

Assurance That We Know Him!

Knowing the Love of God

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The apostle James wrote,

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Faith is a complete trust and confidence in God, based on His character and promises as revealed in Scripture. In contrast, doubting is a vacillating between trusting God, and trusting the world or one's own natural abilities. This makes a person like a wave of the sea, a picture of instability and uncertainty. A person who doubts God's promises dishonors Him. A doubter must not expect that he will receive anything from God, since he is unsure whether God is trustworthy to act on His assurances and guarantees.

Therefore, we can conclude that it is vitally important that we know the love of God, and know that we know God without doubting.

To properly keep Passover we have to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are assured of eternal life because of what God and Christ have done for us and will do in the future. We know God if we believe—have faith—in the name of Jesus Christ and all that it means. To believe in the name of the Son of God is to know the assurance of eternal life.

I John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

Faith in the name of Jesus Christ enables us to know that we are assured of eternal life.

In a sense, I John is a response to the rise of the early form of Gnosticism. This was a religious mysticism that pirated and counterfeited Christian themes to spread an understanding of salvation based on esoteric "knowledge." According to the Gnostic's view, redemption is through affirming the divine light already in the human soul, *not*

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through faith in the name of the Son of God, repentance of sin, and Christ's death to bring about spiritual rebirth.

John wrote to Christians who had witnessed an exodus from their ranks. This does not mean that everything that John wrote should be interpreted as a response to schism. John's focus is positive, *not* negative. His aim is redemptive, not reactionary. He urges us to refine our biblical understanding, sharpen our ethical firmness, and heighten our diligence in loyalty and commitment to God and His church. In other words, we must grow in faith, obedience, and love.

However, John's letter is not a list of what to do and not do. First, John highlights what God the Father has done in sending Christ His Son, offering Him up as a sacrifice for sins, and sending forth the Word of Life.

God's action becomes the authorization of those who believe in His Son. John says, "Whoever does the will of God abides forever." It is the will of God that we believe in His Son. God's will is for us to receive the good news and saving message of Christ's coming, to rejoice in the commands of Christ's teaching, and benefit from the love of the Father as we in turn benefit others in Christian love for one another and ministry—service—to the world. This is not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth. God's will is for us to know that we know the Father by knowing Jesus Christ.

With this background, let us see what test John puts forth regarding our knowing God.

I John 2:3-6 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

As we approach Passover, it is very important that we are certain that we *know* that we know God. The apostle John wrote to assure us of that! We must not take the Passover while doubting God's assurance and guarantee. We must take it in faith!

John, at the beginning of the third verse, applies the doctrine that he has been laying down from the beginning of his letter—fellowship with God, fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ; that is the essential thing that had prompted John to write it.

There were people in the church who were causing others to doubt the integrity of God's ministers, and to doubt the administration of God's church. They thought they could do a better job, but all they did was to cause dissatisfaction among God's people. They were hurting fellowship with God.

Fellowship with God is only possible in and through Jesus Christ and His perfect work. And certainly John has shown us so clearly that as we go forward in this walk with God, even if we unintentionally commit sin—that does not make our position hopeless. But dissatisfied people always feel hopeless and frustrated.

He shows us that our sin is dealt with by the atoning work of Christ as Advocate, Intercessor, and Mediator as He presents it to the notice of the Father. He is pleading, as an advocate presenting a case. And so, in the light of that we have this great certainty concerning the whole basis of our standing in the presence of God.

The book of I John gives numerous means of self-diagnosis. Here the test is ethical: do professing Christians have a changed life and keep God's commandments?

Obedience to God does not bring about justification (which comes by faith). Obedience as a pattern of life gives evidence that one has been born from above. To know Him involves a personal relationship that transforms practical behavior. The love of God is perfected in those who obey and have faith. This love is not only a feeling but also an ethical response in which we keep His word. It is an action of obedience and submission.

The Christian life is a *whole way of life*; it is not a matter of intellectual assent to knowledge or doctrine, and therefore John deals with the whole thing in a very practical manner.

There are certain things that will interrupt our fellowship with God. So John, in verses 3-6, deals with one of these matters; that is, that we know that we know Him. As he does this, he introduces to us a number of his typical, characteristic words. All these Biblical writers have their favorite words; it is one of the interesting aspects of inspiration. Inspiration does not mean mechanical dictation; the personality of these inspired men comes out in their writing.

And as we all have favorite words, as every minister has words that he tends to repeat, so the apostles had theirs; Paul had his, and so did John and Peter. So then, John's favorite word appears here in I John 2, the word "know"—'by this we know'—and if you read his gospel and epistles again, you will find that it is everywhere.

He is also fond of the word “abide”, as we see in John 15:4—“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” And here it is again in I John 2:6, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” You will find it running through his epistle. Then he also likes to play with the words, “keep,” and, “walking.” John was taking it for granted that the people were already familiar with his gospel. His primary concern here is not merely to know the gospel but to work it out, so that it is clear to everyone. And so he uses the same terminology, and we see this interesting connection between the gospel and the epistle—the laying down of the doctrine and the working out of the doctrine in life as well, or what we might call the practical application of it.

So we come to more practical matters, and yet we will still find that it is full of doctrine, again a point that we are never tired of noticing in the New Testament. The New Testament, while in an intellectual sense does divide and separate between doctrine and application, nevertheless never parts them in a radical sense.

The application is always the outcome of doctrine; you talk about the source of a river and the river itself, while there is a division, in a sense there is no division. And doctrine is really like that; doctrine and practice and yet both are one in an organic and vital sense.

The apostle John tells us that the Christian should know something; in other words, he introduces the guarantee of assurance, “By this we know that we know.” This is the perfect way of putting it. II Peter 1:10 tells us, “Make your calling and election sure,” which is an equally good way of putting it, but there is something about this verse of John’s that really does secure it once and for all. Christians are people who know what they know.

A teacher pays a student a very great compliment if he says, “That boy knows what he knows.” He did not say, “That boy knows everything,” but rather that he was certain of the knowledge he has; he has mastered it.

Now that is what John tells us about the Christian. In a sense the whole purpose of his letter is to give an explanation of this assurance. You will find that he goes on saying that. He says, as he finishes up at the very end:

I John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

As natural human beings we want assurance; we want certain things in this life and world, and one of our greatest difficulties is that we are uncertain about so many things. We all have a certain amount of fear of the unknown. But the New Testament offers us assurance.

The New Testament's picture of life in this world is a very dark and gloomy one. It talks about wars and rumors of wars in Matthew 24:6, and it prepares people for persecution and trials and tribulations.

But this is the way to come through it: that we know we know Him; that we have this assurance Paul talks about.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That was Paul's comfort and consolation. But Paul's life was not easy, as you know. His life was full of trials and persecution. How did he keep going? Notice what Paul says.

II Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

The New Testament is full of these assurances, so that apart from anything else, not to believe these assurances is really to deny one of the most central concepts of the New Testament guarantees.

In I John 2:3-6, then, the apostle John puts it very plainly to us: What are we to know? He tells us that there are two main things. First, we are to know God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Referring to Christ specifically in I John 2:3, John says, "By this we know that we know Him..." He does not say we are to know certain things about Him. Rather, he says that we are to know *Him*.

Earlier in his letter he told us about Him—He is our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. And what John says here is that we are to know that we know Him.

So the question remains, ***do we know Him?***

I am not asking whether we know certain things about Him. We know about His birth as a baby in Bethlehem; we know about Him as a boy in the Temple; we know about the parables He gave, and the miracles He performed. We are full of knowledge about these things; but that is not what John has in mind. It is something personal, direct, and immediate; this word “know” means so much more than just information about Him.

The Bible is always dynamic and powerful. It does not mean a general, superficial acquaintance; there is an intimacy about it, a deep knowledge in a special sense; it is a personal friendship, an intimate interest. It is nothing less than that, and John says that we should know Jesus Christ in that way. Our fellowship is to be with the Father and with His Son.

So we are back again with this fundamental question, this question that we should really ask ourselves every time we pray, “Do I know God? Am I simply going to offer up a prayer of hopes and fears and aspirations, or do I know that God is there and that my Savior Jesus Christ is interceding for me?”

We are not only to believe things about them, but to know them too. So, here before Passover, let us examine ourselves by this test of knowing them.

What are we to know?

John tells us that we are in Christ. Please again read John wrote in I John 2:3-6.

The apostle John is constantly teaching us that we are not even to stop with just a knowledge of Him in the sense of the personal, intimate friendship. We are to also be aware of the spiritual union with Him. One of the great phrases in the New Testament is, “in Christ.” If we are in Christ, and Christ is in God, then it stands to reason that we are in God.

In Romans 16:3-7, regarding the list that the apostle Paul gives of those to whom he sends his greetings, he is referring to certain people who were “in Christ before me.”

You find this sort of thing everywhere in the New Testament; we are incorporated into Christ, we are in Him in the sense that any one member of my body is in the body. Paul says,

I Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members

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individually.

So the Christian is in Christ. That analogy is used perfectly in John 15 in the reference to the branch and the vine. It is a vital, organic relationship—not a mechanical attachment, but a live one; it is sharing the life of the vine itself.

John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, 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 without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The essential point here is that if we abide in Christ, we will bear more and more spiritual fruit. The most important spiritual fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

It is an essential, organic relationship; it is sharing the life of the vine itself. And that is our relationship as Christians to our Lord and Savior. John tells us we should know that we are in that vital, organic relationship; we should know that we are part of Christ, that we are in Him and He is in us and we have received of His life.

We are aware of a better quality of life; we are aware of the life of the Son of God Himself in our lives; we are in Christ, and the life of Christ has come into us. What the apostle John tells us is that we must know these things—we know that we know.

John tells us that the way to test ourselves is not to seek some spiritual experience, but to examine our conduct and our lives! "By this we know that we are in Him" is not by the strange or the mystical, far from it. It is as simple as "We keep His commandments." It is nothing less than that.

It is not experience that enables us to say that we know Him; it is not feelings, not

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sensations, not vision, not amazing answers to prayer, not thrills, nor the unusual. There are people who seem to think that the only way in which you can be absolutely sure is that you have one of these things.

Please do not misunderstand me. There are experiences in the Christian life, and we are thankful for them. There are rare experiences that come, certain things like those that the apostle Paul experienced and that he almost seems afraid to mention.

II Corinthians 12:1-7 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

Paul was concerned about being humble, and not causing people to feel left out or lacking experiences. These spiritual experiences are not the things that the apostle John puts first.

Here is the first test, “What is your life like? How do you live?” The test whereby we know we are in God and Christ is, “Are you keeping all His commandments?” Keeping His commandments does not mean I just put on the wall a list of specific injunctions and do my best to keep them. Rather, it means that I am always concerned to be living God’s way of life as fully as I can; that my great object is to be well-pleasing in His sight.

I know what He wants me to do; I find it in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. I have the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, which apply to me, and I have the whole moral, ethical teaching of the Old and New Testaments. I have God’s statutes, principles, and the letter and the spirit of His laws.

If we can honestly say that we are very concerned about doing that, if we can say we are striving to do that, and that is our ambition in life, then we can know that we are in

Him, because to know Him is to walk as He walked.

Remember, John says in I John 2:6, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." The Bible often describes our life as a walk. Genesis 5:24 says, "Enoch walked with God." Genesis 6:9 says, "Noah walked with God." Then read what God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:1, "Walk before Me, and be perfect."

It is recorded in John 8:12 that Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Then, Paul wrote the same kind of thing in Ephesians 5:8, "For you were sometimes in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

It is a wonderful picture of the Christian life; it is a journey; we walk along, and what John says simply and without any explanation is, "If you say you are in Him, then you should to walk as He walked."

Look at His walk; look at His demeanor, and see how He lived His life in the world. If you say that you are in Him, if you say His life is in your life, if you say you are like the branch to the vine, then you will bear His character—it is inevitable. If we, therefore, say we are in Him, we should also walk as He walked.

You are familiar with how Christ walks through the pages of the four Gospels. The first thing you see is a humble and meek person. The prophet Isaiah describes the coming Savior this way:

Isaiah 42:1-3 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.

It is, as we look at Him, as we examine ourselves, that sometimes we may feel we have no right to be here at all. We think we are in Him; we imagine we are testifying to the power of God's way of life. But the great thing we know about Him is that He was meek and humble. He was not weak by any stretch of the imagination. The world does not encourage modesty, and I am afraid that at times Christians, today, do not either. Modesty is a manifestation of a humble heart.

Our human nature sometimes tries to imitate the world, and we become self-assertive.

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Some people are so afraid of being called weaklings by the world that they develop into a boisterous kind of Christian. But we do not see that in the New Testament. Modesty promotes and encourages meekness and humility.

In II Corinthians 10:10, the apostle Paul acknowledged that the Corinthians in their folly said that his presence was weak, and his speech contemptible, even though he was introducing the meekness and the lowliness of Christ. Do you know what contemptible means? Its synonyms are: disgraceful, shameful, despicable, distasteful, and loathsome. That is not a very Christian thing to say about someone, much less a minister of God. Nevertheless people in the church do say such terrible things to us, or about us.

The world is anxious to impress, and it is almost as true of members of the church as it is of the world. How different that is from what we find in Scripture. We should walk as Christ walked. Christ's great concern was to do the will of God, to please Him and not to please men. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He mourned because of the sin and suffering in the world. It hurt, and it pained Him. Do we share something of His godly sorrow because of the state of the world?

Paul expresses godly sorrow in II Corinthians 5,

II Corinthians 5:1-8 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

We see in Christ love toward God and love towards people—His compassion, His sympathy, His patience, and His lovingkindness.

According to the apostle John in his first epistle, examining our thoughts, and conduct is the test we are to apply to ourselves. Not the thrills and the visions, but what is within me. We should feel a great desire to be like Him, to follow in His steps, to walk as He

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walked, to keep His commandments, and to fulfill His word. This is an inevitable test.

Now John does not say, “If you live that life you are making yourself a Christian,” but rather, “If you have life in you, it is bound to show itself. And if it does not, then you do not have life.” That is logical; it is absolutely inevitable.

These things are not matters that can be argued about; we just face the facts. 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 love desires.

John says, ‘Love is the keeping of the commandments.’ There, then, is the first great test, and the safest test; it is *not* some strange mystical initiation into an esoteric knowledge, but the keeping of the commandments, keeping His word, walking even as He walked.

The result of keeping the commandments—keeping His word, walking in faith as He walked, and Christ in us and us in Him—is that it assures us that the love of God abides in us and God abides in us, therefore we know that we know the love of God.

I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Here in this verse, John is summing up and reminding us that he and the other apostles “Have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” Then he says, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,...” In other words, he puts his signature to what he has testified.

John also says, in effect, “Whoever says, ‘Amen,’ to what we have testified and witnessed can be sure that God dwells in him and he in God. So then, we (no longer merely himself and the apostles, but all Christians) have known and believe the love that God has for us.” The love of God is only known and felt adequately and completely in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. John has been repeating this, and he never seems to tire of doing it.

I John 4:9-10, 14 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His

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Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

John knew that in his own day and age there were all those mystery religions, or secretive cults that talked about the love of God; and they all tried to teach that you can know the love of God directly. That is always the character of mysticism; what finally condemns mysticism is that it bypasses Jesus Christ. Anything that bypasses Christ is not Christian. It does not matter how good it seems, however uplifting or noble; it is Christ who is the manifestation of the love of God.

We should distrust any emotion that we may have within us with respect to God unless it is based solidly upon Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8-11 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The apostle Paul writes in I Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Without Him we have no knowledge of God. So any love that is not based upon this must be distrusted. And in the same way a belief that does not lead to such a love is in and of itself useless. Let me put it again in a phrase from the apostle Peter:

I Peter 2:7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.

There is little value in confession unless He becomes precious to us. We have known and believed the love that God has to us. "I have not only believed, I know it."

There is little value in our professing to be Christian unless it leads to some practical result in our lives, such as the fruits of the Spirit. John was writing to men and women in a difficult world, even as we are in a difficult world; and the thrilling thing is that although the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, it is possible for our joy to abound. How can my joy abound? By knowing this love that God has toward me.

The apostle Peter put it:

I Peter 1:7-8 That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Christ died for us. He and the Father love us. This is personal knowledge. You find this everywhere in the New Testament. The love of God is something that we both experience and we know.

We do not know what the future holds for us; nobody does. Our whole life and world is uncertain, and in a world like this the important thing is to know that God loves us—to know that we are in that relationship and that whatever happens around us, God will always be with us. Whatever may or may not come, God loves us. If we know that, then there is a sense in which anything else does not matter very much and cannot vitally and essentially affect us.

So the question remains: How can we know that God loves us?

Let me first give a general answer to the question. We have an increasing awareness and realization that we owe all and everything to the Father and Christ. We are utterly dependent upon them and the perfect work that Christ has done for us in His life and death and resurrection.

But, how do I know that God loves me? Is it because of some sensations or feelings? No!

Rather, the first thing is Christ, what I believe and know about Christ, what Christ is to me. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

At this point let me give you some specifics, by giving you a series of questions or statements. Here are ten tests that you can apply to yourself to know for certain that you know God and His love for you.

1. You have a loss and absence of the sense that God is against you.

The natural man is always ready to believe that God is against him. The media gives publicity to anything that denies belief in a benevolent God. The natural man is hostile against God; he feels God is against him.

Romans 8:6-8 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

This is why when anything goes wrong, the world asks, "Why does God allow this?" And when men and women are antagonistic towards God, then, of course, they cannot love God.

Paul asks, "Who can injure or destroy us?" Sinners may be against us, and we know that Satan and his demons are against us, but their power to destroy us is taken away. God is greater in power, authority, and superiority than all our foes; and He defends and saves us.

Psalms 118:6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Now, returning to Romans 8, it is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and answered seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer's eternal salvation is completely secure in God's hands.

Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore who is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height

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nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So one of the first tests, and I am starting with the lowest, was that you have lost that feeling that God is against you.

2. You have a loss and absence of the feeling of dreadfulness of God and Christ, while a sense of fear, reverence, respect, and awe remains.

Even though Paul knew that his salvation and eternal destiny were obtained by the grace of God and by faith in Christ, the thought of one day standing before his Savior awed him. It was the contemplation of that judgment, if at the time of that judgment he had *not* been well-pleasing to God, which motivated Paul to fear the Lord and to give his all in service to God.

II Corinthians 5:9-11 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

The Lord Jesus Christ will be seated on the throne of judgment, and will decide the destiny of everyone. Knowing how much the Lord is to be feared with godly fear; what an object of terror and anxiety it will be to stand at the judgment seat having lived sinfully in life.

How fearful and awful will be the consequences of the trial of that day. Christ under God's authority will be an object of dread and distress, to anyone who has lived a life of willful sin.

In contrast to the ungodly, the author of Hebrews expresses the idea that we should approach God without dreadfulness.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

The apostle John elaborates on that in the remainder of I John 4. We lose that cowardly fear of God, but a tremendous reverence remains!

3. You have a feeling and a sense that God is for you and that God loves you.

You have lost that sense that God is against you, and you have a feeling and a sense that God is kind and merciful to you, that He is concerned about you, and that He truly loves you. Although He disciplines you, you know that it is done according to His will and that only good will come of it.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

This is such a great source of consolation and support, drawn from the fact that all things are under the direction of an infinitely wise Supreme Being, who has purposed your salvation, and who has appointed all things to contribute to His purpose for you.

All things—all your afflictions and trials, as well as all of the persecutions and calamities to which you are exposed. Even though there may be a great number of them, and they may go on seemingly forever, nevertheless they are among the means that are appointed for your welfare and your spiritual preparation to rule in God's Kingdom.

All these things that God both allows and causes, work together for your good. They cooperate; they mutually contribute to your good. They teach you the truth about your frail and temporary condition; they lead you to look to God for support; and they produce a contrite heart—a humble temperament—a patient, tender, and kind disposition.

The experience of all saints is that at the end of life they have been able to say it was good for them to be afflicted. To love God is a characteristic of true faithfulness where afflictions are a blessing. You are made better by receiving afflictions as they should be received, and by desiring that they accomplish the purpose for which they are sent.

These things are done according to God's purpose. The word here rendered "purpose" in Romans 8:28 is 'prothesis' and it means a proposition, or a laying down anything in view of others. So, when applied to the mind it means a plan or purpose of mind. It implies that God had a plan, purpose, or intention with regard to you. You are *not* called by chance or haphazardly. God does *not* convert people without design; and his designs

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are not new, but are eternal.

4. You have a sense of sins forgiven.

You may not fully understand it, but you are very aware of it. You know you have sinned; just as David knew he sinned.

Psalm 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

You know your sins are forgiven when you believe in the name of the Son of God and accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior; when you repent and overcome your sins and live righteously.

I John 2:12 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

John's strong feeling and determination here brings assurance to us. He expresses his confidence in the role of the Father and Jesus Christ, the Word of God in our lives. Because our past sins are blotted out provides a strong reason why we should be holy. That reason is founded on the goodness of God in doing it, and on the obligation under which we are brought by the fact that God has had mercy on us.

5. You have a sense of sins forgiven, which in turn leads you to a sense of deep gratitude and ceaseless thanksgiving to God.

No one can truly believe that God sent His only begotten Son into the world to die on the stake without feeling a sense of praise and thanksgiving. When you get on your knees in prayer, are you always beginning with requests, or do you start with praise and thanksgiving; a sense of gratitude and a desire to praise is a further proof of the true knowledge of God?

Colossians 1:9-12 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and

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increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

This is another way that we can walk worthy of God, and so as to please Him by endeavoring to become better acquainted with His true character. God is pleased with those who desire to understand what He is; what He does; what He purposes; and what He commands. So, He not only commands us to study His works, but He has made a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate His perfections as reflected in that world.

6. You have an increasing revulsion of sin.

This is a great proof of your knowledge of God and knowledge of the love of God. If we hate sin, we are more like God, because God hates it and is repulsed by it so much so that He cannot even look at it.

Habakkuk 1:12-13 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.

No man hates sin apart from God.

7. You have a desire to please God and to live a righteous life because of what He has done for you.

You appreciate and enjoy keeping His commandments and statutes. The realization of His love should make you not only hate sin, but also desire to live a holy, godly life.

John 14:20-21 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

8. You have a desire to know Him better and to draw closer to Him intimately.

Your life's ambition is to draw closer to Him, so that your relationship to Him may be more intimate. If you desire to know God better, you are doing something about it.

I Corinthians 1:4-9 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You cannot enjoy fellowship with Christ while being at odds with other members of His body. So it is on this note that Paul made his transition from what God had done in the past and will do in the future to what you need to do in the present, namely, mend your divisions—that is, end your conflicts with one another.

9. You have a conscious regret that your love to Him is do poor compared to His love for you, along with a desire to love Him more.

If you are unhappy at the thought that you do not love God as you should, that may be proof that you know that your love is far inferior to His. Love never seems to be satisfied with itself; it always feels it is insufficient.

I John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

If you are concerned that you do not love God and Christ enough, look to see if you love your spiritual brothers and sisters and secondarily unbelievers. Do you have outgoing concern for them? Are you keeping all of God's commandments in both the letter and the spirit of the law?

To love requires total devotion to God's way of life. To truly and intimately know the Great God who first loved you, you must truly and intimately know His Son. This is the

beginning of love to the Father and the Son.

John 14:9-11 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

What John means when he says that God is seen, is that some expression of Him, or some demonstration of Him has been made so that we may learn his character, his will, and his plans. The knowledge of the Son was itself, of course, the knowledge of the Father. There was such an intimate union in their nature that he who understood the one—understood also the other.

Philip's request shows that he had not yet understood the point of Jesus' coming, namely, to reveal the Father. God is love; so Jesus came to reveal love. So, we get an excellent example of *how* to love by becoming more Christ-like.

10. You have a joy in hearing these things and in hearing about the Father and Jesus Christ.

This is one of the best tests. There are many people in the world who find all that we have been looking at here totally boring; all that we have been looking at would be strange to them and unbelievable.

John 10:25-30 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. [People like that are spiritually dead; they know nothing about all this.] My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

So, in whatever state your emotions may be, if you can quite honestly say that you

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enjoy listening to these things and hearing about them, if you can say that they make a difference in your life, and that you would rather hear these things than anything else in the whole world, and you act on them, then you know the love that God has for you and that you love Him in return.

These, then, are some of the practical tests to know for certain that you know God and His love for you.

Let me sum up these ten practical tests like this: Jesus Christ, the realization of who He is, that God sent Him into the world; the realization of what He has done by coming into the world and going back again, that He is our Savior and therefore our Lord, because if He has done that for us, then He has done it so that we can be rescued and redeemed out of sin and that we may live our lives in a way that is well-pleasing to Him.

The key is our attitude toward Him. Can we say with the apostle Paul?

Philippians 3:10-11 That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

We would do anything it takes to take God up on His offer of eternal life. We do not need to try to work up feelings; there is only one thing to do: to know God and His love. If we really know God as we should, having examined ourselves, we can clearly see ourselves and our weaknesses and the flaws in our character in comparison to God and Christ. We realize that only God and Christ can protect us; but we have our faithful part to do.

In the godly fear of the Father, our merciful and loving God and His Son our Savior we know and have assurance that we are in Him, and He is in us.

Ephesians 3:17-19 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

So again, do you know that you know Him? Does your life prove to you that you do? Do you know the love of God?

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If these are the things you are most concerned about, it is probably because you do know Him. God grant that we all may be able to say together, "I know that I know Him!" and, "I know the love that God has for me." For God so loved us, that He sacrificed His only begotten Son, so that our sins might be forgiven, saving us from death and giving us eternal life!