

4,30,26 1 Jn. 2 vs. 6 to 14, To Walk As Christ Walked

(1 Jn. 2:6-11) Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I want you to notice the wording in vs. 6, because it's a perfect example of the difference between a legal system that builds on the foundation of laws, commandments and regulations versus a grace system that builds on the indwelling Christ. It may seem like a small thing, but it's extremely important because it assumes a reality in the life of a believer that wasn't even an option in the Old Testament. If we really knew the full implications of this, we'd be overjoyed with gratitude for what the Lord did by establishing a covenant with us that has all of its requirements put on the shoulders of the Holy Spirit rather than by our attempts in our own strength to keep the Law.

I'm sure you remember that one of the first offers Jesus made to us was to replace our "labor" with "rest". (Matt. 11:28) "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

When a person reads 1 Jn. 2:6, they usually walk away with something like, "If I'm going to claim to be a Christian, I need to make sure my lifestyle matches Jesus's lifestyle". Where they go wrong is the phrase, "I need to make sure my lifestyle matches His".

But here's what John is actually saying; "If a person abides in Christ, then his lifestyle will increasingly become like His Lord's." John's emphasis isn't on us doing

something that comes as close as we can to what Jesus would do; his emphasis is exactly the same as Jesus's was in John 15:4-5;

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

There is a huge difference between "make sure you walk as I walked" versus "abide in Me and I will be the Life you could never achieve without me".

That might seem unnecessarily subtle, but there is no way to exaggerate its importance in terms of what our focus needs to be if we're going to "walk as He walked".

In Gal. 5:1 Paul wrote, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free (therefore) hold on to your freedom and do not become slaves of the Law again."

One view of all this puts the burden or responsibility of generating righteousness on us; the other acknowledges our own inability and puts the responsibility on the One Who offered to bear that burden for us. It's a mindset of faith in Him versus a mindset of obligation laid on us. It's Grace vs. Law.

In our verse in 1 Jn. 2, the thing John is challenging his readers about is not whether the person appears to be "walking as Christ walked"; John is challenging that person on whether or not he is "abiding in Christ". If he is, then over time his life will take on the character of Christ. If he's not abiding, then the best he'll ever come up with is a cheap imitation – one that might convince people around him that he's "Christlike", but since it won't actually be Christ expressing Himself through that person, it will be hypocrisy (religious play-acting). And as we've seen before, that is what John is warning about – deception, hypocrisy, and imitation.

Our purpose in this life is to be a vessel through whom the life of Jesus can be manifest, not a life of doing the best we can to imitate Christlikeness. And the difference between those two is the absence or presence of "abiding in Christ". That's why John uses "He who *says* he abides" as the foundation of his warning. Like Jesus said in John 15, no matter what we do or how good we get at doing it, if

the Source of what people see in us (i.t. the “fruit” of our lives) is not Christ, then it’s not genuine, regardless of how good it might look to us or to others.

The main issue is not the actions themselves, it’s the issue of “abiding”. If that’s there, then the walk will be true and not an imitation; when we abide, as John and our Lord define abide, the walk will take care of itself. When we obey what we learn in the scriptures, it’s imperative that we are obeying in faith – in other words, we move in the right direction with the mindset of trusting in Christ, not in ourselves, for the strength and the outcome.

In the next few verses, we see the “old” and the “new” commandments. The “old” commandment to love God and others is not “new”, but like we just saw with our “walk”, the ability is definitely “new”. Under the old commandment, obedience depended on our ability to do the loving; but the new command to love has the Holy Spirit as the divine Source being released through us. And, obviously, that love is going to be infinitely more substantial and effectual than anything we could personally come up with.

(1 Jn. 2:7-8) Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Man’s attempt to love as God would have us love when compared with the love of Christ in us is like “passing darkness” versus “true light”. We won’t take time now, but all you have to do is peruse Galatians and Romans to see an abundance of passages showing the emptiness and futility of man’s effort to please God in the flesh. Man under the Law, without the indwelling Spirit, is in a state of constant frustration and failure when it comes to living according to the righteousness of God.

The only thing the Law did for man was expose his sinfulness.

(Gal. 2:21) For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

(Gal. 3:10) For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.

(Gal. 5:4) You who are trying to be justified by the law have been severed from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

(Rom. 3:20) For by works of the law no one will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

(Rom. 7:5) For when we (walked) in the realm of the flesh (of self-effort) the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

We could do the same thing with Hebrews, but for sake of time; my point is to show the futility of trying to be justified or accepted by God through the Law.

In his letters John draws a lot from his Gospel; from what he heard personally from Christ's teaching. For example;

(John 13:34-35) A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Like I said earlier, "Love one another" is not new, it's also in Lev. 19:18 and 19:34, but the next phrase Jesus uses makes it "new" when He adds; "As I have loved you."

There's only one Person in the entire universe who can love as Jesus loved; and it's not you or me. The only way others will (quote) "know you are My disciples", is if its Christ's love coming through us that impacts them. I'm sure we all know stories of supernatural love, especially in the case of believers loving their enemies that won them over.

But, again, this is only possible for the Christian who is abiding in Christ; allowing Him to be Who He is in us. Ironside has an interesting take on this:

We can see as we look on the world around us and in us that the darkness is not past. Even though the gospel of the grace of God has been preached for almost two thousand years, the darkness is not gone. There are still millions

in darkness and in the shadow of death. And no matter how well I know my Lord and His Word, I cannot say that the darkness is past even in me. But the darkness is passing, and the true light is shining. Every day I am getting to know my Lord better, and every day I understand His will more perfectly. But until the time comes when I leave this body and see my blessed Savior face to face, there will still be a measure of darkness in me, even though all is light in Him.

I wanted to share that because much of chapter 2, beginning in vs. 12, is going to bring us into the reality of “progressive” conformity to Christ. Perfection doesn’t happen here. Abiding is *ongoing*, transformation is *ongoing*. It’s hard to imagine what it will be like when the love we all have for one another is as perfect and without any darkness as Christ’s is. That day *is* coming and it will be what makes heaven, heaven.

So, with what we’ve seen so far, the next two verses should be pretty clear;

(1 Jn. 2:9-10) Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

As we saw earlier, we are a mixture – hopefully moving into more light and moving away from darkness. But, again, John is challenging the imitator; the one who claims one thing but lives another. This time John adds the “blindness” factor.

(Jas. 1:22) Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

This is probably the greatest danger for those who don’t understand the difference between Law and Grace; Imitation and Life. The longer people are content with a walk that is sourced in *their* strength and commitment, the greater becomes their self-deception; the greater is the darkness blinding them from knowing how this life is meant to be lived. Even though we’ve seen this numerous times in the past,

in the original, words like “hate” and “love” (depending on context) are not referring to emotion, but to action.

As one example, Jesus didn’t emotionally love the Pharisees; He called them vipers, deceivers, hypocrites, children of the devil, etc. Those aren’t words of affection. But He died for them; He desired that every one of them would believe in Him, and some (like Saul of Tarsus and Nicodemus) did eventually believe. By our actions, we can love people we may never emotionally be friends with.

It’s the way we treat people that determines obedience to what John is writing about; it’s not how we “feel” about them. Emotions are nearly impossible to control; actions are *not* impossible to control – they might be extremely difficult in some circumstances, but the fruit of the Spirit (called “self-control”) makes it possible to act against our emotions to do what we know is God’s will. We’re meant to be living in complete dependence on the indwelling life of Christ for everything anyway. This specific exhortation is definitely one of the times we most need it to be His life that we are trusting in to make it happen.

Now, in 1 Jn. 2:12-14 John introduces us to the three stages of spiritual growth – Children, Young Men & Fathers.

I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

None of these have anything to do with chronological age, John is speaking of spiritual age. Moving through these stages is not just an issue of time; it’s an issue of growing spiritually by abiding in, and learning of, Christ.

In DeVern Fromke’s book “Unto Full Stature” he has a section dedicated to the part of 1st John we’re looking at, so I want to share his introduction to this;

It's imperative that we understand God's conception of full stature. But we can only understand his conception as we move into his viewpoint. In his viewpoint we shall be able to grasp the hope of his bringing us unto full stature and the glory of His inheritance in those Saints who reach full stature.

It would seem that Paul lived in God's viewpoint and shared his desire in seeking to move us through childhood into young manhood and unto fatherhood. John saw believers on three different levels of maturity and knew that the Eternal Father could be satisfied only as they were brought into the stature of spiritual fatherhood being sharers with him in His nature, purpose, and vision. But he also knew that the mere passing of time, gaining mere knowledge or more experience, were no guarantee of spiritual development. Above all there must come a change in attitudes and conceptions.

So, from there, I'd like to give some brief overviews of the meaning and implications of each stage of spiritual development.

For children, their primary awareness is that they are forgiven and on their way to heaven. This fulfills the initial phase of Christ's purpose for us. New Christians rejoice in the new life they've discovered and for many, the forgiveness of their sins relieves the pressure guilt has put on them. They've seen that God loves them and has given them this forgiveness as a free gift of grace, so they tend to see the Lord has someone who will continue to shower His blessings on them.

But, as one author put it, "There is reason for concern when after 20 or 30 years they remain little children who live only to be ministered unto and are mostly looking for the blessing, benefits and gifts they receive."

Their faith is solid, but shallow, and directed primarily to what this thing called Christianity is going to do for them. Most of what we understood from the Bible as young Christians was related to us; to God's working on our behalf. We tended to see the Bible as a book about Man and God's willingness to bless him.

As true that as that is, the Bible is more a book about Christ and how Man fits into *His* plan; not a book about Man and how God fits in.

Then John moves to the “young men” stage “who have overcome the wicked one”. Since some children move on and dig deeper into God’s Word they discover that milk is not enough to sustain them in the conflicts and battles they begin to experience. They’re moving from “defense” to “offense”. And to continue to grow and “overcome” they realize that they will have to move from milk to meat.

The danger at this level is that many come to believe they’ve “arrived”. They become occupied with “doing” things for the Lord; they get busy and they may see some encouraging results of their commitment to Him. Their focus now is on being involved in Christian activity as though our calling was primarily vocational and religious.

But at the last stage, spiritual fatherhood or maturity, we wake up to something beyond what we’ve seen before. Little children see God as “Father” in the sense of a new birth and a new life; young men want to honor Him and they see Him as Master and Guide. But in maturity, along with Father and Master, Christians begin to see the implications of sharing God’s “Fatherhood”. We are moved into a relationship with God that opens our eyes (and our hearts) to a place of intimacy in relationship that creates in us the same passion that is in God’s heart for the world and for the growth of His children. The Lord’s personal vision and mission for us becomes much clearer and our commitment to that purpose is something we desperately want to be sharing with Him; we want to be involved in seeing Christ glorified.

The Bible, *as a whole*, begins to make sense and we realize that’s it’s centered in God’s Son, so we start to see Him in every verse. It is Christ as all and in all that becomes our grid both in our study of His Word as well as in life. We come into a place where we are experientially sharing our union with the Lord and with God’s own commitment to His ultimate purpose in Christ.

We could go for hours on the implications of each stage, but the most important thing I feel that we need to take from this is that *our conception of God will determine our commitment to Him.*

We'll never forget (and we *should* never forget), that we began as little children, reborn into God's family and that this life is a warfare that requires taking both defensive and offensive positions which require moving from milk to meat if we are to (quote) "Overcome the wicked one".

Reaching maturity is God's goal for us. So, He will continue to bring us into circumstances and experiences which make it obvious to us that if we are going to survive spiritually, we will need to keep moving forward.

As painful as it seems sometimes, God keeps His goal for us in mind and He keeps moving us onward. He has to get us beyond childhood and beyond activity for activity's sake to where with eyes wide open, we see what God really means by "Father". It will not just be what God has done that will amaze us, it will be seeing and realizing Who He is and that His final goal with us is that we are to be conformed to the image of the One Who is glorious beyond anything we could have imagined in any other stage of growth.

Now let's bring this passage in 2 Cor. 3 into what we're looking at;

(2 Cor. 3:17-18) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (one stage of spiritual growth to another) . . .

As we saw in our study of the Gospel of John, "Glory" is a word that represents an outward visible expression of an inward invisible reality, and can be described as advancing from minimum radiance to maximum radiance. For now, this is spiritual and is referring to the degree to which others are able to experience the life of Christ when they are in our presence. Eventually (as we saw when we studied 1 Cor. 15), our eternal bodies will reflect this in a way that involves *visible* radiance.

When Peter, James and John saw Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration they were given a preview of what the Son of Man, as head of the new humanity in Christ, will look like when we see Him as He is now.

(Matt. 17:1-3) Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

(1 Jn. 3:2) Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears *we shall be like him*, because we shall see him as he is.

There will be as many different and varied expressions of glory radiating from us as there are Christians, because we all grow at different rates and we all reach different levels of spiritual advance in our lives here.

There is obviously much more involved than the brightness of our individual light in the Kingdom; there are rewards, positions of authority, and all the offers made by our Lord to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3. But in relation to our study of the three stages of growth John describes, I just thought it might be good to be reminded that our determination to grow spiritually has immense ramifications both in this life as well as in the life to come.

The last verse in this section (1 Jn. 2:11) is interesting because John connects the outward actions that express hate with a mindset of darkness or deception inside us. Here's the verse again; "Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

To treat a fellow brother or sister in Christ in a way that shows hatred is revealing something more than disobedience or a lack of understanding the relationship we have with one another – it's also revealing a person that is self-deceived, blinded, walking in darkness.

Deception or blindness spiritually isn't always an issue of false doctrine; sometimes the problem is a deep resistance to see others as Christ sees them. There are only

two primary categories of people on this planet – lost and saved. And within the lost group, the division is between those who are searching versus those who have made up their mind about the Lord. Within the saved group, the division is between carnal (controlled by the flesh) or spiritual (controlled by the Spirit). The non-searcher and the carnal Christian are living in darkness, so they will act accordingly. The one in either group who is seeking for answers to their questions will eventually find them by either coming to Christ or by growing in their knowledge of Him.

(Jer. 29:13) You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

(2 Pet. 3:18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we've seen in past studies – the bottom-line character trait of the person approved of God is the one who is the most teachable. Openness, transparency and especially teachability is the very definition of the word “disciple” (mathetes), which could also be translated “student” or “learner”.

As long as we are genuinely hungry for the Truth and realize that we will be learning more and more for all eternity about an infinite God, we are safe from blindness and darkness. We'll be walking in the light, just as He is in the light.

Also, (Eph. 5:8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

When Paul talks about our need to have our minds “renewed” in Rom. 12, his full meaning is that we have almost as much to unlearn as we have to learn. One entire life that we once lived, and which was being engrained into us, is described as “darkness”.

Our new life in Christ is not just better, it's completely different; just as different as light and darkness are. So, it takes time, patience, study, prayer and a willingness to set aside anything we're shown as being deception, while we are embracing all that we learn which we know to be Truth.

John's emphasis is slightly different from some of the other New Testament authors in that John consistently uses light and dark, truth and deception, as the source and motivation of our "walk" – our "actions". Other authors emphasize different motives, different things that inwardly drive us to do what we do, but John boils it down to our motivations being determined by whether we know the truth or not, and then are acting on what we've learned as "mathetes" (disciples) of Christ who willing to die to what we think is true if we're shown that it's not.

As I'm sure you know, that's the hard part. There's way too much pride floating in our veins to consistently be willing to admit we are wrong about things and jettison those things in favor of the truth. But we'll never make it to full stature unless we are willing to make the Cross the great divider in our lives of the old and the new.

Our tendency is to bring what we think are the "good parts" of the old into the new, but the Lord has made it clear that as difficult as it may be to understand at first, there are no "good parts" in the flesh. And all who are born of the flesh, are flesh (or for Christians, those who are *controlled* by the flesh). As Paul told us in Rom. 7, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells *no* good thing".

He reinforces that in 1 Cor. 2:13-14 when he wrote;

(We communicate) that which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man (the man of the flesh) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Two races, two Adams, two species of humanity and two completely distinct and different ways to live this life.

Growing through the three phases we saw John describe takes time, but if we keep moving, we find one life fading and another life increasingly coming into view.

Developing spiritual discernment through study and experience allows us to identify any distinctions and move according to reality rather than deception. That was John's hope for his readers and the Lord's desire for all of us.

I want to share an author's comments that has taken me decades to understand. I don't mean intellectually; it's not complex, but in terms of personal experience, I

have at least a glimpse of the implications of this, and it's been extremely helpful in this whole area of discernment and protection from what Paul calls "Satan's devices" in 2 Cor. 2:11;

The Cross simply says that an order, even if it be religious, well-motivated, or good-intentioned, but nevertheless proceeding from man in his natural state (not necessarily in defiance of God or in conscious rebellion against Him, but just the expression of man's natural state as he is), the Cross says that this entire order has been set aside. God has judicially judged it and put a ban upon it. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus God has said finally: 'You in your natural state cannot serve Me, and cannot bear any fruit to My glory! It is possible to go out and work, labor, and die of the strain of trying to serve Me and yet it still remains true that you cannot, out from yourself, by any natural, fleshly resources whatever, bear fruit unto Me.' The only thing that can ever get through to God's end is that which proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

How sweeping that is! How that analyzes and dissects everything! It continually presents the interrogation: 'Was that spoken in the Holy Spirit?' It is not enough to ask ourselves: 'Did I mean it well? Did I intend it for the Lord?' but: 'Was it said, was it done, in the Holy Spirit, or did I do it?' It is not a question of motive or of intention, but of the *source* from which it came. We have daily to recognize that our lives must be subject to the Holy Spirit, and when we are aware that there has been something of our own introduced into our plans, we have to be honest before God about it.

The Cross is the rejection and judgment of the Adamic mind; the re-birth of the Christian joined to Christ is the entrance into what Paul calls "the mind of Christ". When we study and truly learn by revelation of the Spirit, we are learning the thoughts of God. And the mature believer, the "Father" in John's analogy, spends the majority of his time in this life thinking and acting on the thoughts of God.

Earlier I mentioned the wording of 1 Jn. 2:6 and John 15:7-8;

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Abide in Me, and My words abide in you . . . By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so, you will be My disciples.

In ourselves, we are nothing. Just as Jesus said in John 5:19; 5:30 and 14:10;

“I can, of myself, do nothing . . . I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me . . . the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”

And in 2 Cor. 12:11, Paul simply stated, “I am nothing”.

But in Christ we are remarkable, because *He* is remarkable and it’s His life that is to be manifest through our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:11), just as in the life of Jesus, it was “The Father Who does the works.”

Now we know the “how” of this. To walk as Christ walked, is first to think as Christ thinks. And that happens by abiding in Him through prayer and faith, and allowing His words, His thoughts, abide in us and saturate our minds with light and life.

And undergirding all of that is patience, because just like physical growth, spiritual growth takes time, but God has promised to complete what He’s begun if we stay close to Him and give Him the time, and submit to the circumstances He needs to use, to mature us – to engraft what we learn into our souls through experience in our relationship with Him.