

## THINGS WE CAN KNOW ACCORDING TO 1JNO

1Jno.2:3-6; 5:18-20

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### I. INTRODUCTION

1. According to Deut.29:29 there are:
  - a. “Secret things” that “belong unto the Lord our God” that we cannot know, do not need to know; if so, God would have revealed them to us.
  - b. “Those things which are revealed” – things that do “belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”
2. I know Deut 29:29 and what is said there applied to Israel under the law of Moses, but the principle of what is revealed there applied to us today.
3. From Jno.8:31-36 we learn we can “know the truth,” that truth by which we are made free; that there is no reason for us to doubt our present salvation and hope. Cf. Rom.8:16-18; 2Tim.4:6-8; 1Cor.10:13; Jas.1:12. See also Eph.3:1-4; 5:17; Heb.6:13-20
4. In spite of this, some people, even some professed N.T. Christians, are known to express doubts about whether or not they are presently saved, or whether or not they can really know they are saved!
5. Also, some Denominational people claim we cannot have any divine assurance of our present or future salvation, that we cannot really know whether or not we are saved or will be saved, because we do not have some so-called personal, direct sign or religious experience as proof of our salvation as they claim to have. And because we deny the doctrine of once saved always saved!
6. In view of such thinking, and to encourage all who have by faith obeyed the gospel of Christ, as well as to encourage others who have not to do so, we, in these lesson on “Things We Can Know” from 1Jno., shall consider the things we who are children of God walking by faith can know – should have no doubt about!

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.2:3,4 WE CAN KNOW THE LORD.

1. “Hereby we do know that we know, him if we keep his commandments,” V.3.

- a. “Hereby,” literally, “in this,” is a phrase often used by John in this Epistle. See 2:5; 3:16,19; 4:2,13;5:2.
  - b. Here in V.3 it refers to the clause, “if we keep his commandments.”
  - c. The sure evidence that we know him is “keeping his commandments.”
  - d. “Keep,” here, is present subjective, thus indicating, “If we keep on keeping his commandments.” This keeping is habitual keeping
2. On the other hand, according to V.4, the one who claims to know him and does not keep his commandments “is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Cf. 1:5,6,8.
- a. They not only do not know him; they are disobedient; they have no fellowship with him; they are liars and without truth; the truth is not in them!
3. We are informed in V.3 in a plain and simple way how it is that we can “know that we know him.”
- a. But what does it mean to “know him”?
  - b. It means to have far more than an acquaintance with his nature through a knowledge of his written word.
  - c. Knowing him is not to be altered and weakened into knowing certain doctrines concerning him; it is the knowledge of God himself. For we know, or think we know, much about him, without knowing him in the sense of V.3
  - d. This knowing him is not merely intellectual, but moral and spiritual. It is not merely the trained and vigorous intellect that sees God, but the pure heart, Mt.5:8.
  - e. This knowing him is that inward and spiritual acquaintance with him that arises out of our faith in and love to him. Jesus speaks of it as identical with eternal life, Jno.17:3.
  - f. This knowing him is intimately, vitally, and inseparably related to love, 1Jno.4:7,8.
  - g. This knowing him is to enter into the most intimate relationship with him as his spiritual child and brother to his Son, Jesus Christ. Cf. Mt.28:18,19.
  - h. It is to know him in his saving power; to know or experience the spiritual things relating to God and Christ and proceeding from them.
  - i. It means to stand approved of God in a saved relationship, to stand born of God.

4. If it be asked which commandments constitute the text here submitted by which “we do know that we know him,” the answer is, **ALL** of them! Cf. Jas.2:10.

**B. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.2:5,6 WE CAN KNOW THAT WE ARE IN HIM.**

1. “...hereby **know** we that we are **in him**,” V.5b.
  - a. “Hereby,” “in this,” that is, by “keeping his word” we know this, V.5a.
  - b. “Keeping his word,” of V.5 is synonymous with “keeping his commandments” of Vv.3,4.
  - c. “Keeping his word” – means keep on keeping his word; habitual keeping of his word.
2. The phrase “in him” indicates a relationship of the most intimate spiritual nature.
  - a. It is directly related to the idea of knowing him.
  - b. “In him” is a summary of all the spiritual blessings available from God found only in him. Cf. Eph.1:4; 2Tim.2:10; Rom.5:1,2; 2Cor.5:17-20; Eph.2:11-20; Jno.15:1-10.
3. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected” – stands complete; he stands mature in his love for God. Cf. 1Jno.5:3.
  - a. This keeping is the development of love, the perfecting of it.
  - b. All love flows from God. Cf. 1Jno.4:19.
4. It is vain for one to claim love for God or to be “in him” while neglecting or refusing to keep his word or his commandments; for such is the acid text of one’s love for God.
5. According to V.6 it is not enough to merely claim to be abiding in him any more than it is for one to claim to have fellowship with God while walking in darkness (1:5,6); he is obligated (ought) to walk as Jesus walked. Cf. 1:7.

**C. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.3:2,3 WE CAN KNOW THAT WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR.**

1. V.2a tells us what we know now: that we are the sons (children) of God.
  - a. Rom.8:16a.
  - b. Gal.3:26,27; 1Pet.1:13,14; 1Jno.3:1,9,10; 5:2.

2. V.2b tells us what we do not know as yet pertaining to the future: “it doth not yet appear what we shall be” – because it has yet to be made known to us.
3. V.2c tells us what we know that we shall know; that is, at his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming: “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”
4. The meaning is:
  - a. We are children of God now, as much so as we shall be when the Lord comes again at his 2<sup>nd</sup> personal coming.
  - b. At the present we are waiting for our eternal inheritance to be realized at his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.
  - c. When he comes we shall still be children and, in addition, we will then be in actual possession of that for which we now wait.
  - d. At his 2<sup>nd</sup> personal coming, then, and only then, will we see the Lord as he now is in his glorified, resurrected, and ascended body.
  - e. At the resurrection of the dead and final judgment of all men we will not only see him as he now is in his glorified state, but we will then be like him.
5. What further proof do we need to convince us that the dead do not now go directly to heaven to be in the personal presence of the Lord? We will not see him as he now is until the resurrection of the dead at his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.
6. Then V.3 declares to us hope’s responsibility.
  - a. We now have a hope; that of V.2. Cf. Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; Heb.6:19.
  - b. The possession of this hope carries a personal responsibility – the responsibility to purify himself – to keep himself pure and holy – to keep on purifying himself.
  - c. The pattern or example for this purity is Christ, himself.

**D. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.3:14 WE CAN KNOW THAT WE HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.**

1. Or, we can know that we have passed “out of death into life.”
  - a. “Death” is the status of the unregenerate (the unsaved).
  - b. “Life,” of the saved, the redeemed.
  - c. Cf. Rom.6:3,4; Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13; 1Jno.5:12.
  - d. Children of God “have passed” (migrated) from spiritual death, their former state in the power and dominion of darkness, into the

- life and the kingdom of God's dear Son, which is obtained through spiritual union with Christ. Cf. Col.1:12-14.
2. Brotherly love is here declared to be the condition, *not of our salvation* from past sins, or of passing "out of death, into life," but *of the certainty of our knowledge of it*, V.14a.
    - a. It affords the evidence by which we may know that we have passed out of death into life.
    - b. The text is human, not divine; it is one we are to apply to ourselves for the purpose specified or designated.
    - c. It is such a text by which the individual and the world about him may determine the reality of his profession as Jno.13:34,35 shows.
  3. Furthermore, according to V.14a, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."
    - a. The reference is not to future death; but to a death that already exists – a death he hasn't passed out of – and will reach its consummation in the next life.
    - b. "He that loveth not his brother" is, literally, *the not loving* man!
    - c. And "abideth" suggests a state into which one has settled down permanently.
    - d. The "death" is spiritual death – separation from God and all his spiritual blessings – which is the wages of sin. Cf. Rom.6:23.
  4. But what is the proof that one a lover of his brethren? See 1Jno.4:20-5:3. Cf. 1Jno.3:23.
  5. See also 1Jno.3:15-19 for further explanation of brotherly love! And thus know that we are of the truth.

**E. IN 1JNO.3:24 AND 4:10-13 THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT SOURCES OF EVIDENCE CITED BY WHICH WE CAN KNOW THAT HE ABIDES IN US AND THAT WE DWELL IN HIM.**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1Jno.3:24 declares the basis upon which God dwells in us and we in him: "...he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him..." V.24a.
  - a. He that *keeps on keeping* God's commandments is the truth indicated by the tense of the verb.
  - b. "He that keepeth" describes what is to be the habit of the believer
  - c. God's dwelling in us and our dwelling in him, or continuing to enjoy fellowship with God, and living a righteous life are inseparable. Cf.1Jno.1:5,6.

- d. Here, keeping his commandments is not referring to the cause or the condition of God's dwelling in us and we in him, but is the **proof** or the **evidence** that he is dwelling in us and we in him.
  - e. Where there is habitual obedience to God's commandments by the believer, there is living, abiding, spiritual union between that soul and God.
2. Secondly, 1Jno.3:24 refers to the means by which we know he abides in us: "And hereby (by this) we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."
- a. This part of V.24 declares three things:
    - (1) God abides in us.
    - (2) We can know he abides in us.
    - (3) We know his by means of the Spirit which God has given us.
  - b. This refers either to "the mind or disposition of; attitude, etc. Cf. Rom.8:9,10,15; 1Jno.4:12,13,17,18.
  - c. Or, it refers to the Holy Spirit.
  - d. If it's the Holy Spirit to which it refers, the verse does not reveal the manner or the how of the entrance nor the mode of the Spirit's dwelling, only the **FACT** of it being given to us whereby we know that God abides in us.
  - e. This does not justify the assumption on our part that his indwelling is personal, immediate, direct, separate and apart from the Word of God any more than the assertion in other passages that both the Father and the Son dwell in us and that we dwell in them justifies such a conclusion, unless, of course, there is a passage so teaching. For Example:
    - (1) According to Jno.14:23 both the Father and the Son are said to come unto and make their abode with the one who loves the Lord and keeps his words. Cf. 1Jno.3:24.
      - (a) Personal indwelling?
      - (b) Immediate indwelling?
      - (c) Direct indwelling?
      - (d) Mediate indwelling?
    - (2) 2Cor.6:16, "As God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them."
      - (a) Personal indwelling?
      - (b) Immediate indwelling?
      - (c) Direct indwelling?
      - (d) Mediate indwelling?

- (3) Eph.3:17a: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts...” Cf. Col.1:27 – How?
    - (a) Personal indwelling?
    - (b) Immediate indwelling – through no medium? Direct?
    - (c) No! But “By faith” Cf. Rom.10:17. How was the word received? Rom.10:9-18; Jno.14,15,16; 17:8,20,21; Ac.1,2; Eph.3:1-5; Gal.1:6-12.
  - (4) From these, ARE we justified in inferring that God, in some mysterious, incomprehensible, direct way has, in his own person taken up his abode in us, or that we in the same kind of way have taken up our abode in him and his Son?
  - (5) Why, then, should we fall into similar error with reference to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling?
  - (6) Furthermore, if we have either one of three Persons of the Godhead personally indwelling us, then we are inspired! Which, of course, is not and cannot be true in our case!
- f. There are only three ways specifically revealed in the N.T. at and after Pentecost by which the power of the Holy Spirit is said to influence men and thereby be given unto men by God almighty.
- (1) By and through the Holy Spirit inspired and Spirit-guided Apostles of Christ fulfilling their God=ordained mission as Christ’s sent ones, Jno.14:26; 15:26,27; 16:7,13-15; 17:8,18,20,21; 20:19-23; Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:14-20; Lk.24:45-49; Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-4; 1Jno.1:1-3. See Mt.16:18,19; 18:18; 2Cor.5:17-20.
    - (a) Which, of course, did not and does not include us now!
  - (2) By and through spiritual gifts imparted to baptized believers by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands as part of their work as the Ambassadors of Christ, 1Cor.12,13,14; 1Jno.2:20,27; See Mk.16:17,18; Ac.8:18,19; 19:5,6; Rom.1:11; 2Tim.1:6.
    - (a) All such power has ceased. Does not and cannot be applied to us now. See 1Cor.13:8-13.
  - (3) That leaves the third, final and only means, the only motivating force in immediate contact with the individual

– the Holy Spirit inspired word, Jno.15:1-8; 8:31,32;  
Col.3:16; Psa.19:9-11; Ac.11:14; Heb.4:12.

3. Thirdly, according to 1Jno.4:10-13 brotherly love is proof or assurance of the fact of this mutual indwelling of God in us and we in God.
  - a. V.13 is almost a repeat of 1Jno.3:24.
  - b. Also, the two passages taken together leave no doubt that the practice of brotherly love is one of God's commandments whereby we know the fact of this mutual indwelling. Cf. 1Jno.3:11-18; 4:7-11; 4:20-5:3.

**F. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.4:1-6 WE CAN KNOW THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR.**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>, the warning issued and the command given revealing the need for testing the spirit, V.1.
  - a. V.1a issues the warning against believing every spirit.
  - b. V.1b the command is given to try to spirits.
  - c. V.1c states the reason for the warning and the command to try or test the spirits, which also identifies these "spirits" warned against, who are not to be believed, as "false prophets," or pseudo-prophets, or human beings who are teaching falsely, but claiming to be of or from God, and to be led by the power of God
2. 2<sup>nd</sup>, Vv.2,3 tell us of the text to be applied in order to be successful in knowing the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
  - a. V.2 speaks of the text to be applied from the positive standpoint.
  - b. V.3 speaks of the text to be applied from the negative standpoint.
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Vv.4-6, we learn of the contrast by which John gives God's children assurance of success as a result of having applied the required test.
  - a. V.4a contains John's reminder and assurance of the fact of their victory over the prophets of deceit and the spirit of error: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them..."
  - b. V.4b states the grounds, the reason or the cause, for their victory, for their success in overcoming them and the spirit of error: "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."
    - (1) That is to say, the false teachers and their spirit of error.
    - (2) The overcoming consisted in having:
      - (a) Refused to listen to those who were of the world and the spirit of error.

- (b) The greater One in them to whom they had taken heed.
      - (c) God's indwelling presence by means of faith and obedience to the word of the inspired Apostles. Cf. 1Jno.3:24; Jno.14:23; Eph.3:17. See 1Jno.2:24,25.
    - c. In Vv.5,6, by means of contrast between those who are of God and those who are not of God, John offers further information concerning the manner or the means of their victory which enables them to know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Cf. 1Jno.5:4,5.
      - (1) First, as to the origin and character of the one and those whom they affect.
        - (a) The one is "of the world" (V.5a), as opposed to you "little children" who "are of God" (V.4a).
        - (b) (For this reason) "Therefore speak they of the world," V.5b.
          - (1) They teach a worldly or human approach to God.
          - (2) The character of their teaching is consistent with their character which is of the world.
          - (3) For all their utterances they have no higher source, and no other authority, but that of the world.
        - (c) These therefore affect only the world; for it's only the world that heareth them, or listens to them, V.5c, "and the world heareth them."
      - (2) Second, by contrast, as to the other: "he that knoweth God" and "heareth us" who "are of (from) God," V.6.
4. "Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error," V.6c.
- a. That is, "from this" – from all that has been said in Vv.1-6 – know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. This is the way and this is how we know this!
  - b. John began the paragraph warning them not to believe every spirit, commanding them to try or test the spirits, and to tell them how to test the spirits.
  - c. Having done that in Vv.1-6b, he concludes by saying, "Hereby know" or "from this know" in V.6c, referring to what had preceded, and introduces an inference from it.

5. For emphasis, and because some misunderstand, we ask and answer this question: What is meant by the expression “the spirit of truth” and “the spirit of error” in 1Jno.4:6c?
  - a. Because Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth” in Jno.14:17; 15:26;16:13, some erroneously conclude that John here in 1Jno.4:6 refers to the Holy Spirit, when he mentions “the spirit of truth,” and the devil, when he mentions “the spirit of error,” but not so. **Not so for the following reasons:**
    - (1) In V.1, when he says “be testing (trying) the spirits whether they are of or from God,” he cannot mean “be testing (trying) the Holy Spirit and the devil whether they are of or from God.
    - (2) In V.2, when he says, “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” he cannot be referring to the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1Cor.12:3.
    - (3) In Vv.3,5, when he says, “every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist...and even now already is it in the world...They are of the world...speak they of the world, and the world heareth them,” he cannot be speaking of the devil himself, but of those of the devil’s domain.
    - (4) John is revealing how to test and know the spiritual origin, nature, and quality of men or spirits, how to know who are the pseudo-prophets of that day, and who belongs to their following, and how to know the spirits, the true prophets and teachers who are of God.
6. We thus conclude that “spirit” is here used as it was in V.1.
  - a. To designate the inner, spiritual nature of the man, which belongs to the truth, the whole truth, confesses and speaks it, reveals it to your ears;
  - b. Or, belongs to the error, the deceit, fails to confess the truth about Jesus Christ (Vv.2,3), and speaks what pleases the world (V.5).
  - c. Or we might say that the “spirit of truth” is a **disposition** favorable toward the truth, and the “spirit of error” is a **disposition** friendly to error.

**G. ACCORDING TO 1JNO.5:13-20, ALONG WITH A REMINDER OF HIS FINAL PURPOSE FOR HAVING WRITTEN THIS EPISTLE, JOHN DECLARES SEVERAL ADDITIONAL THINGS WE CAN KNOW.**

1. 1<sup>st</sup>, that those who believe on the name of the Son of God may know they have eternal life, V.13.
  - a. V.13 is introductory in nature to this section and forms a transition from the preceding Vv.11,12, where the distinction is made between those who have life and those who do not, because they either have the Son of God or they do not have.
  - b. Other passages reveal believers have eternal life in promise, or in prospect, not in actual possession here and now; that they are in hope of it, based on the conditions set forth. See 1Jno.2:24,25; Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; Heb.6:19; Mk.10:29,30; 2Tim.4:6-8; Jas.1:12; 1Pet.1:3-5,9; Jno.5:26-29; 6:27,40.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup>, that they may know that their prayers with reference to their own personal life, circumstances, and needs, as well as intercessory prayers for penitent erring believers offered in harmony with God's will will be heard, Vv.14-17. Cf. 1Jno.3:22; Mt.7:7-11; Heb.4:14-16; Jas.1:5,6a; 1Cor.10:13. See also Ac.8:22-24; Gal.6:1; Jas.5:13-16.
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>, that we may know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, V.18.
  - a. "Born of God" here refers to one who "stands born of God." Cf. 1Jno.5:1.
  - b. He who stands born of God does not habitually practice sin; he doesn't make a practice of sinning. Cf. 1Jno.2:29; 3:2,3,6-10; 5:4,5.
  - c. If and when he does sin, he makes no excuses for it; he readily repents of it and confesses it – always to God, and to brethren when necessary, 1Jno.1:8-10; 2:1,2; Ac.8:22-24; Jas.5:16.
  - d. He "keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not;" that is, he resists the devil. See Jas.4:7; 1Pet.5:8,9; 1Cor.9:27.
4. 4<sup>th</sup>, "we know that we are of God," V.19a.
  - a. That we are his offspring in the spiritual sense, 1Jno.3:10; 4:6.
  - b. And that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," V.19b.
    - (1) That is, all others are declared to be in wickedness.
    - (2) All others lieth in wickedness and in the evil One.
    - (3) All other are in unbelief and sin. Cf. Eph.2:2; 1Pet.5:8; Eph.6:11; Col.1:13.
5. Finally, we can know the following five things according to V.20:
  - a. "That the Son of God is come"; this is the very thing the antichrists were denying (and still deny) and refuse to repent of! 1Jno.2:18,22,23; 2Jno.7.

- b. “And hath given us an understanding” (this signifies a process of mind leading to a conclusion; thus denotes the faculty of forming a conclusion from certain facts revealed by inspiration).
- c. “That we may know him that is true” (the believer is not groping in the dark).
- d. “And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ” (again, the antichrists denied it and still deny it).
- e. “This is the true God, and eternal life” (this, in spite of the antichrists or Gnostic denial).
  - (1) So John is saying that God is not an abstract conception existing in the minds of people who hold certain doctrines; he is a Personal reality, revealed in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh, and who is experienced personally by those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus come to know God in the biblical sense of the term know.
  - (2) And this is how men have hope of eternal life; that is, to know – to have an understanding of the true God, and to be in him and in his Son, Jesus Christ – that is, to have the assurance of eternal life, 1Jno.2:24,25; Jno.17:3; Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; Heb.6:19.

### III. CONCLUSION

1. According to 1Jno. we can know all these things.
2. To further appreciate what it means, or the blessedness of knowing these things, we conclude our study with Thayer’s definition of “know” as used in 1Jno:

“In particular, to become acquainted with, to know, is employed in the N.T. of the knowledge of God and Christ, and of the things relating to them or proceeding from them: a. the one, true God, in contrast with the polytheism of the Gentiles...1Jno.5:20...the nature of God the Father, esp. the holy will and affection by which he aims to sanctify and redeem men through Christ...1Jno.2:3,13,14; 3:1-4; 4:8. – Thayer, 117.