

1John 1:3-6

One of great blessings in the Christian's life is:

We can absolutely know we are saved - we can have assurance of salvation

Thomas Brooks – Assurance is a sensible feeling, and an experiential discerning of a man's being in a state of grace.

Well many Christians are confused – they are not sure

But we can be and it is only when we have certainty that we will have peace

Only then can we truly sing

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, Oh what a foretaste of glory divine

Heir of salvation purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long

You see having assurance quiets the anxious heart and rests the soul

Certainty of salvation is the birthright of all Christians

Not having that assurance brings doubt and fear but

Scripture teaches that those who are saved can never lose their salvation

If you are a believer you are permanently sealed by the Holy Spirit

And nothing can separate you from the love of your Savior

But after we are saved for a while

That initial wave of excitement or joy is often replaced by insecurity

Did this really happen to me – could it have been all that easy

How come I don't still feel the way I did when I said that prayer

Formerly you had not found God – now God has found you

But somewhere down the road the emotion wears off

And the Christian begins to wonder if anything has really changed

He thought he was a new creation in Christ

But he seems worse off than he was before

The same temptations are present

He often sins like he used to but he doesn't enjoy it as much

And sin is inevitably followed by guilt

His non-Christian friends don't appeal to him like they used to

And the people in church - they have it all together – he doesn't

He doesn't seem to fit in anywhere

The question often arises –

Am I really saved - How can I truly know that I know God
To answer this question is one of the purposes of John's writing
Until now John has been dealing with the reality of sin in the Christian life
He has set forth the theology of atonement
Now he begins to show how a Christian may truly know he is Born Again
Or to use John's own language – how he may know that he knows God
As I mentioned a few weeks ago – John gives three tests of salvation
The first test and the one we are looking at today is the moral test
The moral test is the test of increasing righteousness
Knowing God will lead an increasingly righteous life
It does not mean that you will be sin free – the old nature will see to that
But it does mean that a believer will be moving in a direction
That causes them to be more like Jesus
There will be ups and downs – hills and valleys in your life
But John says
If you are not increasingly stressed by and unsatisfied with sin
You have cause to doubt your salvation
From what John has already written
It is easy to understand the importance of this test
If a person only claims to know God and does not lead a moral life
He will justify the sinful things he does
Or he will say that sin is not sin
Or that God does not care about sin
Or that he is allowed to sin because they have been paid for
John calls this man a liar
And his presence in the church undermines true Christianity
The life of a Christian should glorify God and advertise Jesus Christ
And one person calling themselves a Christian and flagrantly sinning
Harms the church more than you can know
If salvation is indeed genuine there will be signs
That the Spirit is working in your life both in attitude and behavior
John's purpose in writing is clearly stated in chapter 5, verse 13
These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may
know that you have eternal life

So let's consider how we may know that we have eternal life

Let's look at John's moral test (Read Verse 3)

By this we may know that we have come to know Him

You see assurance comes when you obey God's commandments

Those who do not obey Christ will always wonder if their salvation is real

Obedient believers and only obedient believers will be certain they have come to know Jesus Christ

This isn't new teaching - John isn't just trying to figure things out

And then let others know what he thinks

He's really telling his readers what Jesus told His disciples

John 14 – If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. He who does not love Me, does not keep My words.

How can you be sure that you are Jesus' disciple – you obey Him

And John writes – Discipleship gives you certainty of salvation

John stresses knowledge – by this we may know that we know God

The Gnostics made much of knowledge – secret hidden knowledge

Available to only a few

John says – you like knowledge – let me give you a test of knowledge

What is it that characterizes the one who truly knows God

The one who truly knows God lives righteously

The Greeks believed you could arrive at the knowledge of God by reason

In other words you can think your way to God

They believed that with their mind alone

They could unlock the mysteries of the universe

That thinking is still prevalent in today's society

Literally thousands of scientists – many of them paid by tax dollars

Spend their day working with all their capabilities

Trying to unlock the secrets of the universe

So that they might prove that matter not God is eternal

The Bible states that these intelligent well paid scientists are fools

The knowledge that John is writing about is not mystical or hidden

It's not the knowledge of unredeemed men puffed up by their own reasoning

John is writing about truth

Jesus is truth and to know God you must enter into truth

In the movie *The Last Samurai* the wise leader tells the angry American
“One could spend his whole life studying the cherry blossom”
And then he adds – “It would not be a wasted life”
I guess that is what passes for wisdom
If you want to spend a lifetime of study and not waste your life
Study Jesus Christ – nothing else works
All else in this world pales in comparison to the truth of Christ
Now John’s point is that external obedience provides evidence
Of life-changing internal transformation
Now you may say something like – I want to do good but I keep returning to the same sin
Believe me when I say that we all know exactly how you feel
The apostle Paul understood how you feel – he wrote of his own life
The good that I wish I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish
Sharing the same struggles Paul went through isn’t all bad news
That struggle that you experience with the flesh
Is actually a constant reminder of your salvation
Born again Christians are the only ones in the struggle
We have the Holy Spirit and we have the flesh and they are at war
That war will go on within us until glory
Now obedience that comes forth from salvation
Is not our following a set of man-made rules imposed externally
That is legalism - it promotes pride and leads to discouragement
And it never, ever pleases God
The obedience John is writing about
Is internal - written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit
John MacArthur - New Covenant people have God’s Law written on their hearts, and what is in a
person’s heart controls how he or she lives.
The obedience of Christians comes from a changed heart
Not because you can change it – for you cannot
But God is at work in you to will and to work for His good pleasure
God is at work in you developing the character of His Son in your heart
And the major byproduct of God’s work in you
The thing that is most evident - is the obedience of love
John wants an obedience that flows forth from God’s work in you

And your mindset, which is fixed on pleasing God
That is an unbeatable combination
Under the Old Covenant of the Law – any variance was fatal
Scripture states that the soul that sins shall surely die
God doesn't mess around - that's tough love to the extreme
In the New Covenant God accepts His Children's imperfect obedience
And forgives their disobedience – it doesn't get better than that
Many believe we try hard for God and He forgives our sins
If that were the Christian life – that would be okay
It wouldn't be joyous but it would do
God has so much more for those who are His
He gave us His Spirit to empower and to change us
He gives grace to save us and to move us toward Him
We are incapable of living the Christian life without God's power
It just can't be done
But praise be to God
In Jesus Christ we have everything we need for life and godliness
What God has done for us moves us to obedience
What Christ does in us gives us the ability to obey
Loving obedience in daily living assures us
That we are sons and daughters of the Living God

That is John's test of salvation
Let's consider the application of the test (READ 4,5)
Ever have Bible passages that you wish were softer in their approach
A little more wishy-washy
If you do – this has to be one of them – this is black and white
To say you know God means that you obey Him
If you say you know God and don't obey Him – you're lying
Just what does John mean by that
John is really stating that - Any claim of fellowship with God
Is completely unfounded if it is not based upon obedience
And if you are lying about your fellowship
You may be deceived about your salvation

Jesus told Pontius Pilate – Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice
Those who are in God’s kingdom hear His voice and obey it
John is exposing the empty pretenses of those who claimed
They had ascended to a higher level of truth
That claimed to have special revelation and deeper knowledge
Yet they lived sinful lives – it doesn’t work that way
God’s condition for fellowship is simple
Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you
We draw near to God by faith and righteous living
So John’s question is – Since your life does not remind us of Jesus
And you say you have special knowledge - where did you get it
For it could not have come from God
Now John isn’t telling us anything not found elsewhere in Scripture
The apostle James wrote – Faith if it has no works is dead. Just as the body without the spirit is dead so
also faith without works is dead
Those whose faith is genuine will obey the truth
Now I don’t want to confuse you with this
John has already noted that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves
So John is not telling us that if we sin we are unsaved – don’t go there
If that were the case no one in this room would be saved – we all sin
What John is saying is this
When you live in sin you are not in fellowship with God
And if you say you are – you are lying
Sin does not take away your salvation – it destroys your fellowship with God
That is why repentance and confession are so important
So if you are living in sin and telling others you have this love relationship with Jesus
John says – I don’t think so – it doesn’t work that way
Now listen carefully – you can be saved and be deceived and be a liar
There are perhaps millions of people who fit that exact bill
But you cannot live like the rest of the world
And claim to have this sweet special relationship with God
That is the negative portion of the test
John also gives us a positive test
He writes - Whoever keeps His Word; in him the love of God has been truly perfected

This verse is better translated

Whoever keep His Word; in him the love for God has been truly perfected

For that is what John means – love and obedience are linked

As your love for God grows the result will be obedience

Genuine love for Christ causes you to obey Him

That obedience gives you certainty that you are in Him

John Stott – “To be in Christ”, is Paul’s characteristic description of a Christian. John uses it too. Being a Christian consists in essence of a personal relationship to God in Christ, knowing Him, loving Him, and abiding in Him, as the branch abides in the vine.

We have John’s test of salvation – The test applied and now let’s consider

The test lived out (Read Verse 6)

How many of you would want to be sure of your salvation

If you want complete certainty of salvation - abide in Christ

Our role model is Jesus

So if you say you are abiding in Christ

You ought to live your life just as He lived his life – those are scary words

Jesus relationship to His Father is the perfect example of abiding

Remember we are to walk as Jesus walked

He said “I only do those things My Father tells Me”; “I only say those things My Father tells Me”;
“Without the Father, I can do nothing

Jesus lived His life for and in perfect obedience to - the Father

And His relationship to the Father is the model for our relationship to Him

John 15 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit apart from the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do – what’s that next word – apart from Me, you can do - nothing

What Jesus was in perfection to His Father

We are to be in our weakness towards Him

As Jesus was perfectly submitted to the Father

We are to be perfectly submitted to Him

Phil 2 -Although He existed in form as God, He did not regard equality with God as something to be held onto, but He emptied Himself, and being made in the likeness of man, He took the form of a bond-servant

The word translated bond-servant actually means a voluntary slave

Jesus Christ Eternal Creator God not only came to earth to be a perfect man

He came to earth as a bond-servant – a voluntary slave

Now we romanticize this passage and say - He came to serve all man-kind
Isn't that sweet - but that is not the meaning
Jesus lived His life as a slave or a bond-servant to His Father
As a slave He did only those things His Father told him to do
He said only those things his Father told him to say
Because He abided in the Father
He knew what to do – He knew what to say
He knew when to live for the Father and He knew when to die for Him
Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many
In obedience to the will of His Father
And because He abided in the Father the Father's power resided in Him
He said of His relationship God – without My Father I can do nothing
And He has told us – Just like My Father sent Me, that is precisely how - I am sending you
Even as branches are dependent upon the vine for life and to produce fruit
You draw your spiritual life from Jesus
And you produce fruit to the precise extent
That the life of Christ is flowing through you
If you try to live the Christian life in your own strength
Doing the best you can for Jesus
You will fail and you will become discouraged
To successfully live the Christian life you must be “In Him”
His bond-servant – His voluntary slave
As you abide in Christ His power is displayed through you
And only then are you able to walk in the same manner as Christ walked
Jesus said of Himself
For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father has commanded Me.
He has said of us - As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you
Let me tell you - You have been saved for a great purpose
God has plans for you and they are magnificent
Just as Christ demonstrated to a watching world what the Father is like
You are to demonstrate to a watching world what Jesus Christ is like
And when you live in perfect obedience to and dependence upon Jesus
His power in you gives you the ability to do the will of Him who sent you

You can obey Christ only to the extent of your abiding in Him
That is how you attain the power to do it
Abide in Christ – you will have power to obey and you will produce fruit
When you live like that the world will know that you love Jesus
And they will know what Jesus is like
Don't abide in Christ
And your testimony will come across as made up and hollow
That is the Christian life
How are you coming along
Are you living the Christian life
Or are you working hard to please God without the power to do it
If you try to live the Christian life without Christ's power – you will fail
You will become discouraged – and you will fall and you will fall again
You may even wonder if you are a Christian at all
And while you are striving hard to please Jesus
Do nice things for Him and keep from sinning
You will be filled with guilt and remorse
But it doesn't have to be that way – it is not supposed to be that way
Jesus is calling to you – Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest
Ready to put that burden down
And rest in Christ
Then walk as Jesus walked