

**1 John**  
**The Believer's New Relationship to Sin (Part 6)**  
**1 John 1:5 – 2:6**  
**December 12, 2021**

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1 John, chapter 1. In the Middle Ages, medical practice was still heavily influenced by the Greek model of the four humors: yellow bile, phlegm, black bile, and blood. That was an ancient tradition in the second century. The Greek physician, Galen, had revised and updated that model. But over a thousand years later, general medical theory still taught that the four humors in the body were controlled and regulated by the four elements that make up earth and the other planets: fire, water, earth, and air. They taught that disease, when it came, resulted from an imbalance of those humors, which they believed actually were caused often by the position of the moon and of the planets. In the Middle Ages, the two most common tools for diagnosing a person's health were feeling the pulse, that's helpful, and primarily visually examining a person's urine. In fact, during the Middle Ages, the urine flask was often the symbol of a doctor. Those of you who practice medicine can be grateful that we've moved on from that.

Fortunately today, when we think of a doctor's diagnostic tools, the primary one that immediately pops into our mind is the ubiquitous stethoscope hung around the doctor's neck. In every era, there are crucial diagnostic tools for determining the physical condition of a patient.

Well, in the same way, Scripture teaches that there are certain diagnostic tools that can appropriately diagnose your spiritual condition, a spiritual stethoscope, if you will. And we're learning what those diagnostic tools are as we work our way through the Apostle John's first letter.

John wrote this letter to give true believers assurance that, in fact, they are true believers. He's writing to people who remained in the churches after the false teachers had led people out of those churches following false teaching, and he's writing to encourage them that they really are in Christ, and he does so by giving three tests of eternal life. There's a moral test, obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word. There's a social test, love for God and His people. And there is a doctrinal test, faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

After the prologue, in the first four verses of this letter, the rest of the letter presents those three tests in three cycles. Each of the three tests occurs in each of the three cycles in this letter.

We're studying the first cycle and the first movement that runs from chapter 1, verse 5, down through chapter 2, verse 27. And the first test in this first movement is the moral test, "Our Obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word." Let's read it together, 1 John, chapter 1, and I'll begin in verse 5.

This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

My little children, I'm 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; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this, we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

This first test that we're given of eternal life is a very simple one. It's this, you can know, personally, that you have eternal life, that you're a true Christian because you have a new relationship to sin. Now, this first test is based on two fundamental biblical truths, as we've seen and learned. First of all, "God's Essential Nature of Holiness," verse 5, "...God is Light, and in Him...is no darkness at all." God is perfectly holy; He is perfectly without sin; and because of His holiness, you can't know the God who is light and be walking in the darkness. You can't say, "I know God," and still have the same relationship to sin that you've had before, it's impossible.

That introduces us to the second fundamental biblical truth, and that is, "The Believer's New Relationship to Sin." This begins in chapter 1, verse 6, runs down through chapter 2, verse 6. In the rest of this section that we just read together, John shows how our relationship to sin reveals whether we are true Christians or false Christians. You say, "What's a false Christian?" It's somebody who says, "Yes, I'm a Christian, I prayed a prayer, I walked an aisle, † I belong to

a church,” but isn't really a Christian. And unfortunately, the New Testament is clear, there are plenty of those. How do you know the difference? Well, you know the difference because of your relationship to sin.

Now, beginning in verse 6 of chapter 1, there's a recurring pattern. John first quotes the false claim of a person who's a false Christian. But then he explains how a real Christian thinks or acts, and that's the model we've seen again and again. Let me just remind you of what we have seen so far. “The Believer’s New Relationship to Sin” is first of all, shown by “The Pattern of His Life,” verses 6 and 7. A false Christian habitually lives in sin; a true Christian habitually lives in holiness.

Secondly, we saw that “The Believer’s New Relationship to Sin” is shown by “The Admission of Inherent Sinfulness” in verses 8 and 9. The false Christian denies that reality; the true Christian admits he's a sinner, and verse 9, confesses his sins.

Thirdly, we saw that this new relationship to sin is shown by “The Admission of Actual Sins.” In chapter 1, verse 10, a false Christian denies or downplays his sins; but in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, a true Christian admits his sin, hates his sin, and pursues holiness, and he trusts the work of Christ alone on the cross as the only solution for his sins. That's what we've studied and learned so far.

Now, today we learn that “The Believer’s New Relationship to Sin” is also shown by “His Obedience to Christ’s Commands,” his obedience to Christ’s commands. This is Chapter 2, verse 3 through the first half of verse 5. Look at that text again. Verse 4, Chapter 2:

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

Now as I read those verses, you'll note that here John slightly changes the pattern that we've seen so far. He begins in verse 3, with something new, a kind of general summary of this test, and then when you get to verse 4, you have the false Christian. Notice, “The one who says,” here's the false claim; and then in verse 5, you have the real Christian. So, let's look at it together.

First of all, in verse 3, you have this test summarized. Look at verse 3, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.” Now John uses, and I just want to note this for you, he uses two different Greek words for ‘knowledge’ throughout this letter, or ‘to know.’ The first Greek word is ‘*ginosko*’; it occurs twenty-five times. In classical Greek, this word always refers to knowledge gained by experience or by instruction.

The other word he uses is ‘*oida*’; he uses it fifteen times. And in classical Greek, this word always refers to ‘knowledge that is grasped directly or intuitively, something you come to on your own.’

Now in the first century, sometimes these Greek words were used with those classical definitions and meanings, but other times they're used really as synonyms. And as we work our way through John, we're going to see John use it both ways. At times, he uses these words with distinct meanings; and other times, he uses them essentially like we would use the word 'know' in English, in sort of a broad sense.

So, look again at what he says in verse 3. Here's what he literally says. "We are knowing." He uses the present tense in Greek. "We are knowing that we have come to know Him," he uses the perfect tense. So, he says, "Right now, we have this ongoing knowledge that, in the past, we have come to know God, and we still know Him."

Now first of all, look at the pronoun 'Him.' The question arises, does the pronoun 'Him' there in verse 3 refer to the Father, God the Father, or to God the Son? Well, if you go back to chapter 1, verses 6 and 7 there, John's clearly talking about fellowship with the Father, and that leads some people to conclude that, here in our text, he's talking about claiming to know the Father. But in context, the closest person in our text is in verse 1, Jesus Christ. And the pronouns in verse 2, clearly refer to the Son. And when you come to verse 6, as we'll see in a little bit, the same pronoun there refers to Christ and has to refer to Christ. So, this passage that we're looking at this morning is talking about primarily knowing Jesus Christ and obeying the Word or the commands of Jesus Christ. But of course, to know the Son is to know the Father; so, both are truly implied here.

Now, I want you to start with verse 3, with a reminder of the big picture of what John is trying to do. John is making it clear that believers can have, and the Lord wants us to have genuine assurance of our salvation. We can know, we can, know! And notice this assurance is not based on emotion; that's where a lot of people based their assurance or on some past experience. But rather, by taking a test, you can have a certain knowledge today that you belong to Jesus Christ, that you are a genuine Christian, by taking a simple test.

Notice how verse 3 begins, "By this," this identifies the test he has in mind, and then that points to the test that comes at the end of the sentence. Here's, "By this...if we keep His commandments." Now, notice the precision of how the Spirit expresses this test, knowing Christ comes first, and keeping His commandments follows. Think of it like this, it's like getting a test to see if you've already had COVID. If you take the test and they discover antibodies in your blood, those antibodies didn't cause the virus; they just show that you've already had it. Obedience is like that; obedience is a test of whether you've already come to know Christ, not how you come to know Him. Obedience is the fruit of knowing Christ, not the root. Obedience is the result of knowing Christ, not the cause. Obedience is the antibody that shows that you've truly come to know Him.

What is the cause, then, of a life of obedience? If, true believers, if those who are in Christ all obey Christ, how did that happen? How do all of us have that same mark in our lives? And the answer is because of the work of the Spirit at the moment of salvation in something we call regeneration. Or Jesus calls it, "the new birth," in John 3. Because of what happens to you at

the moment of salvation, because God gives you a new spiritual life, out of that life comes obedience.

Do you remember how the Prophet, Ezekiel, described regeneration? Listen carefully, Ezekiel 36:27, this is how God describes the change that happens to a person the moment they truly become a Christian, the moment they truly come to know God. Listen to this, at that moment, “I will put My Spirit within you and (I will) cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” You see the reason true believers obey Christ is because God, at the moment of salvation, gave them the Spirit and the Spirit causes them to walk in obedience. The two go together. If you've been converted, if you've been redeemed, if you've truly been changed by the Spirit of God, then you're not the person you used to be. You have God's Spirit within you, and the Spirit is at work to cause you to walk in God's ways.

So, the cause of the true believer's obedience is the fact that he has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. You can see how this becomes immediately evidence of whether or not you have the Spirit. As Jesus said in John 3, you can't see the Spirit, the Spirit's like the wind; all you can see is the effects of the wind. You don't see the wind, you see the trees moving, you see the leaves blowing, and you know there's wind.

Well, how do you know if the Spirit has blown into your life? It's because He is causing you to walk in God's ways. That's the point, by the way, of James 2, and the description there of the relationship between faith and works. In fact, look at James 2 with me for a moment. This is the point James is making in James 2, verse 14. He says, “What use is it, my brethren, if



someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that kind of faith save him?” Can a kind of faith that has no works, truly be saving faith? And James goes on to say, “No, it can't be.” I mean, and he uses an example, I love this, verse 15:

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

You know what he's saying? He's saying, “Think about these qualities that describe a person, compassion. How do you know if a person is compassionate? Because they say, “I'm compassionate!” No! Because they might say to somebody who needs compassion, “I'm compassionate. I hope you get it somewhere. You know, I hope somebody meets those needs.” Now, the only way those qualities that mark us internally can be known to be real is when they express themselves, and that's what he's saying about faith. You can't say, “I have faith,” but there's no evidence of it. It's like saying, “I have compassion,” and saying to somebody, “Be warmed and be filled.” No, there has to be this evidence. He goes on to say in verse 17, “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself.” Verse 18, “But someone may well say, ‘You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, (James says.) and I will show you my faith by my works.’” What's happening here? James is not talking about works being a way to be justified, to be declared righteous. Paul is clear in both Romans and Galatians that's impossible. Instead, James is contrasting a living faith and a dead faith.

It's a serious warning for all who call themselves Christians. If you're here this morning and say, “I'm a Christian.” Well, James says, “Listen, there are two kinds of faith. There's real living faith that actually saves, and there's deceiving dead faith, that damns.”

As John Calvin writes, “The question with James is not how men attain righteousness before God, but how they prove to others that they are justified.” That's John's point in our text. Your obedience to Jesus Christ is the mark of whether you're truly His, of whether you truly love Him.

And John makes this point often. In fact, turn to John, let me show you this, John's gospel. Look at John, chapter 8; John, chapter 8, verse 31, “...Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him,” they had expressed some initial faith in Him. And Jesus said, ‘Listen, here's how you can know if that initial expression of faith is genuine.’ “...If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine,” if you continue in my word.

In other words, here's how, you know, if you've come to know Me, do you obey Me? Look at verse 43, “Why do you not understand what I'm saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.” You don't have the capacity to hear Me. Why? Because “You are (still) of your father the devil, and you want to do his desires.” You don't care about the truth, just like Satan doesn't care about the truth. Verse 45:

Because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak (the) truth, why do you not believe Me? (And then He answers His question in verse 47.) He who is of God (the one who belongs to God, the one who has been saved by God, the one who has been given new life by God) He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.

Here's the test. If you claim to be a Christian, ask yourself, what do you do with this Book? What do you do with what's written here? That's the test. Look at chapter 10; John 10, verse 27, Jesus says, "My sheep (those who are really mine) hear My voice." He's not talking about audibly; He's not talking about some vision, some experience; He's talking about His Word. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." They obey my Word. Turn over to chapter 14, in the Upper Room Discourse. Jesus continues to make this point, verse 15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Verse 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." Verse 23, "Jesus...said... 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him.'" Verse 24, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, who sent Me." Jesus couldn't make it any clearer, could he? What do you do with Jesus's commands? Do they matter to you? Do you try day after day to walk in obedience to Jesus commands? Obedience is a powerful test.

It's interesting in Revelation, chapter 12, Verse 17, John continues on this theme, and in the last Book of the New Testament, John describes Christians there as those, "...who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." In Revelation, chapter 14, verse 12, He says, "Here is the perseverance of the saints (those) who keep the commandments of God and (who keep) their faith in Jesus." It's both, because one shows the evidence of the other. That's really what he's saying back in our text. Look again at 1 John, chapter 2, verse 3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." That's "The Test Summarized."

Now next, beginning in verse 4 and running through the first half of verse 5, we see “The Test Applied.” Here he comes back to the pattern we've seen throughout this passage. First of all, he tells us in verse 4, that “A False Christian Consistently Disobeys Jesus’s Commands;” a false Christian, that is somebody who says, “Yep, I'm a Christian. Count me in. I know Christ. I know God,” but consistently disobeys Jesus; that person is a false Christian. Verse 4, “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’” literally, “The one who is saying.” This is a person who is consistently claiming that they have fellowship with God, that they have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, that they've come to know God. Verse 4, “The one who (is consistently claiming that) and does not keep His commandments.” Notice the plural, “commandments.” These are the commands Christ gave us in His Word. ‘Keeping His commands’ is the same as ‘walking in the light,’ back in chapter 1, verse 6 and 7, and practicing righteousness, as we'll see in the end of Chapter 2. So, here's the point, if you are consistently claiming that you have truly come to know God but at the same time, you are not keeping His commandments as a habit of life, verse 4 says that one is a liar.

Here's John's response to somebody who claims to know Christ but doesn't obey Christ, his claim is a lie! It's not just a mistake, it's a lie. It may be a conscious lie, or it may be a self-deceiving lie, but it's a lie! He goes on to say in verse 4, “...and the truth is not in him.” In other words, John says, “Listen, whatever that person claims, the real truth of the Christian faith isn't in them.” Why is that? Because those who consistently refuse to obey Jesus Christ are deceiving themselves. Because if you refuse to obey Jesus Christ, you have never truly confessed Him as Lord, which Romans 10: 9 and 10 says, is crucial to being a Christian. You

have to “confess Him as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.” And if you're not obeying Him as Lord, then you've never confessed Him as Lord, and your heart hasn't been changed. So, their profession of being a Christian is bogus.

Look at chapter 3, verse 6, “No one (No exceptions! No one!) who abides (or remains) in (Jesus) sins.” That is, as a pattern, as an ongoing habit and pattern of life. They're “walking in the darkness” as chapter 1, verse 6 puts it. Turn over to the book of Titus. Titus is dealing with this on the island of Crete where he pastored, and Paul says, “Listen. True believers are marked by obedience. On the other hand, false Christians are marked by disobedience.” Look at chapter 1 of Titus, verse 10, “...there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision.” There were those Jewish people who had connected to the church who made a false profession. And how did they know that? Verse 16, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” As one writer puts it, “Actions speak louder than words,” we say. We mean that they are closer, that is actions are a closer indication of the real person, a better window into the soul. Words are comparatively cheap. They can easily deceive; whatever he may claim, the person who disobeys God does not actually and truly know God. If he did, he would bow unquestionably to God's authority, wisdom, and power. So, a false Christian then, consistently disobeys Jesus's commands.

But on the other side of that, “A True Christian Consistently Obeys Jesus's Commands.” Look at Verse 5, “...but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.” Now, what does this mean, this word ‘keeps, keeps His Word’? Well notice, first of all, that

instead of the plural commandments in verse 4, now John speaks of the singular word in verse 5. He's talking about the collective, the comprehensive teaching of Jesus, everything Jesus taught. He keeps it. Now clearly, John doesn't mean perfect obedience. Remember, back in Chapter 1, verse 7, he says even as we walk in the light, we need cleansing from sin. Verse 9, true Christians regularly have to confess their sins; chapter 1, verse 10, true Christians don't deny their actual sins; chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, when we sin, "...we have an Advocate with the Father." So, keeping the commandments is not perfect obedience.

I love the way John Calvin puts it. He says:

He does not mean that those who wholly satisfy the law, keep His commandments. No such instance can be found in the world. But, (And I love this definition. Here's what it means to keep his commandments.) 'Those who strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God.' (Let me read that again, that's a great definition.) 'Those who strive according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God.'

That's what it means to keep His Word. One Greek lexicon defines the word 'keep' in this sense, 'as to persist in obedience.'

Practically, how do you keep His Word? Well, there are several key elements; let me just list them for you. I'm not going to develop them, but here's what it means to keep His Word. It begins by knowing His Word. You can't keep what you don't know. So, it begins by knowing His Word. Secondly, there is a desire to obey. You have to know the Word; you have to desire to obey it. Thirdly, and this is what sanctification is about, you have to expend maximum effort

to obey. In other words, God's not going to zap you. He's given you the Spirit; He has given you the desire to obey; He's given you His Word, and if you have the Spirit, you're going to desire to obey, and that desire is going to be translated into expending maximum effort to obey.

And then fourthly, as you expend that maximum effort, you depend on Christ and His Spirit to empower your obedience and to do what you could never do, and that is to change you. You see, our obedience doesn't change us. I can obey my parent, when I'm a child, I can obey my parent with all the wrong motives and with a terrible heart. So, obedience doesn't change you. You are responsible to obey, but as you obey and as you depend on Christ and His Spirit, Christ and through His Spirit, through the Word does what you can't do. He changes you at the basic heart level! This is biblical sanctification.

Now, he says, "...whoever keeps His word," and notice what this obedience shows in verse 5, "...in him the love of God has truly (That is corresponding to truth or reality.) been perfected." Now first of all, notice 'whoever' keeps his word, that's all genuine believers here. And in that person, the love of God, now stop there. The love of God is a bit ambiguous. It could mean God's love for us has been perfected. Or it could mean our love for God has been perfected. In context, it has to mean the second for several reasons.

First of all, because that's how John uses this expression a number of times in his letter. Look at chapter 2; look at 1 John, chapter 2, verse 15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, (Here it is.) the love of the Father is not in him." What does he mean? He means you don't really love the Father, alright? Look at chapter 3, verse 17, he

uses it the same way, "...whoever has (this) world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" That is, how does our love for God, how can that be if we don't love others?

So, back in our text, it's our love for God, our love for God is perfected. Also here, John is speaking of what in us provides evidence that we know Christ. And another reason I would say this must mean our love for God here is a very similar expression is used over in Chapter 5, verse 3. Turn over there and here it must mean our love for God. Look at verse 3 of chapter 5, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." It doesn't mean this is God's love for us that we keep His commandments; it means this is how we know we love God when we keep His commandments. So, back in chapter 2, verse 5, John's point is this, when we consistently keep Christ's Word, it becomes clear that we truly love Him, that's the point. And we've already seen that so often expressed in John's gospel.

But you see it even here in 1 John. Look at chapter 3, verse 16:

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (How does true love for God abide in that heart?) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth.

The point in those verses is this, we only know love is real when what happens? When we act on that love. I mean, if I say all day long to my wife, "I love you, I love you, I love you," and it never expresses itself, then that's not real love. It's true again with any quality, compassion. If I



say, "I'm a compassionate person and I never meet anybody's needs," I'm not a compassionate person. If I say, "I'm a person of courage," well, I can say that all day long till I get to the battle; but if in the battle, that courage doesn't demonstrate itself, then it's not courage. That's exactly what's being said here. As John Stott puts it, "True love for God is expressed, not in sentimental language or mystical experience, but in moral obedience," true love for God.

Now, let's just say that what I'm telling you this morning is out of step with contemporary Christianity. If you talk about obedience in many contemporary evangelical churches, you are labeled a legalist. That is merely symptomatic of the church's consistent failure to teach the basic biblical doctrine of sanctification. Tragically, I know a pastor who has made a shipwreck of his life in the faith, who even taught his congregation, this was a man who was an evangelical pastor, a man who once taught in this church, who taught that it's legalism to read God's Word every day. "That's just being legalistic if you want to be in the Bible every day." John says that the one who professes to be a Christian and lives in disobedience to Jesus Christ, "is a liar," because his behavior denies his profession of Jesus Christ as Lord. So, the believer's new relationship to sin is shown by obedience to Christ's commands.

There's one final way that our new relationship to sin is shown, and that is that it is "Shown by a Desire to Be Like Christ." This is from the middle of verse 5 down through verse 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.

Now, John, once again, changes the structure of his argument, but he's still essentially making the same point. In this case, the claim of the false Christian is not directly stated, but merely implied.

So, let me draw it out for you, “A False Christian,” in this point, “Is Content with His Current Condition and Does Not Desire or Pursue Likeness to Jesus Christ;” a false Christian is content with his current condition and does not desire or pursue likeness to Jesus Christ. You can see this implied in John's statement. Look again at what he says:

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.

If that is true of a genuine Christian, then the opposite is true of a false Christian. Let me state it for you, look at it again, let me read it that way, we could say it this way, “By this, we know that we are not in Him. The one who says he abides in Him and does not walk in the same manner as Jesus walked.”

I mean, that's what Jesus said, you remember, back in John 8, verse 44, He said unbelievers desire not to obey God, but to obey (Whom?) their father, Satan. That's what they want, they want their sin. They want to live in their sin. They don't desire to be like Jesus Christ. Hey listen, if you're here this morning, and you're perfectly comfortable with who you are, maybe there's one sin or two that you're kind of embarrassed by, but you don't like the fact that they really dominate and control you, you'd like to be rid of, but if you could be rid of those, you'd be just as happy as you can be to live exactly as you are, then you're not a Christian.

True Christians, and this brings us to the other side of it; “A True Christian Desires and Pursues Likeness to Jesus Christ;” a true Christian desires and pursues likeness to Jesus Christ. Again, look at verse 5:

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

Now, the Greek word for ‘abides’ there, it’s used twenty-four times in this letter. It literally means ‘to stay or to remain.’ Unfortunately, that word ‘abide’ has gotten this sort of mystical sense like, abiding in Christ means you have this sort of mystical connection to Jesus. That’s not what this word means. It just means ‘to stay or to remain.’ In fact, it’s used in 2 John, 9, “(To) abide in the teaching about Jesus.” That’s not mystical, that’s objective. It means, you continue, you remain. It’s used that way in the key text, 1 John, chapter 2, verse 19, “The false Christians went out from us, if they were really part of us, if they were really Christians, they would have (Here’s our word.) remained.” (Paraphrased.) They would have remained, they would have abided, they would have stayed.

As Burdick writes, “The word ‘abide’ does not describe a closer, more intimate relationship with Christ, sometimes referred to us as ‘the abiding life enjoyed only by the more devoted Christian.’ No! All believers are in Christ and abide in Him.” If you’re a Christian, you stay with Christ, you continue with Christ. So, John says, “If we are claiming to continue to abide (That is to stay with Christ, to remain with Christ.) then, we ought to be walking in the same manner as He walked.” The expression, “as He walked,” looks at the entire life of Jesus Christ, like a snapshot, like a photo you take with your iPhone. There it is, there’s His life, that’s how

we ought to walk. We're to perpetually order our patterns, our habits, our lifestyle to reflect our Lord's righteous life.

The goal isn't to sort of in some vague way to be like Him; but notice, "To walk just as He walked." You understand, Christian, that is God's goal for you? That's God's goal for every believer. Look at chapter 3; 1 John, 3, verse 2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. (But) we know (this) that when He appears, we will be like Him." That's what God set out to do.

I love Romans, chapter 8, verse 29, right after it says whatever you're facing, Christian, in this life, God's using it to accomplish spiritual good in your life, the very next thing, he says, is this, "... (God) predestined you," Christian. He predestined you, he predetermined your destiny, and what destiny was that? "That you would be conformed to the image of His Son." That was His plan. 2 Corinthians, 3:18, "We all (every believer) ... beholding as in a mirror (talking about the Scripture, beholding as in a mirror) the glory of our Lord, are being transformed (The Greek word is the word from which we get our word 'metamorphosis,' are being transformed.) into the same image (the image of Jesus Christ) from glory to glory." That is, from one level of glory to another. As you go through this life, you're gradually becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, "... just as from the Lord, the Spirit." This is what God saved you for. It's what's happening if you're a true Christian, and it's what every true Christian desires; that's what every true Christian desires.

What does it look like to live like Christ? Well, it means to be like Him in our characters.

Read Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit, and then read the Gospels. That's what you see in Jesus: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and so forth. It means to be like Him in our characters.

It means to live like Him in our priorities. What was His priority? Well, Matthew 24, "Love God and love people," that's what your life should look like, love God and love people.

It also means that it should be like Him in our daily obedience to the Scripture, to what God has said. Jesus lived like that. John 8:29, "...I always do the things that are pleasing to (the Father)," that was Jesus. That's why Jesus heard the Father say from heaven in Matthew 3:17, "...This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We ought to imitate our Lord's obedience. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, Paul says, "Be imitators of me, ...as I am...also...of Christ."

In the end, to obey Christ's commands to us and to seek to be like Him are one and the same thing. And together, listen carefully, together, they are the most accurate diagnostic tool of your spiritual condition. Take the stethoscope of those two basic principles we've looked at this morning and check out your spiritual condition. Are you spiritually alive?

Turn to Matthew, chapter 7, this is such an important truth that Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount, stressing this very reality. Verse 21; Matthew 7:21:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, (Not everybody who claims to be a Christian is getting in.), but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on (the) day (of judgment), “Lord, Lord, Wait a minute! Look at all we did in your name.” (Paraphrased.)

Verse 23, “...then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, (And here's the key, you don't have to be afraid of this, Christian. Here's who He's going to say this to, those) WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” You see, what He's saying is, “Hey, you can claim to know me all you want, but if your life is characterized not by obedience but lawlessness, you're not mine, I never knew you. And he goes on to tell the parable, verse 24:

Therefore (in light of that fact), everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

He's talking about a life, a Christian profession that withstands the judgment.

On the other hand, verse 26:

Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. (Again, judgment comes.) the rain fell, ...the floods came, ...the winds blew...slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.

So, let me ask you a question, in this parable, what's the rock? It's not Jesus, that's the common answer, “It's Jesus, He's the rock.” Well, He is the rock, but that's not what He's teaching here.

Notice what he says. Notice the difference between the two houses. One's built on a rock; the other is built on sand. But the difference in these two lives, verse 24, those “who hear these words of Mine and acts on them.” Verse 26, those “who hear these words of Mine and does not act on them.” The rock that will show your Christian profession is true and genuine, is a life of obedience to Jesus Christ. So, take the test. It doesn't have to be perfect obedience, but do you desire and actually pursue obeying the commands of Jesus Christ? If so, then you can check the box, and say, “I'm His. I have come to know Him.” But if not, then you are not a Christian no matter what your profession might be.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for these clarifying truths. I pray that you'd help each of us to take the test and, Father, for those of us who pass the test, thank you for your grace in encouraging us, helping us gain the assurance that you so much want us to have. Lord, for every true believer here, may this passage be a great comfort.

But, Father, I pray for those who didn't pass the test, who don't really desire or pursue likeness to Christ, who don't consistently obey His commands; Father, help them to see that they're not truly Christians at all, that they're liars. But, Father, thank you that if they will repent today and cry out for a changed heart, that you've said you will never turn away the one who humbles himself before you. I pray that they would do so even today. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.