

Series: The Composition of Confidence – 1 John

Confidence in Knowledge – What You Heard from the Beginning

1 John 2:3-27

Introduction

1. The backdrop of John's epistle is the conflict with incipient Gnosticism which holds to some peculiar and damaging false claims:
 - a. **Gnostic** – from gnosis, knowledge – a claim to a special knowledge (anointing, **v. 20**) which others don't have.
 - b. **Corresponding to the special knowledge** – fellowship with God, thus salvation, is through that higher knowledge alone, and what we do in the body is inconsequential.
 - i. Including positive sin. (Hate of brethren)
 - ii. Including negative omission of God's commands. (Love of brethren)
 - c. **These conflicts endangered John's readers, threatening their confidence in knowledge.**
2. One of the great obstacles we face regarding our confidence is knowledge:
 - a. How do we know that we know (fellowship) Christ when we look so different from so many others who claim to know Christ? (morality)
 - b. How do we know that we know the truth when what we believe is so different from so many others who claim to know the truth? (doctrine)
 - c. Also, how can we know that we know and are holding to the truth when someone (perhaps in the church) begins to teach some "new thing?"
3. John makes it simple – your confidence in knowledge is in **"what you heard from the beginning"** (**vv. 7, 24**).
- I. Knowing that We Know Christ (**vv. 3-17**)
 - A. If We Keep His Commandments (**vv. 3-6**)
 - a. Extending themes of fellowship from **chapter 1** – **cf. John 17:3** – knowing God is to have fellowship with Him, and eternal life.
 - i. Knowing God through Jesus – **1:5** – the message about God that Jesus declared.
 - b. **Knowing Him** – necessarily implies more than simply knowing some doctrinal truths concerning Him.
 - i. Knowing Him means – **1:5** – knowing He has no fellowship with darkness.
 - ii. Therefore – **1:6-7** – only walking in the light, i.e. faithful obedience to His word, is aligned with truly knowing Him.
 - c. **The litmus test** – (**v. 3**) – keeping His commandments.
 - i. **If you know Him, you know He has no fellowship with sin (1:5).**
 - ii. **If you know Him, you know acting outside of His law is sin (3:4).**
 - iii. **If you know Him, you will be keeping His law/commandments.**
 - d. **The hypothetical statement from the other position (the lie)** – (**v. 4**) – I know Him without keeping His commandments.
 - i. Just like – **1:6, 8, 10** – if we say, then we lie, make Him a liar.

- ii. **Liar** – You show you are not telling the truth because your actions are incompatible with knowing Him – **Matthew 7:21-27** – **“I never knew you...whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them...”**
- iii. **Truth not in him** – He doesn’t know like he says he knows, TRUTH IS MEANT TO TRANSLATE TO LIVING, AND HE IS NOT LIVING IT OUT.
- e. **To know Him is to know He requires our love, which requires our obedience** – (v. 5) (Greatest command)
 - i. **“By this we know that we are in Him”** – language of relationship/fellowship.
 - ii. Extended in **verse 6**.
- f. **To say you abide in Him is a claim of fellowship and relationship with Jesus which He spoke on in His ministry which requires actions to back up the statement:**
 - i. **John 15:1-4** – abiding in Him truly leads to bearing fruit.
 - 1. **(vv. 2, 6)** – If you ever did abide in Him, but you are not bearing fruit now, you know that you no longer abide in Him.
 - ii. To make the claim brings responsibility to walk the walk – **(v. 6)** – walk as Christ walked.
 - 1. Not only abide in Him, but HE ABIDES IN US – **John 15:4, 7**
- B. If the New Commandment is True in Us **(vv. 7-11)**
 - a. NOTE: **(v. 5)** – speaking of the love we have for God.
 - i. First commandment on which hangs the law and the prophets – **Matthew 22:36-38, 40 (cf. John 14:15)**
 - ii. There is the second which is inseparable from the first – **Matthew 22:39**
 - 1. **(v. 9)** – to say you are in the light, you know God **(1:5)**, while hating your brother is to manifest a FUNDAMENTAL IGNORANCE OF WHO GOD ACTUALLY IS **(3:17** – **“how does the love of God abide in him”**)
 - b. The Old Commandment **(v. 7)**
 - i. Looks back **(v. 6)** and forward **(v. 10)** – the commandment (requirement) to walk as He walked is fulfilled in loving as He loved.
 - 1. **Gnostic thought** – fellowship through intellectual assent, inherently sinful flesh is inconsequential.
 - 2. **Logical conclusion** – it doesn’t matter how I treat my fellow man, even by brother **(cf. Romans 13:10** – because it doesn’t matter if I follow the law.)
 - ii. Jesus’ teaching manifested that this commandment was the whole focus of the law – **Matthew 22:39** (all the way back to **Leviticus 19:18**).

- iii. Jesus brings this command forward with Him to His new law, but it is the same old commandment – **Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8** (royal law)
- iv. **“an old commandment which you have had from the beginning”** – **Mark 12:32-34** – proximity to the kingdom was indicated by grasping this important command.
 - 1. It is the most fundamental part of following Christ.
- c. The New Commandment **(vv. 8-11)**
 - i. The “New Commandment” as epitomized in Jesus and His disciples – **(v. 8)**
 - 1. True in Him and you – **John 13**
 - a. **(vv. 14-15)** – example given of the love of humble service – Disciples do as Jesus did.
 - b. **(v. 34)** – NEW in the sense of the now supreme example in Jesus (Foreshadowing – **John 15:13** – dying for us)
 - c. **(v. 35)** – all will know you’re a disciple of Jesus by this because it is what Jesus is all about.
 - 2. **If love is what Jesus is about, and you are a disciple of His, the command to love is not only true in Him, but in YOU!**
 - 3. **(v. 8b)** – this is the natural consequence of light coming into the world.
 - ii. The incompatibility between hate and light – **(vv. 9-10)**
 - 1. **(v. 9)** – because of what is stated in **verse 8** – directly associated with knowing Jesus, thus being in the light, is love.
 - 2. **(v. 10)** – no cause for stumbling – because truly receiving and responding to spiritual direction from the Lord.
 - a. He is not making excuses for darkness and permitting those things which would hinder true spiritual focus.
 - iii. The consuming nature of the darkness – **(v. 11)** – if your misunderstanding of God is so fundamental that you think loving your brother is not required, then you have effectively incapacitated yourself from following God on the most basic level – **therefore your sense of spiritual direction is completely annihilated.**
- C. If We Overcome the Wicked One **(vv. 12-17)**
 - a. Based on truths espoused thus far concerning fellowship with God and knowing Him, in comparison to what he knows of his readers, John posits that they have overcome the wicked one – **(vv. 12-14)** – which is why he is writing to them.
 - i. They should not doubt or be discouraged but continue on.

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- ii. Breaks the readers down into 3 respective levels of Christian advancement in maturity – **children** (new converts), **fathers** (been in Christ the longest, thus, most mature), **young men** (mature Christians who are battle tested and faithful).
 - 1. If we are in Christ, and walking in the light we have reason for confidence no matter where we are.
 - 2. However, it only gets better!
 - iii. **Children (vv. 12, 13c)** – forgiveness of past sins, thus, knowledge/fellowship with the Father (cherished, loving relationship)
 - iv. **Fathers (vv. 13a, 14a – same)** – Knowledge/fellowship with God, but through years appreciation and experience of His immutability – He is the same as from the beginning. (cf. **Hebrews 13:8**)
 - v. **Young men (vv. 13b, 14b)** – they are not new, thus they are tested, yet they have overcome – see how He is faithful.
 - 1. (v. 14b) – how they have overcome – contrast with opponents.
 - 2. Not with intellectual faith, but the strength from the word of God active in their life! (cf. **Ephesians 6:10-11**)
- b. Rather than allowing those in error to affect their confidence leading them to give way to the damaging ideas in their doctrine and turn to the world, John warns about what that activity truly shows.
- i. Keeping His word/commandments shows complete and mature love of God – (v. 6) (cf. **John 14:15**) – in contrast to theoretical or false love.
 - ii. John points out that loving God (who is light) is incompatible with a love for the world – (vv. 15-17)
 - 1. (v. 15) – i.e. a person’s love for God – cf. **James 4:4** – shows himself an adulterer/enemy.
 - 2. (v. 16) – The appeal to the flesh, and things of the world is not some inconsequential matter (as the Gnostics say), but purely antithetical to the spiritual direction God gives.
 - 3. (v. 17) – encouragement to pursue the things of God.
 - a. Passing away – (v. 8) – like the darkness.
 - b. The light (God in the flesh) came into the world to vanquish it. (3:8)
 - c. **THE ONLY LASTING, AND VIABLE OPTION IS THE WILL OF GOD WHICH WILL REMAIN – eternal life is not in things which themselves will pass away.**
- II. Knowing that We Know the Truth (vv. 18-27)
- A. If We Hold to the Truth When Others Depart (vv. 18-23)
 - a. What is “the last hour?” (v. 18)
 - i. Known based on the coming of many “antichrists” (v. 18).
 - ii. **Antichrist** – an opponent of the Messiah (STRONG)

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1. **(v. 18c)** – plural
 2. **(v. 19)** – plural
 3. Anyone opposed to Christ – **cf. Philippians 3:18-19** – in doctrine and practice.
- iii. **Specific doctrinal error of John’s concern** – **(v. 22a)** – denying Jesus is the Christ – **(4:2)** – i.e. that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.
1. Error as contrasted with what John (and other apostles) revealed – **1:1-3**
- iv. **“the last hour”** – a time warned about within the **“last days”** where a crisis of a major apostasy occurred – **1 Timothy 4:1; Jude 17-18**
- b. **A concerning difference** – **(vv. 20-21)** – this is different from what we have understood and believed; have we been wrong?
- i. **Anointing (vv. 20, 27)** – likely specific language in reference to the false claim of those in error.
 1. They claimed a special “anointing” of knowledge – hence, Gnostics.
 2. I.e. we have a higher, special knowledge that you don’t have.
 - ii. **They don’t, YOU DO** – **(vv. 20-21)** – have an anointing of the Holy One to know all things.
 1. What has been declared – **1:1-3 (cf. Acts 2:42)**
 2. **(v. 21)** – you do know, and when another comes along to claim to know something else, compare it to what you know, and then reject it if it differs because it is not of the truth.
- c. **The consequence of the difference** – **(vv. 22b-23)** – their position in opposition to the truth of the incarnate Christ forfeits fellowship with God.
- i. Doctrine matters so do not give up the truth for something new.
- d. **The correct conclusion** – **(v. 19)**
- i. **“They”** – the antichrists who opposed the truth about Him and taught by Him.
 - ii. **“Us”** – those who are holding fast to the truth **(v. 21)**.
- iii. **THEIR DEPARTURE FROM AN UNCHANGING STANDARD DOES NOT REFLECT POORLY ON YOU, BUT ON THEM.**
1. Numbers don’t tell which is right.
 2. Continuation in the truth does.
- iv. **“For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” (1 Corinthians 11:19)**
1. Their departure does not tell you that you are wrong.
 2. It tells you that you are right based on what effected their departure – disagreement with the truth **(vv. 21-22)**.

- e. When we stick to what has been true when others depart after some new thing, we know that we know the truth – **Acts 2:42; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 13:8-9**
- B. If What We Heard from the Beginning Abides in Us **(vv. 24-27)**
 - a. Don't fight or resist what has been true all along just because someone else claims to have some "new truth" – **(vv. 24-25)**
 - i. Right, or original apostolic doctrine is imperative to fellowship – **(v. 24)**
 - 1. Honesty and open mindedness do not equate with entertaining "new" things that are in contrast (contradict) to original things.
 - 2. "New" and "innovative" are not words associated with eternal truth.
 - ii. Right, or original apostolic doctrine is imperative to the hope of salvation – **(v. 25)**
 - b. Don't be deceived by the arrogant claim of others to know better than the truth that you know is already established and verified – **(vv. 26-27)**
 - i. **(v. 26)** – When they say, "I know what that says, but listen to what I am saying instead," don't be deceived.
 - ii. **(v. 27)** – rely on the infallible unchanging standard – it alone can continue to edify you with the truth.

Conclusion

- 1. As is always the case, our confidence in spiritual matters boils down to the Son of God – Jesus Christ.
- 2. The revelation of Jesus Christ is perfect and unchanging:
 - a. If we are applying it in obedience to our daily life, we can have confidence that we know Christ.
 - b. If we hold true to the original teaching of Jesus (cf. Acts 2:42) that has been revealed, verified, and established, we can have confidence that we know the truth.