. 1Jn 2:4 would be a negative example of someone who claims to

know God but who doesn't keep His commands. It would be a negative example. It would be an example of how you know that you don't know God: If you claim to know Him and don't keep His commands. The third part of this passage you'll find in 1Jn 2:5. There again is another way in which John says the same thing that he's just said in 1Jn 2:3: that is, that we know we know God when love to God comes to fruition in obeying His word. And so, he's getting at the same truth again in a different way in 1Jn 2:5. And then, the fourth part of this passage you'll find in 1Jn 2:6, and again, it's another negative example. It's an example of someone who says, "Oh, I abide in Christ. I abide in God. I'm resting in Him. I'm united to Him." But this person isn't living the way that Jesus lived. And so again, he says, "If you are abiding in Him, then you will live in the way that Jesus lived," that is, in accordance with God's word... "You know you know God if you obey His word." Secondly, he says, "You know that you know God if you love obeying His word." Thirdly, he says, "You know you know God if you're abiding in Him and your abiding leads you to live a godly life, to live in a way that Christ lived." ([If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments](#))

**By this** - Statements like this should always prompt us to pause and ponder interrogating with questions like "What is 'this'?" This genre of question will force us to examine the context, going either backwards or forwards. After examining the context, it becomes obvious that this specific use of "by this" is pointing forwards, to what follows. (For more discussion on "by this" see Harris' [Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 2:3-11](#) )

**Marvin Vincent** has this to say of '**by this**' - The expression points to what follows, "if we keep His commandments," yet with a covert reference to that idea as generally implied in the previous words concerning fellowship with God and walking in the light.

As an aside, 12 of 41 uses of the phrase "**by this**" in the entire Bible (NAS) are by **John** in this epistle - 1John 2:3, 5; 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 4:2, 6, 9, 13, 17; 5:2.

**William Barclay** - This passage (1Jn 2:3-6) deals in phrases and thoughts which were very familiar to the ancient world. It talked much about **knowing God** and about being in God. It is important that we should see wherein the difference lay between the pagan world in all its greatness and Judaism and Christianity. To **know God**, to abide in God, to have fellowship with God has always been the quest of the human spirit, for Augustine was right when he said that God had made men for himself and that they were restless until they found their rest in Him. We may say that in the ancient world there were three lines of thought in regard to knowing God. ([Barclay's interesting discussion under the title "THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD"](#))

**Kruse** ([ibid](#)) writes that in this next section 1Jn 2:3-11 John refutes the claims by those who say they **know God while not keeping His commandments**. John begins with a positive statement of assurance true believers can have that they know God, the sign being that they keep His commandments.

**We know** ([1097](#)) (**ginosko**) means to know or to "perceive by experience, from day to day; distinguished from oida/eido we know, expressing absolute, immediate knowledge of a fact once for all. (Compare 1John 3:2-note which uses oida/eido in the phrase "we **know** that when He appears"). This first "**know**" is in the **present tense** which describes continuous action, pointing "to inner progressive knowledge or assurance that believers have entered into a state of knowing Him." (Hiebert)

Notice that the second use of **ginosko** in this passage is perfect tense expressing a knowing that is permanent. **Vine** brings out this distinction by paraphrasing it as "hereby we constantly have the experience of knowing that we have come to know Him." (Collected writings of W. E. Vine) **Wuest** paraphrases it this way "And in this we **know** experientially that we have come to **know** Him experientially and are in that state at present, if we are continually having a solicitous, watchful care in safeguarding His precepts by obeying them.." ([Wuest](#))

**Ginosko** - Used 25 times in this epistle clearly a **key word** (this would make a good "word study" for 1 John - record what you come to "know" about "know"! You will be blessed! Isa 55:11) = 1 John 2:3 (2x), 1Jn 2:4, 5, 13, 14 (2x), 1Jn 2:18, 29; 1Jn 3:1 (2x) 1Jn 3:6, 16, 19, 20, 24; 4:2, 6 (2x) 1Jn 4:7, 8, 13, 16; 5:2, 20;

**Cole** notes that "There is a vast difference between knowing about a person and knowing that person. I may know many things about President Bush, by reading the news or watching TV. But I do not know him personally. I've never met him or spent any time with him. In the same way, you may know a lot about God, but if you have not entered into a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ, you do not know God personally." ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

**Paul** speaks of the wonderful moment when his general (and great) knowledge of God, was superseded by the intimate, personal knowledge of Jesus as His Messiah and Lord...

Phil 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing** (the noun gnosis - more literally it reads "the knowledge" of) Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ

**THOUGHT** - Question: Do you know Jesus like Paul knew Him or do you just know about Him?

**Kruse** remarks that "To 'know' God is a virtually universal religious longing. Brown points out that in the Greek classical period knowledge of God was sought through the exercise of human reason, but in the Hellenistic period people sought this knowledge through the mystery religions, while in Israel the knowledge of God was derived from revelation. ([The Letters of John - Pillar New Testament Commentary](#))

**We have come to know** - These 5 English words are the translation of the same Greek verb **ginosko**, but here it is in the **perfect tense**, which describes a past completed action with ongoing results or effects. The idea is we "Know we that we have come to know and still know Him." (A T Robertson) In short, as alluded to earlier, the perfect tense speaks of permanence of this experiential knowledge. Once we have truly come to know Jesus and be known by Him, we are eternally safe!

**Burge** - Knowledge for John is experiential, not speculative and abstract. It reveals itself in present activity, namely, the continuing reflex to obey God. Therefore, people who make some claim that they know God must have evidence in their daily lives that they are conforming their decision-making to his will. (The NIV Application Commentary: Letters of John).

**Wuest** adds that the **perfect tense** conveys the thought that "if we are keeping His commandments (see discussion below), we know that we have in time past come to know Him with the present result that that state of knowing Him is true of us in the present time. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Harris** adds that the **perfect tense** here is "resultative perfect, which involves both past completed action and existing results, but emphasizes the existing results. It is clear in any case that the author is interested in reassuring those whom he considers to be believers already: they came to know God at some time in the past, and now the author is writing to reassure them of the reality of that (resulting) relationship." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 2:3-11](#))

In His great prayer, Jesus associated **knowing** God and Himself with eternal life (salvation)...

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may **know** (**ginosko** in the **present tense**) Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.

**Comment:** Notice that Jesus is saying in essence that Christianity is not just about knowing orthodox doctrines or following good moral precepts, but at its very core is knowledge of a Person. It is knowing God personally through Jesus Christ, Who explained (Jn 1:18 where explained = *exegeomai* = to lead out, to unfold, to provide detailed information in a systematic manner, giving us English "exegesis" = unfolding interpretation through teaching) the Father to us (cf Jn 14:7, 9, 10, 11, 12:45, Col 1:15, Heb 1:3)

**David Smith** "The apostle foresees the question which may be raised: 'How can I be assured that Christ is all this to me—my Propitiation, my Advocate? And how can I be assured that I have an abiding interest in Him?' He answers: (1) We attain to personal and conscious acquaintance with Christ by observance of His commandments (1Jn 2:3-5a); (2) we attain to assurance of abiding union with Him by 'walking even as He walked' (1Jn 2:5-6). The principle is that it is not enough to understand the theory; we must put it into practice. E.g., what makes an artist? Not merely learning the rules of perspective and mixture of colors, but actually putting one's hand to brush and canvas. First attempts may be unsuccessful, but skill comes by patient practice. Compare Rembrandt's advice to his pupil Hoogstraten, 'Try to put well in practice what you already know; and in doing so you will, in good time, discover the hidden things which you inquire about.' To know about Christ, to understand the doctrine of His person and work is mere theory; we get to know Him and to know that we know Him by practice of His precepts." ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

## THE SIGN OF OBEDIENCE

**If** (Third class [Conditional statement](#) which means potential action)- This is an important **"if!"** We don't want to **"iffy"** about our eternal destination! John is introducing a clear marker by which one can discern whether or not they are genuinely saved. What is it? Read on.

**Harris** on **"if"** = The implication of this is that the author by the use of this construction is assuming that the readers as genuine believers **will indeed keep God's commandments**, but he does not state this as an absolute fact. ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 2:3-11](#))

**Colin Kruse** subtitles 1John 2:3-11 "Claims to know God tested by obedience."

**We keep His commandments** - If we observe, practice or obey His commandments, precepts, teachings, Word. Notice that even this great Apostle includes himself in this "spiritual test!" John's straightforward answer to the question posed above is that we can know we are genuinely saved, that we know Christ and He knows us (Mt 7:23-note), by examining our spiritual walk -- is it a walk of obedience to God's Word ("commandments")? The verb **"keep"** is in the **present tense** which indicates that the general direction of

our life is toward obedience, not disobedience. John is not calling for **perfection**, having already dealt with those who say they are without sin (1Jn 1:8, 10-note). However, John is calling for an assessment of our life's **direction**!

Notice that the "if" introduces a conditional statement ([Conditional statements](#)), implying that this may not be true of some who vociferously claim "I know God!" with their lips yet deny Him with their lives (and lifestyle)!

I like the way **J B Phillips** paraphrases this passage "It is only when we obey God's laws that we can be quite sure that we really know Him."

**C. H. Dodd** wrote that "To know God is to experience His love in Christ, and to return that love in obedience."

**J Ligon Duncan** clarifies what John **IS NOT TEACHING** and what he **IS TEACHING** in this section: "John is **not** asking the question, 'How do we come to know God?' He's **not** saying, 'If you want to come to know God, here's how you do it: obey.' That's **not** the issue that John is dealing with: **how one is saved**. He's **not** dealing with how one is declared righteous before God; he's **not** dealing with how one receives the grace of God; he's **not** saying, 'If you want to receive God's grace, obey.' 'If you want to be justified, obey.' He's **not** saying, 'If you want to be saved, obey.' He's **not** saying, 'If you want to know God, well, then obey.' He's saying something different. He's **not** saying, 'If you want to know God, then obey.' He is saying, 'Here's how you **know that you know** God: it's manifested in the way that you live; it's manifested in your obedience.' So, it's very important for us to note that John is not saying that **we know God** by keeping His commandments. Rather, he is saying, '**We know that we know God** by keeping His commandments.' Those are two, distinct questions, and we need to keep them distinct. That is, **John is not teaching salvation by obedience**, nor is he even teaching assurance by obedience; but John is teaching that salvation is evidenced by obedience, and, in turn, that obedience contributes to our assurance....He's trying to give us a diagnostic to let us know how we know, or to know that we know, the Living God. So, in verse 3, he says that 'we know that we know God in our desiring to keep and keeping God's commandments.' He's concerned to supply tests that will distinguish those who simply claim to be Christians from those who claim to be Christians and who really are Christians. And test #1 is very simple: Do you obey God's word. Look at this: 'We know that we know God by keeping His commandments.' Do you keep God's commandments? There's test #1. Is the Bible your final rule for faith and practice? He's saying here that 'one way grace is evidenced in the life of a person who claims to be a Christian is in obedience.' The Nobel Prize-nominated Christian, Henry Shafer, who is a famous chemist who teaches at the University of Georgia, tells the story of how he came to reject Christianity. He had been raised in a nominally Christian home, attending a mainline Presbyterian church, and one day in the midst of a discussion in the kitchen, he made a point to his father about an ethical question by saying, 'Look, Dad, the Bible says such and such.' And His dad responded by saying, 'I know what the Bible says; it's wrong.' Henry Shafer said, at that moment he decided that Christianity must be bunk, because his dad claimed to be a Christian and yet rejected the teaching of the Bible. In God's mercy, God did a work of grace in Henry Shafer's heart and brought him to saving faith in Christ later on. And then, at that time, he realized that it wasn't that Christianity was bunk; it was that his father's profession of faith was bunk. You see, if you believe the Living God, you will believe His word; you will trust His word; you will acknowledge it as your final rule of faith and practice. And you'll not just do it in the abstract; you'll do it where it hurts; you'll do it where it's hard to obey....John is **not** saying that Christians are able to keep the law perfectly...His point is that fellowship knowledge of God--true knowledge of God, the knowledge of God in which we share a saving relationship with Him--always expresses itself in a transformed life; it never leaves us unchanged. To know Him changes everything; it changes us from the inside out, and one of the ways that it changes us is it makes us love to obey His word, to believe His word, to follow His word.'" ([If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments](#))

**Keep** (5083) (**tereo** from **teros** = a guard or warden) means to keep an eye on, to keep something in view, to hold firmly, to attend carefully or to watch over (Jesus' ask His Father for His watchful care for His disciples in Jn 17:11). **Tereo** speaks of guarding something which is in one's possession. It means to watch as one would some precious thing. The idea is to observe attentively, to heed, to keep watch over and to retain in custody.

**Cole** "to **keep** His commandments implies diligence and effort. The word '**keep**' was used of a sentry walking his post. It implies that the enemy is attempting to invade and dominate your life with temptations that will destroy you. To resist him, you must be vigilant so as to obey the commandments that Jesus has given. A faithful sentry is not laid back. He is alert and diligent." ([1 John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness](#))

As noted above, **tereo** is in the **present tense** which describes continuous action - the idea is "keep on keeping on!" "It is the habitual, moment by moment safeguarding of the Word by the saint lest he violate its precepts." ([Wuest](#)) Beloved, this is the ground of assurance. Little wonder then, that when we wander from truth and willfully, rebelliously chose disobedience over obedience, the blessed fruit of assurance of our salvation begins to wither like a vine that is not watered!

**THOUGHT** - Are you struggling with doubts about your eternal security? It may be time for an obedience "check up!" Spirit enabled obedience will go a long way to restoring your inner assurance that you are eternally secure!

### Related Resources:

- [Eternal security - is it biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is eternal security a "license" to sin? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Did Old Testament believers have eternal security? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Perseverance of the Saints - is it biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)

As **Hiebert** says "in contradiction to the Gnostics, (John) maintained that no professed knowledge of God is valid if it does not have moral consequences....The one who has been brought into a saving relationship with God finds within (himself) a growing love for and desire to obey His commandments." (Ibid)

**Wuest** says that **tereo** "does not merely speak of the act of obeying His commands, but of a solicitous (meticulously careful, concerned) desire that we do not disobey any of them... It is that holy fear of disobeying God ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**THOUGHT** - Have you lost that "holy fear" of sin (note how this fear impacted Job - Job 1:1)? If you are playing with sin as a believer, don't be surprised if you find that you have lost that holy fear that once burned brightly when you were first saved from the guttermost to the uttermost! You might want to read, memorize, meditate on and pray Rev 2:4-5+!

### Related Resources:

- Fear of the Lord
- Proverbs 1:7 Commentary

Listen to how **Ralph Wardlaw** describes the holy fear every follower of Christ should cultivate, a fear that motivates a Spirit enabled "keeping of the commandments". First note that Wardlaw is commenting on Pr 28:14 which says...

How blessed is the man who **fears** always, But he who **hardens** his heart will fall into calamity.

**Wardlaw** then offers us these timeless comments "THERE are, in Scripture, two kinds of fear. In this verse, fear is associated with happiness:—elsewhere we find it associated with torment.\* Such passages are in perfect harmony. The more, indeed, there is of the "love" that "casteth out fear"—the fear that "hath torment," the more there will be of the fear in the verse before us. The fear of a child, and the fear of a slave, are two very different principles. The former is the product of love, and is ever proportionate to love. It is affectionate fear. We fear to displease one whose love is the spring to us of our purest and sweetest enjoyment. The child loves his father, and delights in his father's love to him. He cannot bear his frown. The very thought of his displeasure brings the tear to his eye.—This is the kind of fear which the child of God feels and cherishes toward his heavenly Father. He loves Him, he venerates Him. He finds his happiness in His smile. He dreads to offend Him. His frown is the death of his joy. This is the fear of God which His word inculcates—the religious principle. It is here contrasted with "hardening the heart." It is therefore the gracious fear of a subdued and softened spirit,—the fear of love,—reverence for God,—fear of even His fatherly rebukes and corrections. It is self-distrust. It is tenderness of conscience. It is vigilance against temptation. It is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness, in the admonition—"Be not high-minded, but fear." It is "taking heed lest we fall." It is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection that timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Saviour. And these the child of God will feel and exercise the more, the more he rises above the enfeebling, disheartening, distressing influence of the "fear which hath torment." To "harden the heart," is to put away the fear of God; to be self-confident and presumptuous—unawed by threatenings—unsoftened by entreaties;—neither breaking under the one nor melting under the other. Of the man who thus "hardens" himself, final and irretrievable "mischief" must be the inevitable portion. On the contrary—"Happy is the man that feareth alway." Wherein consists his happiness? This fear keeps him from sin; produces simplicity of dependence upon God; imparts the stability of peace,—a peace that passeth all understanding; maintains consistency of conduct; and thus gives growing evidence of grace in the heart and of the hope being well-founded—a hope that "maketh not ashamed,"—of "glory and honour and immortality." ([Lectures on the Book of Proverbs](#))

**A T Robertson** comments that "The Gnostics boasted of their superior knowledge of Christ, and John here challenges their boast by an appeal to experimental knowledge of Christ which is shown by keeping His (Christ's) commandments (a) thoroughly Johannine



phrase."

If you struggle with the doctrine of eternal security, take some time today and study John's uses of **tereo** which frequently are used in the description of a genuine follower of Christ. Note that TEREO is translated continue(1), guard(1), guards(1), heed(2), heeds(1), held in custody(1), keep(27), keep watch over(1), keeping(1), keeping guard over(1), keeps(9), kept(12), kept in custody(3), observe(3), preserve(1), preserved(1), reserved(4), watching over(1).

- Jn 8:51,55, Jn 14:15, Jn 14:21, Jn 14:23, 24, Jn 15:10, 20, Jn 17:6],
- 1Jn 2:3, 4, 1Jn 3:22, 24, 1Jn 5:2, 1Jn 5:3, 6 in the Revelation
- Rev 1:3, Rev 2:26, Rev 3:3, Rev 3:8, Rev 3:10, Rev 12:17, Rev 14:12, Rev 22:7

From John's frequent usage of **tereo**, it is clear that this is a very important word in his "salvation vocabulary." Are you keeping Jesus' commands? His words? I'm not talking about a legalistic keeping of them, but a Spirit enabled keeping of them, fighting off the temptations of the flesh. Sure, you will fall, but that's why John reminds us as "little children" that we have an Advocate Who is ready to intervene with the Father. As discussed earlier, John is not speaking of **perfection** but of the **direction** of our spiritual walk. Which way are you heading? Don't be deceived that you once prayed a prayer and have a "fire insurance policy!" When you truly receive Jesus, you receive a Person, a new life, a new desire, a new direction (cf 2Cor 5:17-note). If this has not been your experience, you need to have a talk with your local pastor.

Jesus uses **tereo** in his "job description" of a genuine Christ follower (disciple) in Mt 28:20, where **tereo** "does not merely speak of the act of obeying His commands, but of a solicitous desire that we do not disobey any of them but on the other hand, that we obey them perfectly (**Ed**: Enabled by the Spirit this should be our goal, but in this life it will never be our attainment)." [Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#)

**Commandments** (1785)(**entole** from **en** = in, upon + **téllo** = accomplish, charge, command) - **Entole** refers to some type of demand or requirement. A general injunction, charge, precept of moral and religious nature. Of the 67 uses, all but three (Lk 15:29; Col 4:10; Titus 1:14) refer specifically to divine commandments.

**Entole** in the plural usually refers to God's commandments (Mt 5:19 and most of the uses in the Gospels - see below) but, as determined by the context, singular usages can also refer to a divine directive. Keeping God's commandments is the way we show that we love Him (we can say it, but our actions need to authenticate our words. (Jn 14:15, 21, 1Jn 2:3).

**Entole** is found 14x in the same passage as agape, **love**. (e.g., **love one another** is a repeated commandment - Jn 13:34 = described as a "new commandment", Jn 15:12, 1Jn 3:23, 2Jn 1:5). God's commandments "flush out" sin so to speak, showing the heinous, destructive nature of sin (See Ro 7:8, 9, 11, 13) **Entole** sometimes refers to commandments from men (not God) (Titus 1:14) Entole can sometimes mean an order authorizing a specific action (Jn 11:57).

**Ralph Martin** - The word commandment (**entole**) is featured prominently in both 1 John and 2 John (1 Jn 2:3, 4, 7, 8; 1Jn 3:22, 23, 24; 1Jn 4:21; 1Jn 5:2-3; 2 Jn 4, 5, 6), and in every case it appears that the commandments of God rather than Jesus are intended (see esp. 1 Jn 5:2-3; 2 Jn 4). John teaches that those who truly know God keep his commandments (1 Jn 2:3-4). (Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments).

**Commandment** (Webster) - a law, edict, or statute; authoritative directive; a mandate; an order or injunction given by authority; charge; precept. a divine command, esp. one of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. In the Bible a commandment is a prescription or requirement, usually from God; most often a reference to God's will as revealed in the laws of the Pentateuch. In the Bible commandment (entole) refers to orders or adjurations (solemn charging on oath or under the penalty of a curse) given by authorities. The plural predominantly refers to Mosaic laws.

**Precept** (Webster's 1828) - In a general sense, any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action; but applied particularly to commands respecting moral conduct. The ten commandments are so many precepts for the regulation of our moral conduct.

**Green** - There are sixteen occurrences of entole in the synoptic Gospels: six in Matthew, six in Mark and four in Luke. Eleven are found in just three passages: (1) the debate over ritual defilement (Mk 7:1-23 par. Mt 15:1-20, specifically Mk 7:8-13 and Mt 15:3-6); (2) the question of a rich man to Jesus (Mk 10:17-22 par. Mt 19:16-22 par. Lk 18:18-23; cf. Lk 10:25-28); (3) the question about the "first," or "great," commandment (Mk 12:28-34 par. Mt 22:34-40; cf. Lk 10:25-28)....Of the ten occurrences of the noun **entole** in John's Gospel, four refer to a "command" (Jn 10:18; 12:49-50) or "commands" (Jn 15:10b) given to Jesus by God the Father (cf. the use of the verb entellomai in 14:31). Five occurrences refer to a "command" (Jn 13:34; 15:12) or "commands" (Jn 14:15, 21; 15:10a) given by Jesus to his disciples (cf. the use of the verb in 15:14, 17). One occurrence refers to "orders" given by the Pharisees to inform them of Jesus' whereabouts (Jn 11:57). Nowhere in John is entole used to refer to the "commandments" of the Hebrew



Scriptures (the verb entellomai is so used only in John 8:5, a passage not originally a part of John's Gospel). The contrast in the use of "commandment" between the Synoptics and John could hardly be more striking. (Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels).

**Friberg** (Summary) - (1) of the Old Testament law commandment, precept, ordinance (Lk 23:56); (2) of official commands edict, decree, order (Jn 11:57); (3) of authoritative but not official directions order, command (Lk 15:29)

**Vine - Entole** denotes, in general, "an injunction, charge, precept, commandment." It is the most frequent term, and is used of moral and religious precepts, e.g., Matt. 5:19;

**MacArthur** notes that in 1Jn 2:3 **entole** "refers not to the Mosaic law, but to the precepts and directives of Christ (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). But of course the moral and spiritual precepts the Lord taught were consistent with those revealed to Moses (cf. Matt. 5:17-18; John 5:46), all reflective of God's immutable nature. (1, 2, 3 John : MacArthur NT Commentary).

**TDNT - entole outside the NT. (1). entole** in the General Usage of the Greek and Hellenistic World. The meaning is "command," "commission," a. as the command of a king or official, b. as the instruction of a teacher, c. as a commission, and d. as authorization. **(2).** The Specifically Religious Reference to the entolai of the Law in the LXX and Hellenistic Judaism. The term acquires a solemn religious sense in the LXX (Hebrew mostly miswa, sometimes piquddim) when used for specific requirements of the law. Josephus and Philo, however, rarely use it in this sense, preferring nomos or nomoi. **(3).** The Stoic Truncation of the entole Concept in Philo. Philo avoids the term because he finds it too official and historical. He is less concerned with the content of the law than with its ethical substance and its agreement with natural or cosmic law. Like the Stoics, he links entole with a lower form of morality. The voluntary act is higher than the commanded act. Commands are given only to the earthly Adam. The true sage knows and practices virtue without them. Commands may be tolerated only for the immature and uneducated.

- [Commandment - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Commandment - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Commandment - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)

**Entole** 67x in 61v - 13x in 1John - **NAS Usage:** command(2), commanded\*(1), commandment(38), commandments(23), instructions(1), orders(1), requirement(1).

Matthew 5:19-note "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these **commandments**, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 15:3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the **commandment** of God for the sake of your tradition?

Matthew 19:17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the **commandments**."

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great **commandment** in the Law?"

Matthew 22:38 "This is the great and foremost **commandment**.

Matthew 22:40 "On these two **commandments** depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Mark 7:8 "Neglecting the **commandment** of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

Mark 7:9 He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the **commandment** of God in order to keep your tradition.

Mark 10:5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this **commandment**.

Mark 10:19 "You know the **commandments**, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

Mark 12:28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What **commandment** is the foremost of all?"

Mark 12:31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other **commandment** greater than these."

Luke 1:6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the **commandments** and requirements of the Lord.

Luke 15:29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I

have never neglected a **command** of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

Luke 18:20 "You know the **commandments**, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

Luke 23:56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the **commandment**.

John 10:18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This **commandment** I received from My Father."

John 11:57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given **orders** that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

John 12:49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a **commandment** as to what to say and what to speak.

John 12:50 "I know that His **commandment** is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

John 13:34 "A new **commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My **commandments**.

John 14:21 "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."

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.

John 15:12 "This is My **commandment**, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Acts 17:15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a **command** for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

Romans 7:8-note But sin, taking opportunity through the **commandment**, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

Romans 7:9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the **commandment** came, sin became alive and I died;

Romans 7:11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the **commandment**, deceived me and through it killed me.

Romans 7:12 So then, the Law is holy, and the **commandment** is holy and righteous and good.

Romans 7:13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the **commandment** sin would become utterly sinful.

Romans 13:9-note For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other **commandment**, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

1 Corinthians 7:19+ Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the **commandments** of God.

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's **commandment**.

Ephesians 2:15-note by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of **commandments** contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

Ephesians 6:2-note HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first **commandment** with a promise),

Colossians 4:10-note Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received **instructions**; if he comes to you, welcome him);

1 Timothy 6:14 that you keep the **commandment** without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Titus 1:14-note not paying attention to Jewish myths and **commandments** of men who turn away from the truth.

Hebrews 7:5-note And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have **commandment** in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

Hebrews 7:16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical **requirement**, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

Hebrews 7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former **commandment** because of its weakness and uselessness

Hebrews 9:19-note For when every **commandment** had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law (at the inauguration of the "10 Commandments"), he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

2 Peter 2:21-note For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy **commandment** handed on to them.

2 Peter 3:2-note that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the **commandment** of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

1 John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His **commandments**.

**ESV Study Bible - Assurance of salvation** is possible (see 2 Pet 1:10+ - ESV Note = **Good Deeds** are evidence of and give assurance of salvation, though they are never the basis for it. Peter's wording does not imply that true followers of Christ can ever apostatize; those who do so were never really "called," "elected," or born again). First John gives numerous means of self-diagnosis (cf. 1John 1:7; 2:5; 3:14; 4:13; 5:2). **Here the test is ethical:** do professing Christians have a changed life and **keep** the Lord's commandments? **Obedience to God does not bring about justification (which comes by faith alone), but obedience as a pattern of life does give evidence that one has been born again. To know him involves a personal relationship that transforms practical behavior.** (Ed: "Amen or O my!") (SEE ALSO - [Obedience of faith](#) - Ro 1:5, Ro 16:26+)

1 John 2:4 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;

1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new **commandment** to you, but an old **commandment** which you have had from the beginning; the old **commandment** is the word which you have heard.

1 John 2:8 On the other hand, I am writing a new **commandment** to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

1 John 3:22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His **commandments** and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:23 This is His **commandment**, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He **commanded** us.

1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His **commandments** abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 4:21 And this **commandment** we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His **commandments**.

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His **commandments**; and His **commandments** are not burdensome.

2 John 1:4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received **commandment** to do from the Father.

2 John 1:5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new **commandment**, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

2 John 1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to His **commandments**. This is the **commandment**, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Revelation 12:17-[note](#) So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the **commandments** of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

**Tony Garland:** The phrase (**who keep the commandments**) is further restricted to the offspring who keep the commandments of God. This indicates that during the final half week **unbelieving** Jews are not the primary object of the dragon's warfare—for they, like unbelieving Gentiles, will take his mark and give him due worship (Rev. 13:15-18 cf. John 5:43). It is **believing** Jews elsewhere around the world that are now his target. ( )

**Comment:** Note the descriptive definition of a believer by John - those "who keep the commandments of God." He is not saying they keep them perfectly, for only one Man accomplished that feat! The verb keep (tereo) is a present participle indicating that the general "direction" of these individuals is toward obedience, so that keeping God's commandments is their lifestyle, their habitual practice. As I like to teach my young disciples, the authentic Christian life is about "direction" not "perfection" (until we are glorified of course!) The sad fact is that there are prominent names in evangelicalism today who teach one is saved by faith alone (which is 100% true) but that the new life in Christ and the new possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit does not necessarily influence one's behavior! In other words (they teach) one can go on sinning as their habitual practice and still claim to be a saint (holy, set apart) in the eyes of the Holy God! This is 100% false! And many of these individuals have doctorates of theology. We do well to remember that none of the apostles had doctorates and yet they were theologically accurate, because they had been with Jesus. For example, **Zane Hodges** even goes so far as to state that the list of sins in 1Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:19-21-note actually describe true believers, and that they will just forfeit their reward because of their sin (See "[Those Who Do Not Inherit the Kingdom](#)" See [also here](#) or [here](#)). Hodges even makes the incredible assertion that Paul was describing believers in Titus 1:16+ ([See refutation](#))! Do you think that sounds like a description of a genuine born again individual? Great caution is advised when reading [anything written by Zane Hodges](#). Sadly Hodges has authored the commentary sections of Hebrews, and 1-3 John in the otherwise excellent Bible Knowledge Commentary (BKC). [Caveat emptor](#)! I am thankful that in the BKC, Ronald Blue writing on James, sounds the clear warning that "Merely claiming to have faith is not enough. Genuine **faith** is evidenced by **works**....**Workless faith** is **worthless faith**." (BKC, Volume 2, Page 825)

**John Piper's Comments are pertinent** - I have referred several times to a contemporary movement of evangelicalism that offers assurance of salvation to professing Christians who go on living in sin. Who am I talking about? Here is an example. **Zane Hodges**, who teaches at Dallas Seminary, has written a book entitled "The Gospel Under Siege" (Redencion Viva, 1981) (**ED:** See a [critique](#) of this book. See also J V Miller's review of Hodges' book). His position is the very opposite of mine: (**Ed:** Hodges writes) "An insistence on the necessity or inevitability of works fundamentally undermines assurance" (p.13). That is, "if good works are really . . . an essential fruit of salvation," we cannot be sure of our eternal salvation (p. 9). Therefore, "works have nothing to do with determining a Christian's basic relationship to God." "There is not even a single place in the Pauline letters where he expresses doubt that his audience is composed of true Christians." (p. 95)." Apart from the fact that 2 Corinthians 13:5-note contradicts his last statement, **1 John remains an insuperable obstacle. His interpretation will not stand.** Consider for yourselves what he says concerning 1 John 3:14+ ("We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers."). Here assurance of passing out of death into life is the product of loving our fellow Christians. How will he escape it? He tries to escape it by saying that the verse has "no reference to conversion as such." He says that there is a sphere of light and a sphere of darkness within the Christian life. "If anyone does not love his brother he is out of touch with God. He is not living as a true disciple of his Master" (p. 63). But he is still a child of God because eternal security has nothing to do with whether you are a loving person or not." This will not stand scrutiny. The one other place where John uses the same Greek phrase ("We have passed from death to life") is John 5:24, where he says, "Truly, truly I say to you that the one who hears my word and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed from death into life." Therefore it is grasping at a straw to say that "passing from death to life" in 1 John 3:14+ refers to two states within Christian life. It plainly means:

passing from lostness to eternal life. I appeal to you, judge for yourselves, does John's assurance in 1 John 3:14+ come from loving the brothers or not? Bowing before the Word with you, Pastor John [Who Am I Talking About- Desiring God](#))

Revelation 14:12-[note](#) Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the **commandments** of God and their faith in Jesus.

**Comment:** Could John be any clearer? Here he links faith in Jesus with those who keep the commandments of God. Beloved, the only ones who can "keep the commandments of God" are those who possess a supernatural enabling power (the indwelling Spirit)!

**Tony Garland adds - Their faith is evident by their works—keeping God's commandments** (Luke 6:46; Jas 2:18-note). During this time, the woman who flees to the wilderness has offspring which "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). Here, the phrase denotes those who are not just of Israel (her offspring), but also Gentile **believers**: all the saints of the end.

**Entole** - 245 uses in 183v in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - 160x **entole** translates Hebrew **mitsvah** which is usually translated into English as command or commandments - Ge 26:5; Ex 12:17; 15:26; Ex 16:28; 24:12; Lev 4:13, 22, 27; 5:17; 6:2; 22:31; 26:3, 15; 27:34; Nu 15:22,31, 39-40; 36:13; Deut 4:2, 40; Dt 5:29, 31; 6:1-2, 17, 25; 7:9, 11; 8:1-2,6, 11; 10:13; 11:8, 13, 22, 27-28; 13:4, 18; 15:5; 16:12; Dt 17:19-20; 19:9; 26:13, 18; Dt 27:1, 10; 28:1, 13, 15, 45; 30:8, 10-11, 16; Josh 5:6; 22:3,5; Jdg 3:4; 1Sa 13:13; 1Kgs 2:3, 43; 3:14; 1Ki 8:58, 61; 9:4, 6; 11:11, 38; 13:21; 2Ki 17:13, 16, 19, 34, 37; 2Ki 18:6, 2Ki 18:36; 2Ki 21:8; 23:3; 1Chr 28:7-8; 29:19; 2Chr 7:19; 8:13-15; 12:1; 2Chr 14:4; 17:4; 2Chr 19:10; 2Chr 24:20-21;29:15, 25; 30:16; 34:31; 35:10, 15-16; Ezra 7:11; 9:10, 14; 10:3; Neh 1:5, 7, 9; Neh 9:13-14, 16, 29, 34; 10:29, 32; 11:23; 12:24, 45; 13:5; Ps 19:8; 78:7; 89:31; 103:18; Ps 111:7; Ps 112:1; Ps 119:4, 6, 10, 15, 19, 21, 32, 35, 40, 45, 47-48, 60, 63, 66, 69, 73, 78, 86-87, Ps 119:96, 98, Ps 119:100, 104, 110, 115, 127-128, 131, 134, 143, 151, 159, 166, 168, Ps 119:172-173, 176; Pr 2:1; 4:5; 6:23; 7:1-2; 10:8; 13:13; 15:5; 19:16; Eccl 8:5; 12:13; Isa 48:18; Jer 35:16, 18; Ezek 18:21; Da 3:12; 9:4-5; Mal 2:1, 4

**Wuest** comments that **entole** means "an order, command, charge, precept. The precepts (commandments) are those given by our Lord either personally while on earth or through His apostles in the New Testament Books. Thus, a solicitous (meticulously careful, concerned) guarding of the precepts of Christ, a consuming desire that they be honored, a passionate determination that they always be kept, is a proof gained from experience, that that person has come to an experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus and is at present in that state of knowing Him. This experiential knowledge is in contrast with and opposed to a mere theoretical knowledge of His Person. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**William Barclay** has an interesting comment - "Here was John's problem. In the Greek world, he was faced with people who saw God as part of an intellectual exercise and who could say 'I know God' without being conscious of any ethical obligation whatever. In the Greek world, he was faced with people who had had an emotional experience and who could say: 'I am in God and God is in me,' and yet who did not see God in terms of commandments at all. John is determined to lay it down quite unmistakably and without compromise that the only way in which we can show that we know God is by obedience to him, and the only way we can show that we have union with Christ is by imitation of him. Christianity is the religion which offers the greatest privilege and brings with it the greatest obligation. Intellectual effort and emotional experience are not neglected—far from it—but they must combine to produce moral action. ([Barclay](#))

**REALLY SURE!** **Steven Cole** gives a great illustration which emphasizes the importance of John's instruction on how to be REALLY SURE you are going to heaven...

Years ago, when I was candidating at my first church, we were staying in a house in a remote area of the Southern California mountains while the owners were away. We were having dinner at another home when we received a call informing us that an escaped convict had ditched his stolen car in the driveway of the house where we were staying and had set out on foot through the property. We decided to spend the night at the home where we had dinner.

The next morning, I called the sheriff to explain our situation and to ask if it was safe to take my pregnant wife back to the house. He assured me that it was **perfectly safe**. I said, "Fine, but I would like a sheriff to escort us into the house and to check some hiding places on the property, just to make **sure**." When we arrived at the property, there were three or four cars of officers wearing their bulletproof vests, loading their shotguns!

We later learned that the convict had made his way to another road, hitchhiked, and killed the driver who picked him up. The sheriff was **sure** that it was safe for us to go back to that house unarmed, but he wasn't **REALLY SURE!** When the safety of his

men was on the line, he wanted to be **REALLY SURE!**

There are some things in life that you want to be **REALLY SURE** about, because so much rides on the outcome. Your salvation is such an issue. You don't want to take risks about your eternal destiny. Since the Bible warns that many are deceived about this crucial matter (e.g., Mt 7:21, 22, 23), you especially need to know that you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. ([1 John 2:3-6 How to Know That You Know Him](#))

## **ASSURANCE OF YOUR SALVATION: HEAVEN ON EARTH!**

**John MacArthur** quotes the great Puritan writer **Thomas Brooks** words on assurance as being...

a reflex act of a gracious soul, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimental [experiential] discerning of a man's being in a state of grace ([From Brooks' preface "Touching the Nature of Assurance" - Page 316](#)) ...A good conscience hath sure confidence; he that hath it sits, Noah-like (**Ed:** having assurance is a believer's "ark" in the midst the world's ungodliness) in the midst of all combustions and distractions, [in] sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. A good conscience and a good confidence go together, where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all combustions (destructions, commotions and confusions. ([Page 323 in Brooks' treatise entitled "Heaven on Earth"](#))

**MacArthur** adds that...

Assurance causes believers to rejoice with the hymn writer, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!" To possess assurance is, in a sense, to experience heaven on earth. But sadly, as Brooks goes on to lament (**Ed:** I am expanding MacArthur's quote with the original words of Brooks)

Now this assurance is the beauty and top of a Christian's glory in this life. It is usually attended with the strongest joy, with the sweetest comforts, and with the greatest peace. It is a pearl that most want, a crown that few wear. His state is safe and happy, whose soul is adorned with grace, though he sees it not, though he knows it not. ([Page 316-317](#))

The fourth ground of my presenting this treatise to public view, is, that little well-grounded assurance that is to be found among most Christians. Every unsettled Christian is [Magor-missabib](#) (**Ed:** "affright from around," or "fear on every side" Jer 20:3), a terror to himself, yea, his life is a very hell; fears and doubts are his chiefest companions, and so he judges himself unfit and unworthy to live, and yet he is afraid to die; and verily this is the sad condition of most Christians. Most Christians living between fears and hopes, and hanging, as it were, between heaven and hell, sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them for ever; anon they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such or such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation; and so they are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there, &c. Now that these weak souls may be strengthened, that these unstable souls may be established, that these disconsolate souls may be comforted, &c., I have presented this tract to the world, not doubting but that if the Lord shall draw out their spirits to a serious perusal of it, they shall find, through the blessing of Jehovah, that it will contribute very much to their attaining of a full assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness, as also to the keeping and maintaining of that full and blessed assurance; which that it may, I shall follow it with my prayers. ([Page 314](#))

(**Ed:** Beloved if you are wrestling with assurance of your eternal destiny, this old work by Brooks can bring new vitality to your walk with Christ. The English is archaic, but overall you will understand the gist of Brooks' arguments. Take a weekend retreat and go to some quiet inn by yourself, with your Bible, your God and Brooks' book "Heaven on Earth" -- I think you will return to the "real world" on Monday renewed in your mind and spirit and soul!) ([Heaven on Earth by Thomas Brooks](#))

Assurance is not only a privilege; it is also a birthright that Christians possess as members of the body of Christ (Ro 5:1; 8:16; cf. Ps. 4:3; Jn 10:27-29; Phil. 1:6; 1Th. 1:4). Not having it, on the other hand, and thereby doubting one's salvation, produces uncertainty and fear that brings misery and despair. Though the assurance of salvation is part of redemption and vital to joy and comfort, God's Word teaches that it is possible to forfeit it, unless one pursues it. The apostle Peter wrote, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10; cf. Heb 10:22). Peter revealed that this certainty comes to those who pursue all the features of holiness with increasing diligence (2Pe 1:5-8). (Ibid)

### **Related Resource:**

- [How can I have assurance of my salvation?](#)
- [What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?](#)
- [If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved?](#)



- [What if I don't feel saved?](#)
- [Can a person believe in some sense but not be saved?](#)
- [How can I avoid being a doubting Thomas?](#)

**Steven Cole** has some sobering comments on this section...

God wants us to know that we know Him. John writes (1Jn 2:3) , "By this we know that we have come to know Him...." There is a difference between knowing and knowing that you know. It's easy to claim that you know Him, but it's also easy to be mistaken. John mentions (2:4) someone claiming, "I have come to know Him," but John bluntly says that this person "is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Since we're talking about eternal destiny, we don't want to be deceived on this crucial matter!

Because this subject is so important, it's not surprising that the enemy of our souls has created some major confusion about it in our day. There are many evangelicals (including the Greek professor under whom I first studied 1 John) who teach that if a person professes faith in Christ, he is saved eternally and should be assured of his salvation, even if his subsequent life demonstrates no fruit to back up his claim. They argue that if faith must be validated by any evidence, then it is not faith alone that saves.

The popular Four Spiritual Laws booklet also promotes the idea of giving immediate assurance of salvation to a person who prays to receive Christ. It uses 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." The logic goes, "You just prayed to receive Jesus, indicating that you believe in Him. Therefore, you should know that you have eternal life and that nothing can ever take it away from you." But the booklet ignores that "these things" refers to all that John has written, which includes three tests of genuine faith: obedience, love, and sound doctrine.

That view of instant assurance based on a person's profession of faith is foreign to what most of the godly men in church history have taught. I would argue that it is foreign to First John, Hebrews, James, and many other Scriptures. In the parable of the sower, those represented by the rocky soil that received the word with joy certainly would have claimed to believe. The same would be true of the thorny soil. But only the fourth type, the good soil, brought forth fruit with perseverance (Luke 8:5-15). That parable shows that if a person truly believes, he will endure trials and root out the weeds of the world. But it takes some time to determine this. How can we know if a recent profession of faith is genuine, saving faith? Look at the fruit that comes from it. But fruit takes time to grow.

In 2 Peter 1:10, the apostle exhorts us to **"be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; ..."** Why would anyone need to be diligent to make certain about this, if assurance is something that accompanies initial faith? Peter indicates that making certain about our calling and election is somewhat tied to our deeds subsequent to initial faith. He adds (2Pet 1:10-11), **"for as long as you practice these things [the qualities that he has just listed], you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."**

So God wants us not only to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ, but also to know that we know Him. But as many Scriptures indicate, this assurance is linked to how we live subsequent to our profession of faith. ([How to Know that You Know Him 1 John 2:3-6](#))

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**Basis of Assurance** - Rests on the Word of God (John 1:12), the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16), keeping God's Word (I John 2:5), walking like Christ (I John 2:6), not loving the world (I John 2:15), purification (I John 3:3), love for the brethren (I John 3:14), true love (I John 3:18-19), answered prayer (I John 3:22), overcoming the world (I John 5:4). - Source unknown

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**Three Groups** - Regarding salvation and assurance, there are three groups of people:

1. those who are secure but not sure;
2. those who are "sure" but not secure; and
3. those who are secure and sure.

Category one are conscientious believers in Christ who are saved but lack assurance. In category two are professing Christians who say, "Even though I'm living in sin, I'll make it. After all, 'once saved, always saved!'" The third group are born-again believers who enjoy a warm, secure relationship with Christ each day. The objective basis of our salvation is the finished work of God's Son on the cross. The subjective basis for our assurance is our believing the truth about Christ (I John 2:2, 4; 2:15; 5:1), loving the brethren (I John 3:14, 18, 19, 4:7-8), and obeying Christ's commandments (I John 2:3-5). - Source unknown

## JOHN PIPER SUMMARIZES JOHN'S EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH

I think God wants the totality of this book to have its impact on us. It is dominated by the concern to give **tests of life** or effects and evidences of the new birth. He gives at least eleven evidences that we are born again. We could probably boil them all down to **faith** and **love**. But for now let's let them stand the way he says them. Here they are:

### 1. Those who are born of God keep his commandments.

1 John 2:3-4-note: "By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

1 John 3:24-note: "Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him."

### 2. Those who are born of God walk as Christ walked.

1 John 2:5-6-note: "By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

### 3. Those who are born of God don't hate others but love them.

1 John 2:9-note: "Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness."

1 John 3:14-note: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death."

1 John 4:7-8-note: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

1 John 4:20-note: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar."

### 4. Those who are born of God don't love the world.

1 John 2:15-note: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

### 5. Those who are born of God confess the Son and receive (have) him.

1 John 2:23-note: "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

1 John 4:15-note: "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

1 John 5:12-note: "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

### 6. Those who are born of God practice righteousness.

1 John 2:29-note: "If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him."

### 7. Those who are born of God don't make a practice of sinning.

1 John 3:6-note: "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."

1 John 3:9-10-note: "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."

1 John 5:18-note: "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

### 8. Those who are born of God possess the Spirit of God.

1 John 3:24-note: "By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us."

1 John 4:13-note: "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

## 9. Those who are born of God listen submissively to the apostolic Word.

1 John 4:6-**note**: "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

## 10. Those who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ.

1 John 5:1-**note**: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

## 11. Those who are born of God overcome the world.

1 John 5:4-**note**: "Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

**Two Wrong Conclusions** - One of the effects of all those "tests of life" is to overwhelm us with the sense that John may be saying: "If you're born again, you're perfect. If you're born again you don't sin at all. There is no defeat in the Christian life. There is only victory."

Another effect that these tests might have in our minds is to make us think we can lose our salvation. That is, we can be born again for a while and then begin to fail in these tests and die and lose the spiritual life that we were given in the new birth.

**Two Key Clarifications** - John is very aware that his words could be taken in these two wrong ways. So he is explicit as any writer in the New Testament that this is not the case: Christians are not sinless, and born-again people cannot lose their spiritual life and be lost.

He says in 1 John 1:8-10-**note**, "If we say we have no sin [present tense], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins [present tense], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." So John is at pains to say that "walking in the light" (1Jn 1:7-**note**) does not mean walking flawlessly. It means that, when you stumble, the light of Christ causes you to see it and hate it and confess it and move forward with Christ.

And John is just as jealous to make sure we don't infer from these "tests of life" that we can be born again and then later lose our life and be lost. 1John 2:19-**note** is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that there is another way to understand what happens when a person abandons the church. It says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

Notice three things John says to protect us from misunderstanding. 1) Those who seemed to be born again and forsook the faith never were born again—they never were of us. "They went out from us, but they were not of us." In other words, the explanation is not that they lost their new birth. They never had it. 2) Those who are truly born again ("of us") will persevere to the end in faith. 1Jn 5:19b-**note**: "For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Endurance is not the cause of the new birth. The new birth is the cause of endurance, and endurance is the evidence of new birth. 3) God often makes plain who the false Christians are in the church by their eventual rejection of the truth and the people of God. Verse 19c: "But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." It became plain. And it often becomes plain today. ([Everyone Who Has Been Born of God Overcomes the World](#))

**1 John 2:4 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; (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** ho legon (PAP) hoti Egnoka (1SRAI) auton, kai tas entolas autou me teron (PAP), pseustes estin, (3SPA) kai en touto e aletheia ouk estin; (3SPA)

**Amplified:** Whoever says, I know Him [I perceive, recognize, understand, and am acquainted with Him] but fails to keep and obey His commandments (teachings) is a liar, and the Truth [of the Gospel] is not in him. ([Lockman](#))

**ESV:** Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

**KJV:** He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

**NIV:** The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

**NLT:** If someone says, "I belong to God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and

does not live in the truth.

**Phillips:** The man who claims to know God but does not obey his laws is not only a liar but lives in self-delusion. In practice, the more a man learns to obey God's laws the more truly and fully does he express his love for him.

**Wuest:** He who keeps on saying, I have come to know Him experientially and as a present result am in that state, and His precepts is not habitually safeguarding with solicitous care, is a liar, and in this one the truth does not exist. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** he who is saying, 'I have known him,' and his command is not keeping, a liar he is, and in him the truth is not;

- **The one who says:** 1Jn 2:9 1:6,8,10 4:20 Jas 2:14-16
- **I know:** Hos 8:2,3 Titus 1:16
- **Is a liar:** 1Jn 1:6,8
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHO IS A LIAR?

**The one who says "I have come to know Him" and does not keep His commandments, is a liar** -This passage is so clear, it does not need much comment. It simply needs to be read and heeded. If you are reading it and refusing (as a general rule of your life) to keep His commandments, then you need to seriously question whether you are in Christ or still in the old Adam nature (see 2Cor 13:5-note, cf 1Cor 15:22). The nature of Christ in a man or woman brings forth the fruit of holiness (cf Heb 12:14KJVnote, Ro 6:22KJV-note, 1Th 4:7KJV-note, 1Pe 1:14, 15, 16-note), because this new nature includes a new source of power, the Holy Spirit (see contrasting warning and promise in Ro 8:13-note). **Calvin** said that "The knowledge of God is efficacious" meaning that the Gospel changes one's heart and life. But John says not if you just say "I know Jesus." In the following notes I have included a relatively large number of comments on this passage from old (Puritans) and new commentators, because I want to counter a teaching (especially by men such as Zane Hodges' who writes in the popular, generally excellent Bible Knowledge Commentary) that in my opinion is (1) erroneous, (2) very misleading and (3) dangerous in regard to a soul's eternal destiny in either heaven or hell! There is simply too much at stake to not counter spurious comments on passages that are otherwise very clear if read in plain English!

**Spurgeon** cautions us - Do distinguish, however, between *knowing about* Christ and *knowing* Christ. We may know very much about many of our great men, though we do not know them. Now, it will never save a soul to know *about* Christ. The only saving knowledge is to *know* him, his very self, and to trust him, the living Savior, who is now at the right hand of God.

John's test of obedience in 1Jn 2:3 is underscored by the direct contrast he presents in this verse.

**A T Robertson** has a pithy comment that "This is one of the pious platitudes, cheap claptrap of the Gnostics, who would bob up in meetings with such explosions. John punctures such bubbles with the sharp addition "and keepeth not"."

## LIPS FAIL TO SYNC WITH LIFE!

**Says (lego)** is in the **present tense** = their continual claim is "I know Jesus," but what comes out of their **lips** is not authenticated by what is seen in their **life**! Their conduct belies their claim! What their life says invalidates what their lips say!

**THOUGHT** - What does your life say?

**Does not keep (tereo)** - Direct contrast with 1Jn 2:3 with "**not**" being the stronger Greek particle of negation (ou/ouk), signifying essentially absolutely not! No way! To reiterate, John is not speaking of perfection, but direction. These professors are plodding toward perdition! Note again the is **present tense** which Robertson paraphrases "and keeps on not keeping" adding that when he calls them a liar "There is a **whip-cracker effect** ([Whipcracking in Wikipedia - the sound is a small "sonic boom" - see "Physics"](#)) in John's words!"

**Liar (5583)** (**pseustes** from **pseudomai** = to lie) is one who speaks falsehood, untruth, and so attempts to deceive. The most tragic deception is one's own self. Remember sin is deceiving (Heb 3:13-note) and many who claim to know Jesus, are deceived by their sin and are not known by Jesus (Mt 7:21, 22, 23-note) **Thayer** adds that **pseustes** describes "one who breaks faith, a false or faithless man."

While John's language at first reading sounds "harsh" (to call someone **aliar**), we do well to recall that John is the beloved disciple of Jesus (Jn 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20, 24), and that Jesus Himself called the devil a liar and clearly called those in His audience (who had ostensibly "believed" in Him - see Jn 8:30, 31) children of the devil - like father like son! (Jn 8:44). In John 8:55 Jesus added "and you have not come to **know** (ginosko) Him, but I know (eido) Him; and if I say that I do not know (eido) Him, I will be a **liar** like you, but I do know (eido) Him and keep His word." In other words Jesus is confronting those who claim to know God (intellectually, but internally, so to speak) but who in actual fact **DO NOT know God!** It seems that Jesus could not have been much clearer! Similarly, it seems the warning words of the Apostle John could not be much clearer!

**J Ligon Duncan:** If you claim to know God but your life is not changed by knowing Him, that is a certain sign that you don't know God. He doesn't say, "He has head knowledge, but he doesn't have heart knowledge." He says, "He has no truth," because the truth of God turns your world upside down. Once you have that truth it fills you with a fire of rapture and love for the Living God; it changes everything. That truth always leads to love; it always leads to obedience; it always leads to a transformed life. And so, when that transformed life is not there, then you can be certain that that person has never had the truth; he's never met God; he's never met the Lord Jesus Christ who is "the way and the truth and the life." (Jn 14:6) **There is no knowledge of God that does not also lead to the keeping of His commandments.** "True grace always reigns in righteousness," Paul says in Romans 5. "Grace-salvation always leads to obedience," Paul says in Ephesians 2. "Justification is always accompanied by sanctification," Paul says in Romans 8. "Faith always shows itself in works," James says in James 2. Those are just different biblical ways of stressing the point that John is making here in 1 John 2:3 and 4: Truth always expresses itself in action. Faith, trust, real knowledge of God always are always expressed in action, and especially in the action of obeying God's commandments. And so, we know that we don't know God if we don't want to keep His commandments, and if we don't by grace do just that. ([If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments](#))

**Matthew Poole** calls this one "a false, hypocritical pretender, as 1 John 1:6."

Notice that the verb modifying "**liar**" is *estin* which is present tense indicating that lying is their lifestyle! They may even be lying to themselves, which is the ultimate deadly deception! (See Rev 21:8+)

Jesus warned....

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does *present tense* - habitually, albeit not perfectly!) the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE** (*present tense* - habitually) **LAWLESSNESS.**' (Mt 7:21-23)

**Harris** - The evaluation is harsh and self-explanatory: to say a person is a liar means that the claims he or she is making are not to be believed (a not-too-subtle polemical statement against the secessionist opponents with their false Christology). To say "the truth" is not in such a person, in light of passages in John's Gospel such as Jn 14:6 (where Jesus says "I am the way, and the truth, and the life") and Jn 17:17 ("Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth" - note "his word" in the following verse, 1 John 2:5) again points to the falsity of the opponents' claims. ([Ibid](#))

**John Piper** - So here in 1 John 2:4 John not only says that this disobedient person does not know God. He goes on to say at the end of the verse, "The truth is not in him." This is why his knowledge is not knowledge. It is not in him. He carries it on the surface. It has never sunk in. He has never tasted the truth he mouths so easily. **So the knowledge John has in view in 1Jn 2:4 is an experience of Christ and God the Father in which they are taken into the depths of our life and change the way we live.** John's whole case hangs on the certainty with which knowing God produces obedience. If a person could know God and still live in disobedience, then John could not say to this disobedient man in verse 4 that he is a liar when he claims to know God. John would not be able to know if he is a liar or not if he might know God and yet live in disobedience....the point is that people who do not keep the word of God cannot claim to love God or have the love of God in them. As 1Jn 4:8 says, "He who does not love does not know God; for God is love." So the first stage of the argument is the foundational truth that there is a necessary connection between knowing Christ and obeying his commandments. Anyone who claims to know him and lives in disobedience is a liar. ([Obedience Confirms Our Standing in God](#))

**Robert Candlish** - The language is more forcible than ever. He not merely "**lies**" (1Jn 1:6); but "**is a liar.**" Not merely does he "**not do the truth,**" but in that man "**the truth is not.**" To affect any knowledge of God that is not to be itself known and ascertained by the keeping of his commandments,—to dream of knowing God otherwise than in the way of keeping his commandments—**is to be false to the heart's core.** (Ed: Woel!)

**Burge** says here John "describes the person who feigns intimacy with God and rejects obedience (the same description is given in 1Jn 2:11). John's words are severe: This person is a liar. In 1:8 we learned that the denial of sin is evidence that truth is not in a person. Now we learn that the denial of obedience means the same thing: Truth is absent. We must keep in mind the central place of



"truth" in Johannine vocabulary. Truth describes Jesus (John 14:6), the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:17), and the word (Jn 17:17). Truth is the principle of spiritual integrity that should accompany all worship that is empowered by God's Spirit (Jn 4:24). Therefore, John is here not simply saying that someone who fails to obey has missed the point; instead, such people are seriously disconnected from God. (The NIV Application Commentary: Letters of John).

"An unchanged life is the sign of an uncleansed heart."

-- C H Spurgeon

**Ray Stedman** - Have you ever seen a counterfeit bill? I do not know that I have ever had one handed to me. I may have, and, if so, I passed it along without knowing. But I know one thing about counterfeit bills. Contrary to popular expression they never come in \$3.00 or \$7.00 denominations. You hear the phrase, "as phony as a \$3.00 bill," but I have never seen a \$3.00 bill and I never hope to see one. Counterfeiters are smarter than that. At a superficial glance, a counterfeit bill appears to be perfectly normal and in a common denomination. But there is always something bogus about it, there is always something phony. There is a lack of exact correspondence. There is a blur somewhere, or something is omitted from it which marks it as a counterfeit bill. **It is the same with a phony Christian, and there are phony Christians, many of them. As John indicates, they say the right things. If you were to judge them by what they say, you would never know they were phonies. They go to the right places, they mingle with the right crowds, and they say the right things. They say "I love him," but, as John indicates, there is something wrong with their lives: They disobey his commandments. They have no apparent desire to do what he says, to keep his word. Their lives are unchanged. Their actions are no different than they were before.** As a dairyman once said to me, "*They preach cream, but live skim milk.*" (Ed: But in truth, professing believers aren't even "skim milk" for at least it is still milk!) Paul also warns about this in his letter to Titus. He speaks of some who, he says, "**profess** (present tense - continually) **to know God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed,**" (Titus 1:16a RSV-Titus 1-16 Commentary). It was Charles Spurgeon, the prince of English preachers, who once said, "An unchanged life is the sign of an uncleansed heart." The Scripture is very clear about this: If the thief has not stopped his stealing, if the liar has not quit lying, if the alcoholic has not stopped drinking, there is no good in his claiming that he is a Christian. If there has been no basic change in his life, there is nothing that indicates to him or to anyone else, that he has been delivered from bondage to Satan and the power of evil into the kingdom of God (Col 1:13-14, Acts 26:18). Now let me make something clear. You can stop all these things without being born again. There are many reasons why men quit something evil, if for no other reason than that it is bad for their health. You can stop these things without being born again, but you cannot be born again without stopping them. That is the claim John makes. ([1 John 2 - Ray C. Stedman's Expository Studies of the Bible](#))

**Charles Simeon** - It is evidently taken for granted, in my text, that some self-deceivers will be found, who will **'say, that they know Christ, whilst yet they keep not his commandments.'** And what shall I say to them? What can I say more, than what God himself speaks to them in my text, **"That they are liars; and that the truth is not in them?"** I grant that this sounds harsh; but it is the declaration of our God: and **I dare not to soften or conceal what He hath spoken.** In many other passages does this loving Apostle use the same language [1John 1:6; 1John 4:20; 1John 5:10.]; and I entreat you, brethren, to lay it to heart. Be assured, that, whilst you continue under this delusion, **"the truth is not in you: the Gospel has not yet wrought effectually on your hearts, nor are you possessed of real integrity in your souls. No, indeed, you are "liars" and hypocrites, and must take your portion with such characters in the eternal world.** Tell me, then, whether it does not become you to "examine yourselves," and to try your faith [Job 20:4-7.] by this standard? Do not imagine that the knowledge here spoken of is a speculative acquaintance with divine truth: no; it is such a knowledge as both justifies [Note: Isaiah 53:11.] and sanctifies [John 17:17.] the soul; it is that knowledge in comparison of which St. Paul "accounted all things as dung and dross [Philippians 3:8.]." This is the knowledge which you must possess: and **if you will think you have it, whilst your life and conversation (behavior) give the lie to your profession, your doom is fixed:** for thus saith God, by the Prophet Hosea: "Israel saith, my God, we know thee: Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him [Hosea 8:2-3.]:" yea, "every such person shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of his power, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ [2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.]." I say, then, to every one of you, "Examine whether ye be in the faith, and prove your own selves [2 Corinthians 13:5.]." ([1 John 2 - Simeon's Horae Homileticae](#))

**Puritan writer Thomas Brooks** - Such walk in darkness, who promise to themselves the future vision of God's face, while they go on in the willful breach of God's royal law. Such who say they know Him—and yet in the course of their lives walk contrary to Him—such are liars: "He who says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar," 1 John 2:4. ([A Cabinet of Choice Jewels](#))

From a funeral Sermon by **Samuel Davies** (April 22, 1758) - The willful and habitual practice of any known sin—and the willful and habitual neglect of any known duty, are repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, as the sure signs of a wicked man. "The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4. ([The Certainty of Death](#))

**Akin** notes that here John "explains that the one who claims to know God but is consistently disobedient is a liar. John implies that this individual will be exposed as a liar by his disobedience to God's commands. **What is internal will eventually come to the**

**surface.** The condemnation of this person is quite similar to what John says in 1:6, 8. Not only is the claim of this individual false, but the truth is altogether absent from his life. As Schnackenburg writes: "He lacks the divine nature which alone makes possible the genuine knowledge of God."" (The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

**J Vernon McGee - I would call this very plain talk!** In the previous verse John has said that we know that we know Him—this is the positive side. We know by experience in contrast to the esoteric knowledge of the Gnostics. **Now he presents the negative side: disobedience to Christ is a proof that we do not know Him. This is plain and direct language. Disobedience to Christ on the part of a professing Christian is tantamount to being a liar. In other words, his life is a lie. There are a great many people who say they are children of God, but are they?. It is one thing to say you are a child of God, and it is another thing to be a possessor of eternal life, to have a new nature that cries out to the Father for fellowship and wants to obey Him.** You cannot make me believe that all of these church members who have no love for the Word of God and are disobedient to Christ are really His children. I do not believe they have had the experience of regeneration. John is making it very clear that we know that we know Him because we keep His commandments.

**W E Vine** - a comparison should here be made with 1John 1:6 and might be set out as follows:

#### **1John 1:6**

- (a) If we say that we have fellowship with Him,
- (b) And walk in the darkness,
- (c) We lie and do not the truth.

#### **1John 2:4**

- (a) He that saith, I know Him,
- (b) And keepeth not His commandments,
- (c) Is a liar and the truth is not in him.

A comparison may further be made with parallel clauses in 1John 1:6, 8 and 10. The apostle increases the forcefulness of his statement concerning the iniquity of mere profession without conformity in the life, till he here reaches the greatest pitch of severity. In such inconsistency—

- (a) A person does not the truth—1John 1:6
- (b) The truth is not in him—1John 1:8
- (c) He makes God a liar—1John 1:10
- (d) He is a liar himself and in him the truth is not.

**He is not merely guilty of certain statements and acts of falsehood, but is himself false in his moral state.** The order, too, in the last sentence is more emphatic than in 1John 1:8. There it was "truth is not in us"; here it is "and in this man truth is not." (Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

**Kistemaker** - "The man who says, **'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar.**" Although this verse parallels the discussion of the last half of the preceding chapter (1Jn 1:6, 8, 10), where John writes comprehensively about the claim of fellowship with God and the failure to live in the truth, here he quotes an individual. He quotes the person who claims to have come to know (perfect tense) God but who fails to keep (present tense) God's commands. John calls him a liar. That is, this person is a walking lie who says one thing and does the opposite (compare 1Jn 4:20; Titus 1:16). The word **liar** describes the character of the man whose entire conduct is opposed to the truth. (Vol. 14: New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John: Baker Book House)

**J R Miller** - The Scriptures never give us the impression that we can sin with impunity because we are saved by grace, and not by our own good works, or because God is so merciful and forgives so readily. **Nothing is taught in the Word of God more clearly—than that faith in Christ always implies surrender to Christ and obedience to His commands. There is no true faith, without obedience.** This is made very plain here, "We know that we have come to know Him—if we obey His commands. The man who says, 'I know Him!' but does not do what He commands—is a liar, and the truth is not in him!" 1 John 2:3-4 ([Devotional Hours with the Bible](#))

**Puritan Thomas Watson** - 1 John 2:4: **'He who says, 'I know Him,' and keeps not His commandments, is a liar—and the truth**

**is not in him."** A man may have a speculative knowledge—and be no better than a devil. This is the reason why men do not embrace Christ, Who is infinitely lovely, because they do not know His worth. Though they are not intellectually ignorant of Christ—yet they are spiritually ignorant (**Ed:** Like Judas Iscariot!). To this day the veil is upon their hearts. ([The Loveliness of Christ](#))

**Barker** - In 1Jn 2:3 the author dealt with the general question of how we may have assurance that we know God. Here he deals with those who claim that they know God but at the same time break his commandments. For John knowledge of God is clearly not perceived as academic, theoretical, or speculative but as practical and experiential. It is "a relationship to God, in which the one knowing is determined in his existence (and thus also in his 'walking,' his conduct) by God" (Bultmann, p. 25). To claim to know God and at the same time to be disobedient to his commandments is, the author asserts, to lie and be devoid of all truth. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**James** (see Jas 2:14-17) uses different words to say the same thing - He describes someone who says they have "faith" but they have no good, godly works to authenticate their faith, and the conclusion is that they do not possess true, saving, (eternal) life giving faith but dead lifeless faith.

## LIKE FATHER LIKE SON!

**And the truth is** (present tense - continually) **not in him** - It's as if John wants to make sure we did not miss the seriousness of what he just said, calling this person a liar. And so he adds that the truth is not in him. Jesus said "I am...the **Truth**" (Jn 14:6) and Paul said believers have "Christ in you the Hope of glory." (Col 1:27). It follows that when John says these individuals do not have "**the truth**" in them, they do not have the indwelling Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, but are still of their father the devil (cf Jn 8:44 = the father of lies, 1Jn 3:8, 10), and thus behave like his children by lying!

**Kruse** - The statement, '**the truth is not in him**', is synonymous with '**he is a liar**'. Underlying this whole verse is the recognition that **people can have no authentic relationship with God if they do not obey his commands**. This does not mean, of course, that those who know God will never fail to obey God's commands, but rather that those who know God will not be characterised by disobedience to his commands. (See context [The Letters of John](#) - **Note** - Many consider this to be the #1 Commentary on First John - He does not seem to equivocate on John's intended meaning in 1 John 2:4).

**Truth** ([225](#)) (**aletheia**) has the literal sense of that which contains nothing hidden. Aletheia is that which is not concealed, that which is seen or expressed as it really is, that which is the manifestation of a hidden reality.

**Jesus** comments on the importance of **truth** in his reply to Pilate...

John 18:37 (cf 1Jn 3:18, 19) Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. **Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**"

**Paul** described some on the isle of Crete who claimed to have come to know Him" and yet denied Him with their lying lives...

Titus 1:16+ (cf similar description 2Ti 3:5) They profess (pres tense = continually make this claim!) to know God, but (always pause to ponder the contrasts for they mark a "change of direction") by their deeds (cf they do "not keep His commandments") they deny (pres tense = continually say with their life the do not know) Him, being detestable (derived from bdeo which means "to stink!") and disobedient, and worthless (rejected after examination) for any good deed.

**1 John 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

**Greek:** hos d' an tere (3SPA)I) autou ton logon, alethos en touto e agape tou theou teteleiotai. (3SRPI) en touto ginokomen (1PPAI) hoti en auto esmen; (1PPAI)

**Amplified:** But he who keeps (treasures) His Word [who bears in mind His precepts, who observes His message in its entirety], truly in him has the love of and for God been perfected (completed, reached maturity). By this we may perceive (know, recognize, and be sure) that we are in Him: ([Lockman](#))

**ESV:** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

**KJV:** But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in

him.

**NIV:** But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: (Note: The NIV mistakenly renders this as a conditional sentence. In fact it is a statement).

**NLT:** But those who obey God's word really do love him. That is the way to know whether or not we live in him.

**Phillips:** Obedience is the test of whether we really live "in God" or not.

**Wuest:** But whoever habitually with a solicitous care is keeping His word, truly, in this one the love of God has been brought to its completion with the present result that it is in that state of completion. In this we have an experiential knowledge that in Him we are. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** and whoever may keep his word, truly in him the love of God hath been perfected; in this we know that in him we are.

- **Whoever:** 1Jn 2:3,4 Ps 105:45 Ps 106:3 Ps 119:2,4,146 Pr 8:32 Pr 28:7 Ec 8:5 Eze 36:27 Lk 11:28 Jn 14:21,23 Rev 12:17 14:12
- **In him:** 1Jn 4:12,18 Jas 2:22
- **By this:** 1Jn 2:27-28 1Jn 3:24 1Jn 4:13-16 1Jn 5:20 Jn 6:56 15:5 Ro 8:1 1Co 1:30 2Co 5:17,21 Col 2:9,10
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Corinthians 5:17+ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

1 John 3:24+ The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 4:13-16+ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

### HOW TO KNOW YOU ARE IN CHRIST FOREVER

**But** - Always take note of contrasts (**contrast**), for they mark a "change of direction" by the author and beg at least one simple question "What is being contrasted?" (also Why? Why now? - **5W/H questions**). Discipline yourself (cf 1Ti 4:7, 8) to pause and ponder the passage, for as you do, you will be practicing the blessed discipline of **Biblical Meditation**.

**Whoever keeps ([tereo](#)) His Word** - [Tereo](#) is again in the present tense picturing one as "keeping on keeping God's word," as exhibiting ongoing obedience (enabled by continually relying on the enabling power of the indwelling Spirit). Earlier John used the word **commandments** (1Jn 2:3-4), but now uses **word** (lógos) which is more general, and would include not just commands but instructions, principles, etc. **Vine** adds that "His Word (lógos) is the whole, of which His commandments are the parts. It is the complete divine revelation." John like a patient father continues to belabor the point that a truly changed heart will inevitably result in a changed life.

Obedience has always been what God looks for as evidence of a changed, surrendered heart (cf 1Sa 15:22). As Jesus declared...

But (Remember to pause and ponder what Jesus is contrasting = Lk 11:27) He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who **hear** the word of God, and **observe** (Not tereo but similar word [phulasso](#) = guard like a military sentinel) it (the word heard)." (Luke 11:28+)

**Comment:** Jesus clearly links hearing and heeding (doing) of His Word. His half brother James issued a similar charge to his readers "**prove** (present imperative = command calling for habitual practice) yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely **hearers** who delude (paralogizomai) themselves." (Jas 1:22+)

Remember that the only way a sinner can keep the word is by entering the New Covenant and receiving the new source of power which enables obedience motivated by love not legalism. Ezekiel quotes Jehovah's New Covenant promise...

And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes (God's Part!), and you will be careful to observe (Lxx uses

[phulasso](#) = guard) My ordinances (Our Part - enabled by the Spirit!). (Ezekiel 36:27+, cf Php 2:12+, Php 2:13NLT+)

**In him** - The one who exhibits a truly changed life as evidenced by his or her obedience to God's Word of Truth. "The demonstrative pronoun is used, "**in this one** truly is the love of God perfected." ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Vincent** - The change in the form of this antithetic clause is striking. (Here is the first clause in the prior verse) He who claims to know God, yet lives in disobedience, is a liar. We should expect as an offset to this: He that keeps His commandments is of the truth; or, the truth is in him. Instead, we have, '**In him has the love of God been perfected**' In other words, the obedient child of God is characterized, not by any representative trait or quality of his own personality, but merely as the subject of the work of divine love: as the sphere in which that love accomplishes its perfect work.

**The love of God has truly been perfected - The love of God** could refer to either His love for us or our love for God.

**Hiebert** writes that "The love of God" may be taken as an objective genitive, "man's love for God," or as a subjective genitive, "God's love." Both make good sense, but the latter here seems more probable. These words (**love of God has truly been perfected**) speak of the glorious outcome of obedience."

**A T Robertson** feels it is "Probably objective genitive, our love for God, which is realized in absolute obedience."

**Vincent** on the other hand feels that "the fundamental idea of the **love of God** as expounded by John is the love which God has made known and which answers to His nature." (**Vincent** has a lengthy explanation - see [1 John 2 Word Studies in the New Testament](#))

**Steven Cole** writes that "The phrase, "**the love of God**," is ambiguous. It may mean "God's love for us," or, "our love for God." Or, it may refer to God-like or divine love. Scholars are divided between the first two options, and it's hard to decide. But perhaps it does not really matter, in that if God's love for us is perfected in us, we will also love God. And, no one can really love God without first experiencing His love. So the two concepts are intertwined. ([How to Know that You Know Him 1 John 2:3-6](#))

**Vine** feels that "**the love of God**" is the exercise of God's love manifesting itself in the human heart and life in practical love toward God and our fellowmen. This is confirmed in 1Jn 4:10, 11. Love is the fulfilling of God's commandments ("love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." Ro 13:10), which are summed up in the one commandment concerning love (Ro 13:8, Ro 12:30,31), and in the fulfillment of this the love of God is (or has been) perfected in us. Love has thus attained to its end. Selfishness and carnal desires are banished, and the will of God is carried out both in us and through us toward others. The perfect tense thus expresses the abiding effects produced by God's love and the response to it in our heart."

Here is **Wuest's** excellent summary of the question regarding the "**love of God**" - To sum up the matter, we would say that the love of God here is the love that God is in His nature, produced in the believer yielded to the Holy Spirit by the same Holy Spirit, which love causes him to have a solicitous watchful care of His precepts. This love is brought to its completion or perfection in the sense that it accomplishes that for which it is intended, namely, to cause the saint to obey God's Word, not because he should, not because it is right to do so, not in order to escape chastisement should he disobey it, all of which motives may enter into the subconscious reasons he may have for obeying it and which in themselves are proper motives, but he obeys the Word because he loves the Lord Jesus. Paul, in Galatians 5:1-26, teaches that the saint is not under law, and has been put under a superior restraint to evil and a compelling urge to do right, namely, divine love, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Love** ([26](#))(**agape**) is that selfless, sacrificial, supernatural, Spirit wrought love that characterizes the essence of God (1Jn 4:8), so again "like Father, like sons." From this definition, you should surely realize that you cannot love like this! Only by relying on the Spirit of Christ in you can you exhibit this quality of love (cf Gal 5:22+).

**Perfected** (reached maturity) ([5048](#)) (**teleioo** related to **teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal, consummate soundness, idea of being whole) means to be brought to the intended goal. It speaks of the love of God as attaining maturity or reaching completeness. God's love achieves its purpose when we keep His word.

**Brown** - Since keeping the commandments (or God's word) certainly involves living out the commandment to love one another, the love of God shown us in Jesus Christ reaches its perfection when the same love is shown to "one another" and to the God who abides in the Christian. ([The Epistles of John -The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries](#))

**Robert Law** writes that "Perfected" love, in the phraseology of the Epistle, signifies, not love in a superlative degree, but love that is consummated in action. Bearing fruit in actual obedience, Love has been perfected: it has fulfilled its mission, has reached its goal. ([The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of St. John](#))



**Expositor's Bible Commentary** explains **love of God is perfected** this way - "The true knowledge of God does not end with speculative ideas, as for the Gnostics, but with obedience to the moral law and with the presence of God's love in the believer. The term "made complete" (teleioō) carries with it the idea of continuous growth and development. It describes both state and process. As obedience is practiced, so also God's love matures in us. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Vol 12](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Obedience to God's Word is proof of our love for Him. There are three motives for obedience. We can obey because we **have** to, because we **need** to, or because we **want** to. A slave obeys because he has to. If he doesn't obey he will be punished. An employee obeys because he needs to. He may not enjoy his work, but he does enjoy getting his paycheck! He needs to obey because he has a family to feed and clothe. But a Christian is to obey his Heavenly Father because he wants to—for the relationship between him and God is one of love. "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). This is the way we learned obedience when we were children. First, we obeyed because we had to. If we didn't obey, we were spanked! But as we grew up, we discovered that obedience meant enjoyment and reward; so we started obeying because it met certain needs in our lives. And it was a mark of real maturity when we started obeying because of love. "**Baby Christians**" must constantly be warned or rewarded. **Mature Christians** listen to God's Word and obey it simply because they love Him. (See [Be Real 1 John: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth](#) or borrow [Bible exposition commentary](#))

**By this** - Although it may seem simplistic, always pause to ponder, asking questions like "By what?" or "What is this?" Your Teacher the Spirit will never scoff at you for asking childlike questions and as you develop this habit in all your Scripture reading, I guarantee that you will be amazed how it changes your insights and comprehension!

**Hiebert** - **By this** we know that we are in Him" (1Jn 2:5b) may be taken with what precedes or follows. Views are divided, but it seems best, with most modern versions, to take it with what follows.

**A T Robertson** ties **by this** back to "whoever keeps His Word" remarking "That is by continuous keeping of Christ's commandments, not by loud talk and loose living."

**W E Vine** comments that **by this** "may refer to "whoever keeps His word" at the beginning of the verse. More probably, however, the RV is correct in connecting it, as a fresh sentence, with 1Jn 2:6; just as the "hereby" in 1Jn 2:3 referred to what immediately followed.

**We know that we are in Him**- We know experientially that we are in Him. Again know is in the present tense so the idea is that this "is simply a statement of a constantly enjoyed experience." (Vine)

**In Him** - While this is ambiguous and could be the Father or the Son, I take it primarily to refer to the Son. If so to be "in Him" is synonymous with Paul's phrase "**in Christ**." This is "shorthand" for a follower of Christ, a regenerated individual. To be "in" Jesus speaks of the oneness and identification of covenant. John goes on in the next verse (1Jn 2:6) to amplify that "in Him" means "abiding in Him."

**Vine** observes that John "speaks of being "in Him." This is one of the great central truths of the Christian faith. Introduced here in the Epistle it is taken up in various ways subsequently. It is also especially brought out in the Gospel; compare, e.g., Jn 14:20; 15:4; 17:10, 21, 23. The condition of being "**in Him**" is not a matter of absorption into deity, as Pantheism teaches, but of spiritual relationship and unity of life, which involves the removal of the alienation of man in his unregenerate state from God, and the enjoyment of fellowship with God and oneness with Him in His will and purpose."

**Steven Cole** agree with **Vine** writing "Although some take the last phrase of 1Jn 2:5 to point back, I understand it to point forward to 1Jn 2:6: "**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.**" John equates being "**in Him**" with "**abiding in Him**." "**Abiding**" is John's term for fellow-ship or a close, intimate relationship. As with the phrases, "keeping His commandments" and "the love of God," so also the term "abiding" goes back to the Upper Room Discourse, to Jesus' words about the vine and the branches. There Jesus said (John 15:4), "**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of it-self unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.**" ([How to Know that You Know Him 1 John 2:3-6](#))

**Jamieson** - in our progressing towards this ideal of perfected love and obedience. There is a gradation: 1Jn 2:3, "know Him"; 1Jn 2:5, "we are in Him"; 1Jn 2:6, "abideth in Him"; respectively, knowledge, fellowship, abiding constancy. [Bengel].

**J Ligon Duncan** - Test #1 (See Duncan's comments under 1Jn 2:3) expressed differently here in verse 5 is this: "Do you manifest your love of God by keeping His word?" You see, true love for God is expressed not in sentimental language. True love for God is not expressed in some claim of mystical experience. True love for God is expressed in moral obedience. The proof of love is loyalty. What would a wife think of a husband who said, "Oh, honey, I love you," but every week he engaged in an affair with another woman? Well, that profession of love would ring hollow. True love is loyal. And, therefore, God says, "You truly love Me? You'll be loyal to My word; you'll be committed to My word." You see, the truth of God does not exist in order to promote merely right notions

about God; the truth exists to promote an active and experiential relationship with the Living God. And that relationship, that fellowship-knowledge, always expresses itself in love to God, in obedience to God, in love and obedience to His word. Love delights to do God's will. What is Jesus' refrain in the gospels? John catches it so frequently. He says, "It is My meat--it is My food to do the will of the One who sent Me." Jesus loved to do God's will. And so, if we're like Jesus, then we will love to do God's will as well. If we love God, we will keep His commands, and that obedience will in turn evidence our true love to God. Do you remember what Jesus said to His disciples on the night that He was betrayed in the upper room in John 14:15? "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." That's what He said. And so, the Christian who teaches that you can love Christ and not keep His commandments is contradicting the Master. Well, that's the second way He expresses this truth. ([If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments](#))

**David Guzik** comments on this passage...

A perfected (the idea is mature) love for God will show itself in obedience, and the presence of this obedience and love gives us assurance that we are in Jesus (By this we know we are in Him).

Mark it, when one becomes a Christian, there is a change in their relationship with sin. Sin is not eliminated in the believer until he comes to glory, but their relationship to sin is changed when they truly become a Christian.

- A Christian no longer loves sin as he once did. A Christian no longer brags about their sin as he once did.
- A Christian no longer plans to sin as he once did.
- A Christian no longer fondly remembers his sin as he once did.
- A Christian never fully enjoys his sin as he once did.
- A Christian no longer is comfortable in habitual sin as he once was.

"The Christian no longer loves sin; it is the object of his sternest horror: he no longer regards it as a mere trifle, plays with it, or talks of it with unconcern . . . Sin is dejected in the Christian's heart, though it is not ejected. Sin may enter the heart, and fight for dominion, but it cannot sit upon the throne." (Spurgeon)

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**LESSONS OF OBEDIENCE** - When young Kofi came home after Sunday school, his mother asked him what he had learned that morning. His quick reply spoke volumes: "Obedience . . . again!"

Although I'm many years older than Kofi, I agree that obedience to God is a lesson that we must, sometimes reluctantly, learn over and over again.

Oswald Chambers wrote: "The Lord does not give me rules, but He makes His standard very clear. If my relationship to Him is that of love, I will do what He says . . . If I hesitate, it is because I love someone I have placed in competition with Him, namely, myself."

When we are obedient, we show God that we love Him and have more faith in Him than we do in ourselves. Arthur W. Pink said that love is "a principle of action, and it expresses itself . . . by deeds which please the object loved." To obey God means to relinquish what we want and to choose to do what He asks.

God requires the obedience of His followers, and Jesus placed great importance on it. He asked, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). And He issued this challenge: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). - Cindy Hess Kasper

To say we follow Jesus Christ  
Without attempting to obey  
Reveals our lack of faith that He  
Will lead us right in every way.  
—Sper

**Obedience to God is an expression of our love for God.**

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**1 John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** ho legon (PAP) en auto menein (PAN) opheilei (3SPA1) kathos ekeinos periepatesen (PAN) kai autos [houtos] peripatein. (3SAAS)

**Amplified:** Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk and conduct himself in the

same way in which He walked and conducted Himself. ([Lockman](#))

**ESV:** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

**KJV:** He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

**NLT:** Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Christ did.

**Phillips:** The life of a man who professes to be living in God must bear the stamp of Christ.

**Wuest:** He who is constantly saying that he as a habit of life is living in close fellowship with and dependence upon Him is morally obligated just as that One conducted himself, also himself in the manner spoken of to be conducting himself. ([Wuest](#))

**Young's Literal:** He who is saying in him he doth remain, ought according as he walked also himself so to walk.

- **Who says:** 1Jn 2:4 1:6
- **He:** 1Jn 2:28 3:6 Jn 15:4-6
- **To walk:** 1Jn 1:7 Ps 85:13 Mt 11:29 Jn 13:15 1Co 11:1 Eph 5:2 1Pe 2:21
- [1 John 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

John 13:15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

1 Corinthians 11:1+ **Be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

Ephesians 5:2+ and **walk** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

1 Peter 2:21+ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, (See famous book [In His Steps](#))

### WALKING LIKE JESUS CONFIRMS ABIDING IN HIM

Vine, Cole, et al feel that this verse is best connected to the last clause of preceding verse - **By this we know that we are in Him'** (See preceding comments).

"If you have the life, it is bound to show itself, and if it does not, then you have not the life"

-- D Martyn Lloyd-Jones

**The one who says (lego)** is in the **present tense** = his continual testimony regarding his relationship to God is that he continually abides in Him.

**In Him** - In Jesus, [in Christ](#).

**Abides** ([3306](#)) (**meno**) in simple terms means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. In the present context, meno means more than simply remaining in a place. **Meno** is often used of persons abiding or dwelling in a home, "which implies more than mere position, but rather fellowship, communion, dependence, harmony, friendship (cf uses of meno in Mt 26:38, Lk 1:56, Lk 19:5, Jn 1:39, 40)....To **abide** in the Lord Jesus therefore implies not only position, but relationship. It implies fellowship, friendship, dependence, harmony, communion."([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Wiersbe** - To **abide** in Christ means to depend completely on Him for all that we need in order to live for Him and serve Him. It is a living relationship. As He lives out His life through us (cp Col 3:4), we are able to follow His example and walk as He walked. Paul expresses this experience perfectly: "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). This is a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ is our Advocate in heaven (1John 2:1), to represent us before God when we sin. The Holy Spirit is God's Advocate for us here on earth.....Christ lives out His life through us by the power of the Spirit, who lives within our bodies. It is not by means of imitation that we abide in Christ and walk as He walked. No, it is through incarnation: through His Spirit, "Christ liveth in me." To walk in the light is to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16). (See [Be Real 1 John: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth](#) or borrow [Bible exposition commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** was quite clear when he said "If any man abide in me, he shall bring forth fruit." Fruits of righteousness are good works, and they are evidences that we abide in Christ. **If I am living in sin day by day, what right have I to conclude I am a child of God?"** ([Good Works - Titus 2:14](#)) Indeed, what right? Dear reader, do not be deceived by the false teaching that says you can believe in Jesus and thereafter behave any way you please! Or the corollary false teaching that if you at any point in time in your life profess "belief" in Jesus Christ, then it makes no difference how you live after that because you are "saved" and you have a "fire insurance policy!" And you reason falsely that even if you spend the remainder of your days living in sin, you are still saved by your momentary "profession." This is an affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which frees men from the shackles and domination of the old Sin nature and makes them slaves to a new Master, energized by the Spirit of grace, not the law (Read Ro 6:16-18+). This is utter foolishness, sheer craziness! And this genre of false teaching will take many who are duped by it straight to an eternal hell! **Do not be deceived dear reader.** Genuine belief in Jesus will always show itself genuine by holy fruit in one's life. Genuine belief births holy behavior! And note carefully that we are not talking about **perfection** of one's life, but of the general **"direction"** of one's life. If one says he believes and lives like the devil, well, what would be the logical conclusion of his ultimate fate?

**Hiebert** writes that **"Abides (meno)**, a characteristic Johannine term, portrays habitual fellowship with Him as an active relationship that endures."

**NET Bible Note** on **abide (meno)** "The Greek word (menō) translated resides indicates a close, intimate (and permanent) relationship between the believer and God. It is very important to note that for the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles every genuine Christian has this type of relationship with God, and the person who does not have this type of relationship (cf. 2 John 9) is not a believer at all (in spite of what he or she may claim).

**Harris** - Insofar as the word **"abide"** indicates a close, intimate (and permanent) relationship between the believer and God, it is not inaccurate; but it must be remembered that for the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine letters **every genuine Christian has this type of relationship with God**, and the person who does not have this type of relationship is **not a believer at all** (in spite of what he or she may claim). ([Ibid](#))

**Steven Cole** writes "Dr. James Rosscup devotes an entire book to the theme of **abiding in Christ** as found in John 15. He sums up the concept of abiding in three ways (Abiding in Christ [Zondervan], p. 116, italics his): **"Abiding** involves a person's relating himself to Christ the Vine, to His Person and His purpose; rejecting attitudes, words, actions, or interests which Christ's Word reveals He cannot share; and receiving the quality-essence of Christ's imparted life for authentic fulfillment." ([How to Know that You Know Him 1 John 2:3-6](#))

**Spurgeon** on **in Him** - We have entered into Christ as into the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as guest; into a banquet-hall, as returning travelers into their home. And now we abide — in Christ in this sense, that we are joined to Him : as the stone is, in the wall, as the wave is in the sea, as the branch is in the vine, so are we in Christ (Jn 15:4). As the branch receives all its sap from the stem, so all the sap of spiritual life flows from Christ into us. If we were separated from Him, we should be as branches cut off from the vine, only fit to be gathered up for the fire, and to be burned. So that we abide in Christ as our shelter, our home, and our life. Today we remain in Christ, and hope (not "hope so" but absolute assurance of future good) for ever to remain in Him, as our Head. Ours is no transient union; while He lives as our Head we shall remain His members. We are nothing apart from Him (Jn 15:5, Col 3:4). As a finger is nothing without the head, as the whole body is nothing without the head, so should we be nothing without our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are in Him vitally, and therefore we dare ask the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" ([In Him-Like He Is - Sermon on 1Jn 2:6](#))

**Hiebert** writes that "A believer's testimony involves moral obligation: "ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." "Ought" (opheileo), rather than "must" (dei), points to an abiding inner realization that "he who declares his position is morally bound to act [according] to the declaration which he has made."

**LIVE LIKE CHRIST  
IF YOU PROFESS  
TO LIVE IN CHRIST!**

Now before you say "That sounds a little like [legalism](#) to me," remember that God never calls us to do anything for which He does not also empower us! Think with me a moment. If we are charged to live **like** Christ, does that not beg the question of "How did Christ live?" Or maybe a question like "He was God, so how could I possibly be expected to live like Him?" Both good questions! Yes, Christ never ceased to be God on earth, but He did relinquish His divine prerogatives (cf Php 2:6-7+) and took on flesh and blood to give us the perfect pattern of how we are to live. In short, Jesus the Man lived in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf Lk 4:1, 14+, Acts 10:38+, Eph 5:18+, Gal 5:16+, et al), the same Source which every believer has continual access! There is the answer. Yes, we are commanded to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12+) (**OUR RESPONSIBILITY**), but not in reliance on our natural power, but on His supernatural power, which continually energizes us with the desire and the power to walk in a manner

pleasing to our Heavenly Father (cf Php 2:13+)(HIS PROVISION). Try it, you'll like it! Learn to daily confess sin which grieves and quenches the Spirit (and saps supernatural power - Eph 4:30+, 1 Th 5:19+), [jettison](#) your tendency toward [self-reliance](#) (cf **daily** death to self - Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23+), and rest your weight fully (trust) on the indwelling Spirit's ability to enable you. Notice, the Spirit does not just give you a little "[help](#)" for that implies you are doing some of the living like Christ in your own power (which you cannot accomplish!). [Enable](#) means He gives us both the desire to live like Christ and the power to live like Christ (in Christ - learning to live and "*breathe*" in the "*atmosphere*" of Christ and His Spirit. It is a learning process. Don't give up. In time this Spirit filled life will become more "natural.").

**Ought** (3784)(**opheilo** from **ophéllō** = heap up) means to owe something to someone and here conveys the sense of necessity, duty or under obligation. The idea is that one is bound by duty, moral obligation or necessity to walk the way Jesus walked, if they are going to talk about abiding in Him. In other words, John is saying that the person who makes the claim that he is "in Him" and "abides in Him" has a "spiritual obligation" to walk the way Jesus walked.

**Vine** - The word **opheilo**, rendered "ought," suggests the thought of a debt, and so of moral responsibility, a duty incumbent upon the one who makes the profession. The responsibility is to walk "even as" Christ walked, the "even as" suggesting the closest conformity to Him in character and conduct.

**Hiebert** writes that - A believer's testimony involves moral obligation: "ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." **Ought** (**opheilo**), rather than **must** (**dei**), points to an abiding inner realization that he who declares his position is morally bound to act [according] to the declaration which he has made.

If we *make the profession of abiding* in Christ,  
we *must prove it by our practice of walking* with Christ.  
-- C H Spurgeon

**Spurgeon** - A Bible **ought** has great weight with a conscientious man. **Ought** it to be so? Then it shall be so, God helping me. If we **say** we must **do**. If we **talk**, we must **walk**, or it will, be mere talk. If we *make the profession of abiding* in Christ, we *must prove it by our practice of walking* with Christ. If we say that we are in Christ and abide in Him, we must take care that our life and character are conformed to Christ, **or** else we shall be making an empty boast. This is true of every man who says he is in Christ, for the text is put in the most general and absolute manner: be the man old or young, rich or poor, learned or simple, pastor or hearer, it is incumbent upon him to live like Christ if he professes to live in Christ. ([In Him-Like He Is - Sermon on 1Jn 2:6](#))

**Ought himself to walk** - This is not optional if we say we are believers - a follower of Christ should follow in His steps. If we say we are abiding in Christ, our walk should match our profession. John is clearly giving us a parameter by which we can discern whether our profession of faith is genuine.

John's "logic" is simple - If you say you are "in Christ", in union with Him, in oneness with Him, then it follows you are a partaker of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4+), and thus "equipped" to be able to walk the way Jesus walked. How did He walk? What was His source of strength? Jesus was filled with the Spirit (Lk 4:1+) and led by the Spirit (Mt 4:1+) and in dependence on the Spirit, with prayerful dependence on and submission to the will of His Father (Jn 5:19, 5:30, Jn 8:28, 29), He walked for 3.5 years giving us His example. John is saying that if you are in Him, then you have the power to imitate His walk as a Man. And if there the general tenor of your conduct (your walk) is not similar to Jesus, there is cause for pause to honestly assess whether or not you are genuinely in Him, abiding in Him. Are you (am I) [Walking Like Jesus Walked](#)?

**Harris** - The obligation to conduct oneself the way Jesus did is likewise placed upon all true Christians. It is not an option for Christians not to follow the example of Jesus. We may presume, however, that this is a major part of the fault the author finds with his opponents - while claiming to "reside" in God, they are not following the example of Jesus in their conduct. ([Ibid](#))

**Burge** - The second test of authenticity, of genuine spiritual vigor and life, has to do with living as Jesus lived (1Jn 2:6-8). If we claim to live in Him, we must also walk as He did. (The NIV Application Commentary: Letters of John).

**Steven Cole** notes that while no one can walk perfectly as Jesus did in His humanity "everyone who claims to abide in Christ should have the same focus and direction, not to act in independence from God, but in total dependence on Him. We should not live to please ourselves apart from God, but to do the things that are pleasing to Him....(Spiritual) Walking is not as spectacular or swift as running, leaping, or flying, but it is a steady, sure movement in one direction. It implies progress toward a destination or goal. A walk is made up of many specific steps, but it points to the overall tenor or general quality of a life, not to any one step. To walk as Jesus walked means that our lives should be characterized by daily dependence on God, submission to Him, and obedience to His will. Our overall aim in life will be to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. We will seek to please Him by our thoughts, words, and deeds. While we will never perfectly walk as Jesus walked, it should be our constant aim and effort to do so." ([How to Know that You Know Him 1 John 2:3-6](#))



**in the same manner** - Jesus is to be our example for our spiritual walk. We see this idea in..

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example** for you to **follow in His steps**, (1Pe 2:21)

You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For **I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** (Jn 13:13-15)

**He walked** - If we are truly in Him, He is in us via His indwelling Spirit (Spirit of Christ, Ro 8:9, 1Pe 1:11 Spirit of Jesus Acts 16:7, Spirit of Jesus Christ Php 1:19, Spirit of His Son Gal 4:6), Who was His source of power (Lk 4:14, Lk 5:17, Acts 10:37, 38) and the source of our power to walk as He walked!

**Martin Luther** - It is not Christ's walking on the sea, but His ordinary walk, that we are called on to imitate.

The question is how can we possibly imitate Jesus? The answer has already been alluded to above, but for more in depth treatment of this vital truth, read the following article for a better understanding of how this is possible (and it is possible or God would not have commanded us through Paul to imitate Jesus! Paul wrote "**Be** (present imperative = make this your lifestyle! [See role of Spirit Who enables us to obey this command](#)) imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1-note). Several years ago there was a popular saying "[What Would Jesus Do? \(WWJD\)](#)" While that is fine, if you think about it for a moment, this question could have a tendency to place you under the heavy grace-less burden of [legalism](#)! Why? Because you may be tempted to try to do what Jesus did in reliance on your own *natural* strength. You might succeed for a while, but eventually you will become frustrated, tired and even burnt out! In fact, I think the better question that we should ask is "**How Did Jesus Do It? (HDJDI)**" In other words how did Jesus as a Man forgive those who wronged Him, not return evil for evil, etc? As we summarized above -- by being continually filled with and reliant upon the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the same One to Whom we have continual access! Once this vital prerequisite for power is understood, then we can ask the question throughout the day "What would Jesus do?" And in reliance on His Spirit, we can follow through with Christ-like forgiveness, love, turning of the other cheek, etc. Naturally **IM**-possible! Supernaturally **HIM**-possible!

- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

**Walked** (Behaved, Conducted) ([4043](#)) (**peripateo** from **peri** = about, around + **pateo** = walk, tread) literally means to walk around, and figuratively means to conduct one's life or order one's behavior (cf (Ephesians 2:10; Eph 4:1, 17; Eph 5:1, 8, Eph 5:15; Col 1:10; 1 Th 2:12)

**Hiebert** explains that **walked** "calls for careful conformity to the pattern left by Christ as He engaged in His daily activities here on earth. The completed example now stands before the believer, challenging him to be walking "in the same manner" (houtos), in exact conformity to the example before him. In thus insisting that there is an inseverable bond between the believer's professed relationship to Christ and his morally consistent conduct, John delivered a crucial blow against the Gnostics who tried to divorce their claimed spiritual enlightenment from their daily moral conduct."

**Wuest** comments that the verb **meno** (abide) "refers to the saint's fellowship with and dependence upon Him, communion, closeness of intercourse. The word **peripateō** (walk) means "to order one's behavior, to conduct one's self," (and) speaks of the saint's manner of life. The first idea, the saint's position in Christ, makes possible his Christian manner of life. The second, the saint's fellowship with and dependence upon the Lord Jesus, conditions that manner of life, makes it what it should be. The word **peripateō** literally means "to walk around." And since the way a person walks is often a good index as to the kind of person he is, the word not only referred to the physical act of walking, but came to have the idea of the manner of life of the person.'...(**Peripateo**) is a **present** infinitive in the Greek text emphasizing habitual, continuous action. The Christ-like life here admonished must be the continuous, habitual, moment by moment experience of the believer, no spasmodic, infrequent sort of thing. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** sums up these verses "If you have the life, it is bound to show itself, and if it does not, then you have not the life....You cannot be receiving the life of Christ without becoming like Him. You cannot walk with God without keeping His commandments. You cannot know God without immediately, automatically loving Him. Love always manifests itself by doing what the object of its love desires."

**Barker** - The author is not claiming that the walk of Jesus can be perfectly imitated but that there is a divine imperative which must be taken seriously—for believers to live according to the way Jesus lived. **Also included is the true test for those who want to know whether their life in God is real or mere fantasy:** To claim a relationship to God necessitates a commitment to moral standards expressed positively (to love as God himself loves) and negatively (to obey commandments and not to sin). (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**J Ligon Duncan** comments on 1Jn 2:6: "In other words, here's somebody who's saying, "Oh, I'm **abiding** in Christ, John." And John says, "Good. Well, then if you're **abiding** in Christ, then one thing that will happen is you'll walk like Christ."--in other words, you'll live like Christ. And how did Christ live? He lived in obedience to the Father. So, John is saying that you'll **abide** in Christ. And what does he mean by "**abiding in Christ**"? Well, to **abide in Christ** is to experience a life-giving relationship of the deepest and closest sorts with God through Jesus Christ, a relationship that issues forth not in passivity and indifference and indolence and inattention to duty, but a relationship that issues forth in activity and commitment and effort and love for God's will and following after Christ's way of living. And so John says, "Good. You abide in Christ? Well, then no doubt your whole life will have been transformed by that." If you're resting in Jesus Christ, if you've found Him to be the Source of every spiritual blessing, you're trusting in Him for salvation; you're fellowshiping with Him in grace; then your whole life will have been changed. You see, everyone who is **united with Christ** expresses that **union with Christ by living like Christ**, by emulating Christ's love for these to the Heavenly Father. Oh, we'll never do it perfectly. If you're looking for perfect obedience as the answer to this test, then no one will pass this test. But by grace God always works some obedience and some love for obedience in the life of those who claim to be His disciples....Now, my friends, that message is important for us; it's important for at least two reasons. It's important because there may be some of us here today who profess to be Christians who are not living in accordance with God's word and really have no deep desire to do so. And what John is saying to you is, "**You're not a Christian, friend. Come to grips with that. Realize that you need grace! You don't need to be brushed up and made to live it better; you need grace; you need saving grace!**" And there may be other Christians here today that are wrestling with a lack of assurance because of imperfections in their lives. And John is saying, "I'm not asking for perfect obedience to God's word; I'm asking you to look at your heart and answer this question: Do you long to obey God's word? If you answer that question 'yes,'" John says, "well, then I have some help for you here." He's going to give that help to you in the rest of this book. But, my friends, in that way this message is for all of us today. May God grant us to answer rightly John's questions. ([If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION OF WALKING THE TALK** - A congregation was singing, as a closing hymn, the familiar song, "For You I Am Praying." The speaker turned to a man on the platform and asked quietly, "For whom are you praying?"

The man was stunned. "Why, I guess I'm not praying for anybody. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I just heard you say, 'For you I am praying,' and I thought you meant it," the preacher replied.

"Oh, no," said the man. "I'm just singing."

Pious talk! A religion of words! To paraphrase James 1:22+, "We should be doers of the Word as well as talkers of the Word." We must walk what we talk. It is not enough to know the language; we must also live the life. "If we say—" then we ought also to do! (Wiersbe - [Be Real 1 John: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth](#))

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You are writing a gospel,  
A chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do,  
By the words that you say;  
Men read what you write,  
Whether faithless or true.  
Say—what is the gospel,  
According to you?  
—Paul Gilbert

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In the February 26, 1963, issue of *Look*, C. P. Snow made this trenchant comment concerning Winston Churchill: "He has not only helped to save us from dying. He has shown us a pattern of how life can be lived."

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Leslie Flynn points out that the Italian word for *influence* is *influenza*. The word *influenza* was introduced into English in the mid-1700s, apparently coming from the Italian phrase which attributed the origin of this malady to an *influenza di freddo* (influence of the cold). We are, by our very natures, very contagious people—our example tends to spread to others as easily as the flu. Everyone exerts influence.

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The comedian Sam Levenson once recalled that his over-protective mother went with him on his very first day of school and insisted on talking to the teacher before leaving him. Levenson said that, among other things, his mother told the teacher that if he misbehaved she should punish the boy next to him. Why? "My little boy learns by example," she said.

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**C H Spurgeon** - I believe that many weak ones in our churches are seriously injured, if not entirely broken down, by following the example of their ministers in matters wherein they come short of the Lord's mind. How grievous it would be if any believers were dwarfed through our conduct!

If we were better, our church-members would be better.

A minister soon gets round him people like himself: "like priest, like people."

He that cannot be safely imitated ought not to be tolerated in a pulpit.

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G. Campbell Morgan once received a letter from a man who was converted under his ministry. The man spoke of coming into the church as a boy, neglected and hungry, and as he listened to the great preacher he resolved that he, too, would like to become a preacher of the gospel. Not only did he become a minister, but in the course of time his son also went into the ministry. In the letter the man said: "From that night you became my great human ideal.... I think I have read every book you have written. I placed your picture on the fly-leaf of my Bible, and I have never stood up to preach without first turning to look upon it. It somehow helps me more than anything else."

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I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way.

The eye's a better pupil and much sharper than the ear.

Fine counsel can confuse me, but example's always clear.

The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true,

But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

—Author unknown

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We unconsciously imitate what pleases us and approximate to the characters we most admire.—Christian Nestell Bovee (1820–1904), U.S. author and lawyer

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I talk and talk and talk, and I haven't taught people in fifty years what my father taught by example in one week.—Mario Cuomo, former governor of New York

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**Like Jesus** - He who says he abides in [Jesus] ought himself also to walk just as He walked. —1 John 2:6

During a children's church service, the teacher talked about the first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). She suggested some ways for the kids to keep this command. She said, "Nothing should come before God—not candy, not schoolwork, not video games." She told them that putting God first meant that time with Him reading the Bible and praying should come before anything else.

An older child in the group responded with a thought-provoking question. She asked if being a Christian was about keeping rules or if instead God wanted to be involved in all areas of our life.

Sometimes we make the mistake of viewing the Bible as a list of rules. Certainly obeying God (John 14:21) and spending time with Him are important, but not because we need to be rule-keepers. Jesus and the Father had a loving relationship. When we have a relationship with God, we desire to spend time with Him and obey Him so we can become more like Jesus. John said, "He who says he abides in [Jesus] ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). He's the example we can follow.

When we want to understand how to love, or how to be humble, or how to have faith, or even how to set our priorities, we can look at Jesus and follow His heart. By Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, as I look ahead to another day, I give myself  
to be led by Your Spirit. Give discernment in  
priorities, but most of all a sensitive heart to live like  
Jesus did—filled with Your love and power. Amen.

Jesus calls us to follow Him.

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**The World Is Watching** - He who says he abides in [Jesus] ought himself also to walk just as He walked. —1 John 2:6

If the people in your community were asked about the Christians who live there, what do you think they would say? Would they say they recognize Christians by their love, or because of something else?

Consider these two true situations: In one small town a restaurant decided to close on Sunday nights because the staff refused to work for the after-evening-church crowd. The people who came from church were rude, messy, and left small tips.

In another town, the manager of a store that sold concert tickets reported that some of the rudest people she had ever met were several who had bought tickets to hear a well-known Christian singing group.

Sometimes we don't realize it, but the non-Christian world is watching us. Our neighbors and acquaintances and others we encounter notice our behavior. They know that if we claim to be followers of Christ we are supposed to be kind and compassionate. They know that our lives should reflect love and Christlikeness (John 13:35; 1 John 2:6). They know that we shouldn't be so busy with our own interests that we don't love other people.

Let's make sure the people who are watching our lives will want to get to know our Savior. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I want my life to shine for Jesus  
So that everywhere I go  
The watching world will see He loves them  
And His saving grace will know.  
—Hess

Nothing is so attractive as being like Christ.