

Sermon 25th October 2020

Knowing me knowing you

It was hatred at first sight, well perhaps not hatred but certainly deep and profound dislike. That is how Gillian and I started off our relationship. We didn't know that much about each other bar seeing each other at church and what the church gossips were saying about each of us. Still, not really knowing anything about each other didn't stop us from truly disliking each other. It got so bad Gillian even set the Pastor on me! This was how it was for few years not really knowing anything about each other but not being able to stand being in the same room.

It was only after we actually spent time together that we got to truly know each other. Despite what we both thought we knew about each other we discovered we knew nothing about the other person. Surprisingly, as we got to know each other we discovered we didn't hate or dislike each other, but much to our shock we found we loved each other. I do promise you this story will become relevant later.

We are returning to think about John's letter to the Churches in Norther Turkey. Let's recap on what we discovered from our previous look at John's letter a few weeks ago.

Firstly, the background, John is writing to the Churches during a time of distress. A group of Heretics called Gnostics had come into the churches and were spreading lies about God. These lies had even led to some of the Believers leaving the church and this had caused those remaining to begin ask questions about their own faith and eternal life. One of John's purpose in writing his letter is summed up in **1 John 5:13** *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* John wants his readers/listeners to "know" or be certain about their eternal life. For John eternal life is not solely about being saved, it is as John wrote at the beginning of his letter also about fellowship with God. This eternal life, this fellowship with God is not something for when we shuffle off this mortal coil. No eternal life, that is fellowship with God begins the moment that a person professes Jesus as Lord and saviour. We will return to this knowing in a few minutes.

Secondly, John wants us to know and be certain of the “word of life” which is the foundation for the Believers eternal life. John describes how this “word of life”, literally God Himself, came and lived among man in the life of Jesus Christ **1 John 4: 14** *“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.”* John himself examined this “word of life” having been with Jesus Christ seeing all he did, hearing all He said and even spending three years living day to day with Him. John writes in **1 John 1: 3** *“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard,”* to drive home the point his message is based on God’s revelation of Himself in the life of Jesus Christ. John is keen to contrast this message from God which is based in his first-hand experience of this “word of life”, God Himself that is Jesus Christ with the Gnostics whose supposed message from God came only from mystical experiences in their own heads.

Thirdly, John wants us to know that God is light **1 John 1:5** *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”* Notice that this great revelation, “that God is light” is from Jesus. Jesus life and teaching both demonstrate the truth, *“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”* John wants us to know, to be certain of God’s character in which there is no sin only holiness and righteousness.

John brings these last two certainties; that Jesus is the “word of life”, God Himself and that God is light together. This give us the first of John’s two tests that we can apply to determine the validity or other wise of the Gnostics profession to know God. It can also bring us certainty and assurance that we ourselves know God.

John’s first test is one of obedience to God’s commands. John believes if we claim to know God and fellowship with Him, then we will obey His commands. However, the Gnostics believed that it didn’t matter what you did or how you conducted your life and they refused to obey God’s commands. The Gnostic lives were full of disobedience, sin and darkness. Contrast this with John’s assertion that if you profess to know God you will obey His commands and exhibit His light in your life. John is pointing out that although the Gnostics profess to know God, they fail to exhibit God’s character or light in their own lives.

Let's look at **1 John 2:3** *"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands."* This could be paraphrased as, "We can be certain we have a relationship with God if we obey His commands." Saving faith is not about knowledge, it is not about knowing the facts of Jesus life. Look at **James 2: 19** *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."* Just knowing the facts about God and Jesus does not mean you have eternal life. In 1 John 2:3 the NIV translation uses the word know twice to translate two different Greek words each with different meanings. The first know translates a Greek word which mean to come to understand or perceive something. That second Greek word translated know is the type of knowing of a person such as there is between husband and wife or parent and child. They don't just know the facts about the other person they know their nature, character, beliefs, secret, hopes and dreams. Gillian and I fell in love when we got to know each other rather than knowing, mainly wrong facts about each other.

In the Hebrew understanding, knowledge is more than intellectual, for it involves an experience of the whole person — that is why "knowledge" can be used for sexual intimacy. To know God means to share His life, to fellowship with Him, to abide in Him. Sharing God's life means living according to His commands. God's commands flow out of His character that is unalloyed pure light and free of darkness. The Gnostics claimed to know much about God, but their conduct proved they didn't know God that is abide in Him or fellowship with Him.

Does this mean that if we do not always obey God's commands that we don't know God? Well no John in **1 John 2: 1 - 3** has already addressed this, God has made provision for us when we fail to obey His commands, that is sin. God sent Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and even more than that God sent Jesus Christ to be our advocate who speaks in our defence when we do sin.

John is clear, those who profess to know God, that is to fellowship with God, will obey God commands. However, for all believers there is a struggle to obey God's commands, it is not something that comes naturally to us and it is a struggle we sometimes fail in. Paul himself experience this same struggle and failure to obey God's commands he writes in **Romans 7: 15** *"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."* This failure to obey God's commands

led him to call himself a, “wretched man” in verse 24. But in that famous verse **Romans 8:1** *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”* Paul recognises that although we fail, we are not condemned. Through Jesus Christ we have forgiveness for our sins, our failures to obey God’s commands our failure to live in fellowship with God. All we need to do is confess our failings, ask God’s forgiveness and seek through the power of the Holy Spirit the strength to obey the next time. I like Calvin’s quote about **1 John 2:3**, “He (John) does not mean that those who wholly satisfy the Law keeps His commandments (and no such person can be found in the world) , but those who strive according to capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in obedience to God.”

John then focuses on the Gnostics hypocrisy in **1 John 2:4** *“Whoever says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.”* The Gnostics claim to know God, yet their lives demonstrate no light just darkness no obedience just disobedience. The Gnostic may claim to know about God, but their lives demonstrate that the do not know God, that is abide in Him or fellowship with Him.

John goes on to clarify what obeying God’s commands mean in **1 John 2: 6** *“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”* John wants the Believers he is writing to understand that obedience to God’s commands is not just sticking to the rules. The Pharisees were pedantic about obeying the tiniest part of the Law, even counting the leaves on their herbs so they could tithe the correct amount. Yet Jesus savagely criticised them for their hypocrisy and failure to truly know God. John says that if we claim to know God, that is to love God and fellowship with God we must walk as Jesus did. Why does John write this? John writes this because Jesus is the ultimate example of a life spent in obedience to God. Here is just one of the numerous verse that speak of Jesus’s obedience **Philippians 2: 8** *“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* As we saw two weeks ago Jesus despite His desire not to die on the cross put aside His desires and obeyed God. John also commands us to, *“live as Jesus did”* because Jesus Himself is the “Word of life” the full expression and example of God. Jesus’s life and death are the ultimate example of God’s nature and character. Jesus

by how He lived His life showed us just who God is. Jesus life was a life lived in intimate fellowship with God.

Obeying God's commands is not solely about obeying the Ten Commandments or the commands that Jesus gave us. No, obeying God's commands is about living your life just as Jesus did. We each have a lofty calling on our lives to live in fellowship with God and become living Gospels in which other people can read and discover the character of God and His love for them. Obeying God's commands is not a matter of doing right or doing wrong it is matter of fellowshiping with God and walking as his Son did. When we live in that knowledge of God and fellowship with Him "His love is truly made complete in us".