

Theme: Authentic Christian faith is seen not in the claim to know God, but in the fruit of faith - obeying God's commands, walking as Jesus did, and loving other Christians.

I. The Structure of Great Music

- A. Many great pieces of music expand a central theme
- B. They will begin with the theme and then spin it out
- C. True of Beethoven's 5th, Vivaldi's Four Seasons
- D. Also modern classics like Jessica of Allman Brothers
- E. Take one idea, move in and out of it several times
- F. John does that in this passage - one idea, three movements (and through the whole book!)

II. The Structure of John's Argument

- A. The theme: how we know if we have known God (v3)
We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 1 John 2:3
 - 1. This is the central theme John will take on
 - 2. How does one test a claim to know God
 - 3. Tenses: **present** and **perfect** - the **fruit** and the **root**
We **know** that **we have come to know** him if we obey his commands. 1 John 2:3
 - a. Present - we know - we test faith in present; fruit
 - b. Perfect - we have come to know - past experience; root
 - c. The present grows out of the perfect
 - d. This is not salvation by works - we do not come to know God by keeping commands

- e. We know we have really been born again because it changes us

B. The background - the Gnostics

- 1. This whole section is full of Gnostic terminology
- 2. Example: Gnostics named after gnosis - knowledge
- 3. 25 of 222 uses of verb ginosko in 1 John - 10% - by far highest concentration in NT
- 4. But also used words like "truth"; "abide"; "light"
- 5. The difference between Gnosticism and Christianity
 - a. Gnostics claimed to know God by secret, abstract knowledge - no real relation to ethics, morals or behavior
 - b. John says we know because of public, concrete actions - true knowledge of God produces a change in ethics, morals, behavior
 - c. Gnostics said faith produced secret knowledge; John says faith produces works
 - d. Gnostic growth produced ever more mystical, speculative knowledge
 - e. John's tests of true faith become increasingly specific and concrete

C. The movements expanding this theme

- 1. A series of 3 claims (root), 3 tests (fruit)
- 2. Three claims, one reality - we have true knowledge
- 3. Each introduced by "Whoever says/claims"
- 4. Can be seen in the following table

The claim (root)	The test (fruit)
I know God (v4)	Obey God's commands (vv4-5)
I remain in God (v6)	walk as Jesus walked (v6)
I am in the light (v9)	Love believers (vv7-8; 10-11)

5. He deals with these three claims to real knowledge

III. Three Claims and Three Tests

A. I know God - obey His commands!

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. 1 John 2:4-5

1. Gnostics claimed knowledge without obedience
2. John says they are liars; truth not in them (also 1:6)
3. Commands & word - parallel - commands in Word
4. Not just a command - all of them
5. Love of God perfected - probably speaking of our love for God (NIV2011)
6. Perfected - this is a mature love; goal of love of God is to obey His commands
7. This was the teaching of Jesus
Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." ... ²³ Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. John 14:21, 23

B. I live/remain in Him - walk as Jesus did!

This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:5-6

1. End of v5 probably points forward to v6
2. Being "in Him" (v5) is the same as "live in Him" (v6)
3. If we are in Him and live in Him, we must walk as Jesus did.
4. The disciple must be like His master!

C. I am in the light - then love other Christians!

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 1 John 2:7-9

1. V7-8 are a parenthesis - next claim in v9
2. Not a new idea - they heard this when they believed
3. He is saying Jesus taught them this
4. He is also focusing on the new commandment
A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:34-35
 - a. It is old - they have heard it before
 - b. It is old - command, as Jesus did, love one another
 - c. It is new - Jesus called it a new command

d. It is new - because the darkness is passing

Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. 1 Jo 2:8

e. The light of the kingdom is coming on! Live like it!

5. John combines the theme of **light** and **love**

Anyone who claims to be in the **light** but **hates** his brother is still in the **darkness**.¹⁰ Whoever **loves** his brother lives in the **light**, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.¹¹ But whoever **hates** his brother is in the **darkness** and walks around in the **darkness**; he does not know where he is going, because the **darkness** has **blinded** him. 1 Jo 2:9–11

a. Light a big idea for Gnostics - and in this letter!

b. But John says the true light promotes love

c. If you hate, in dark, stumble around, blinded

6. This is the end of the whole section on light - light or darkness have appeared 12x - no more in letter

7. The key to light is love - a key theme in this letter - noun (18x) and verb (28x) - total of 46x in the letter!

8. Specific command here is to love other believers

D. A summary of Jesus' teaching in John 15:9-12

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:10, 12

1. This really is nothing new - Jesus taught this

2. Obey, just like Jesus, love each other

3. This is how an authentic Christian in action looks!

IV. The Authentic Christian In Action

A. John has been warning us of two Gnostic errors

1. Some Gnostic's falsely claimed sinless perfection

a. John said this was a lie - sin is a present reality

b. We will never be past our struggle with sin in this life

2. Some Gnostics said "Then just live in sin"

a. John said this denied authentic faith

b. We are not sinless - but we do not dwell in sin

c. Remember verb tenses - they are key!

1. Know v3-4 - perfect - past action with present effects

2. Obey, walk, love, hate, - present - continuous habits

3. John talking about settled, embraced patterns of life

d. John Calvin - this passage refers to "those who strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God."

e. The Gnostics did not do this - they embraced sin

B. The glorious new covenant

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:25–27

1. We are forgiven & cleansed of sin - sprinkle; clean

2. But we are also given new heart, Spirit indwelling
3. Spirit empowers us to obey the law of God!
4. The same Gospel that promises justification also promises sanctification. The same Spirit who regenerates us so we can be justified also works to conform us to Christ's image daily.
5. This is glorious good news - sin deforms, but the Spirit reforms and conforms us to Christ!

V. Applying the Word

- A. Am I walking as an authentic Christian?
 1. Have I truly repented and embraced Christ in faith?
 2. We must come to Christ before we can walk in Him!
 3. If I have - am I walking in authentic faith?
 4. By grace am I obeying, walking like Jesus, loving?
 5. This is our inheritance in the new covenant!
- B. The Table of authentic sanctification
 1. Here we come to confess our sin
 2. Here we receive grace and power to walk free of sin's dominion

The Authentic Christian In Action

1 John 2:3-11

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Prayer

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Teaching keywords: sin, Christian life, obedience, love, fellowship, law and gospel

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴ The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. ⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

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