

Bible Greek VPOD - Intermediate Greek

Lesson 6

Knowledge applied to life (2:3-6)

1 John 2:3-6

And in this we continue knowing that we have known him, if we might attend carefully to his commandments. 4 The one who says that I have known him and the commands of him are not kept, he is a liar and in this the truth is not. 5 But whoever might keep the word of him, in this truly the love of God has been made perfect, in this we know that we are in him. 6 The one who says, in him abides, he owes himself also to walk even as he walked.

Και ἐν τούτῳ γινωσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνωκαμεν αὐτον, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. 4 ὁ λεγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτον και τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μη τηρῶν, ψευστης ἐστιν και ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἐστιν. 5 ὅς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τον λογον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελειωται, ἐν τούτῳ γινωσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν. 6 ὁ κεγων ἐν αὐτῷ μενειν ὀφειλει καθως ἐκεῖνος περιεπατησεν και αὐτος [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν.

Introduction

Becoming a Christian does not exempt one from sinning nor free one from the righteous obedience to the law of Christ. These two extreme teachings have been with us from the beginning of the church. John addresses the two extremes. On one side is a false perfectionism and on the other antinomianism. Perfectionism teaches that the believer does not sin at all and that he or she can achieve perfection on earth. Antinomianism teaches that the Christian is not bound by the law - any law. John clarifies the confusion of both extremes found in the early church not only correcting both the Gnostic belief of spiritual superiority and perfectionism, but corrects the carnal Christian. John presents a biblical standard for the Christian that involves a close walk with God and keeping the commandments of Christ. A close walk with God involves growing in maturity which produces experiential knowledge. This is what Paul calls walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 26). This is the theological doctrine of sanctification. John is not talking about a non-believer he is talking about the difference between a disciple and a carnal believer.

True Knowledge

2:3. Και ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκωμεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, (And in this we continue knowing that we have known him). John links the previous thought with the conjunction phrase “and in this,” or “in connection with this.” The demonstrative pronoun οὗτος (houtos) dem. pron. d.n.sg., “this” points back to the message as the custom by use of the neuter; namely, the important fact is the great propitiation we have in Jesus Christ and the believer’s acknowledgment, confession and repentance of sin. The demonstrative points to our γινώσκωμεν (ginoskomen) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., “we are knowing” or more accurately “we continue to know” that we “have known” him.

The perfect tense of the second γινώσκω (ginosko) Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., makes this knowledge past tense and the effect continues up to the time of writing. This knowledge is experiential knowledge as it relates to knowing by experience or doing. The perfect tense is a completed act - In the past John’s audience came to know Jesus Christ, the righteous One, the propitiation of the world as their Savoir and John reminds them that they continue to know this fact. To know God is to have fellowship with God as John has already spoken about (1:6-7). Knowledge is equated with light in the sense of the Spirit’s work in the believer. That work involves experiential knowledge. Spiritual maturity occurs as the Holy Spirit illuminates the truth to the believer.

ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. (if we might attend carefully to his commandments). Knowing this fact enables us to attend to the work of God. The conditional εἰ (ean) “if, in case,” introduces the probable possibility that defines the conditional clause that brings to the front of his argument that the believer should attend to God’s work that is commanded of us. The word for command is the subject of this phrase and is the Greek ἐντολή (entole) a.f.pl., with def. art., “an order,” “command,” “charge,” or “commandment.” It comes from the compound of ἐν (en) prep., “in, with, by,” and τέλος (telos) “end,” or “custom,” and has the main idea of “anything within the realm of the established custom of God.” The New Testament custom that

God gave the disciples was to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20); and being a disciple means abiding in Him, as Christ says, “observing all things I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Thus doing His work means that along the way one will grow in the knowledge of Christ. This growth means he or she will become a true disciple.

The main verb of this phrase has a strong sense. The word is τηρεω (tereo) Pres. Act. Subj. 1pl., “to attend to carefully,” “take care of,” “keep,” “reserve.” One sure sign of a mature Christian is that he or she attends carefully to commandments of God. This is the “then” part of the conditional phrase – if you know him, then you will attend to His commandments. The knowledge of Christ and the love of Christ have a common result, namely, attending to His commandments. John says in his gospel:

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

So what are the commandments spoken of here? Are the commandments related to the law, did Christ not come to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17-18), and indeed free us from the law (John 8:31-36; Gal. 5:1)? First, the commands of God have come at various times throughout history. God commanded Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), but we know what happened – they ate (Gen. 3:6). God gave man commandments before the selection of the chosen people, before the selection of Abraham, commanding them not to kill, but they killed (Gen. 4:8, 23). God gave commandments before the patriarchs, before the “Law” and the covenant with Moses and mankind failed in that instance too. The “Law” formalized has some 613 statutes that was given to Israel, each pointing to the sinfulness of man and the righteousness of God. What is spoken of here is the “commands of Him,” that is, the commandments (pl) of Jesus Christ. These are the commandments that Christ Himself gave to the disciples. Why are they not listed in the Old Testament fashion like that found in the book of Leviticus – the book commanding holiness (cf. Lev. 20:26). The commands are all lined up in logical fashion in the Old Testament, but when Jesus is questioned about the first commandment he provides two in response: (1) love your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and (2) love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:28-34).

There is no legalism with the New Testament gospel of grace. The answer Jesus gave the Scribes has its root in the character and holiness of God. It involves a love relationship with Him. It is simple and involves a personal relationship with Him and that relationship involves giving Him glory and praise, acknowledging our weaknesses and relying upon Him. When Cain brought his offering before the Lord, God called it an evil work (Gen. 4:3-5; 1 John 3:12-15), but He also provided a way to make it right as the Lord tells Cain, “If you do well, will you will not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Gen. 4:7). In other words, God seems to give him a way to make it right and though the text does not say how, the implication is confession – calling it like God calls it, sin, then repenting – turning from that sin and coming before God with an acceptable attitude and offering, that is, doing it right with the right attitude.

In contrast to the Old Testament commandments (whether they be Mosaic or pre-Mosaic) the New Covenant believer is given a helper, namely, the Holy Spirit making obedience to the commandments of Christ something that is desirable in the new man.

In a very real and practical sense this reflects the result of a true knowledge of God. Realizing that Christ died in our place is a profound motivator, but mankind can have a short memory, he can be easily distracted like a sheep, a constant redirecting of his attention is needed, and the convicting work of the Spirit helps the believer in knowledge, understanding and action.

False Knowledge

2:4. ὁ λεγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτον και τας ἐντολας αὐτοῦ μη τηρῶν, ψευστης ἐστιν και ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀληθεια οὐκ ἔστιν (The one who says that I have known him and the commands of him are not kept, he is a liar and in this the truth is not). John now addresses a certain believer who claims to know Christ but lives a life not set apart from the world, a life that is not committed to the commands of Christ. “The one who says” is a participle - λεγω (lego) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to say,” “speak,” and points to a person who is a verbal – noun, that is, a person who is known by speaking and in particular the thing that he speaks about is that he has known, γινωσκω (ginosko) Perf. Act. Ind. 1sg., “to learn to know,” “to know,” “understand,” “perceive,” I have known Christ. The perfect tense means the action occurred in the past and the effect continues up to the time of writing. This person professes to be a Christian and is known to be a Christian.

But instead of keeping the commandments of Christ as in verse 3, this person is one who is known for not keeping, in a habitual sense, His commandments. This person is not one who keeps some but not others; this person is known for his open non-support for Christ’s commandments. The result is that John calls him a ψευστης (pseustes) n.m.sg., “a liar,” and his stance on the subject of obedience to the commandments of Christ is false. Further, “in this thing” there is no truth, that is, in his profession of knowing Christ and lack of walking with Christ he is inconsistent with being changed and truth is compromised because he is uncommitted to the commands of Christ.

True Knowledge

A. Obedience reflects perfected knowledge (2:5)

2:5. ὅς δ’ ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τον λογον, (But whoever might keep the word of him). In contrast to the previous verse, the contrastive conjunction δε (de) conj., “but,” is used, indicating a contrast to the behavior of the liar above who is immature, who claims the power of salvation, but exhibits no growth, no putting away of sin, no changed life. John now moves back to the person who possesses a knowledge that is mature or at least is sensitive to the Spirit and one who is growing in Christ. This person, whoever it may be, is identified by the relative pronoun ος (hos) rel. pron. n.m.sg., “who,” “which,” “what,” and most translate as “whoso,” indicating that within the set of believers, there are those who do grow in knowledge, who will mature and the possibility is there for all who are believers.

The particle αν (an) has no exact English equivalent and serves to point out the relative clause. As Robertson says, “Indefinite relative clause with modal *an* and the present active

subjunctive, “whoever keeps on keeping.”¹ In this case the subjunctive verb τηρω (tereo) Pres. Act. Subj. 3sg., “to attend to carefully,” “take care of,” “keep,” “guard,” is seen as being more probable, a more certain outcome of yielding to the Spirit.

Notice the relationship given between the “commandments of Christ,” and the “word of Him.” The two are spoken of here as synonymous. λογος (logos) a.m.sg., with def. art., “word,” “of speech,” is the direct object of the phrase and is the same play on words Jesus used in John 14:21-24:

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελειωται, (in this truly the love of God has been made perfect). Or better “truly in this [message] the love of God has been made complete.” The idea of the neuter dative demonstrative² with the preposition makes the message, namely, the knowledge of Christ and subsequent reaction of the believer, the indirect object. This means there is a purpose to the message that is rooted in love. The word for truly is the adverb ἀληθῶς (alethos) “truly,” “of truth,” “in reality,” “most certainly” and has as its root truth.

In this message truly is found the love of God. The apostle is moving to one of the greatest love sections of the Bible. The love that God possess toward mankind is something that is hard to define. There are three words for love in the Greek, the first is “eros” which is sexual and not really love at all; then there is “phileo” which is “friendly” love; and finally there is the love referred to here ἀγάπη (agape) n.f.sg., “affection, love,” which seeks good will, affection and benevolence.

Finally, this love is complete and passive as the perfect tense and passive voice is used of the strong word τελειοω (teleioo) Perf. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “to make perfect,” “complete,” “to bring to an end (goal),” “to accomplish.” God seeks to bring our growth in knowledge of Him to an end goal that is, knowledge of Him involves action and that action is specifically keeping His word. The perfect is passive which has God as the agent, that is, the love of God has been brought to its goal by God and not by ourselves.

Some try to make this complicated in listing out all His commandments, but that is not the apostle's point here, that is a return to the law. That is a legalistic fruit counting scheme that is far from the intent of what is presented here. John is addressing the other extreme, the one who does not want to live by any laws, but that should not drive us to the opposite extreme. What John is talking about here is the love principle that Jesus spoke of. It involves a loving relationship where man comes to the knowledge of God in a growing relationship that involves changing one's behavior because we love the One who died for us. It is a picture of a husband and wife where the desire to please the other so rules one's manner of life because the desire is to

¹ Robertson Word Pictures

² The demonstrative serves to point out with clearness and certainty. The near demonstrative further serves to point out with certainty the result of the “whoever keeps His word.”

place the spouse before self. This is a self-less love where God comes first and that kind of relationship is a perfected relationship. Later, John will further define and develop this principle of the love of God in relation to keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3; cf. John 14:15-16).

ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν. (in this we know that we are in him). This perfected knowledge results in a person whose actions and attitude clearly reveal that we are truly a Christian. “In this” is again used to reflect the idea of the context of the message and the certainty of its outcome. In an obedient, God fearing, God loving manner of life we collectively know that we are in Him. The word for know is in the present tense and is γινώσκω (ginosko) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., “to know,” “learn to know,” “understand” and means “we (collectively) continue to know ὅτι (hoti) conj., “that,” we are [a state of being] in Him.

In Him is a technical term meaning that we are secure in Christ and is a statement of being a Christian, one who is in the Church proper. This is not an Old Testament saint, but rather is exclusively referring to Christians who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ and the New Testament message of the gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:6).

This serves as a test for the Christian. How does one know he is walking as a Christian? First John says, does he say he knows Him? Next, the question is does his actions reflect his testimony? That is, is he in fellowship with believers and walking consistent with Christ (1 John 1:5-7)? Next, is he truthful about his sin or does he claim to be perfected here on earth (1 John 1:8-10)? Then, does he abide in Christ, walking as Christ did (1 John 2:3-6)? This little letter presents some very practical truths about those who profess to be Christian and John has a lot more to say concerning those in the Church. John is addressing this issue because there were some in the early Church who were confused by the false teaching of others and then there were some who were professing falsely to be Christians because they denied the deity of Christ.

B. One ought to strive for perfection (2:6)

2:6. ὁ κειων ἐν αὐτῷ μενειν ὀφειλει καθως ἐκεῖνος περιπατησεν και αὐτος [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν. (The one who says, in him abides, he owes himself also to walk even as he walked). While the first part of a true knowledge of Christ is a perfected knowledge and involves a loving relationship, the second part involves the believer to actively pursue a way of life consistent with Christ’s will. The one who has a healthy relationship with God will pursue those activities that please God.

“The one who says” is an active participle from λέγω (lego) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to say,” “speak,” the active voice means that this person who professes to abide in Christ is really abiding in Christ. That is what the active voice means; that the subject is actively performing the action. Recall that the participle will get the verbal attributes from the main verb of the phrase and in this case the verb is ὀφειλω (opheilo) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to owe,” “to be bound,” “be one’s duty,” making this ethical or moral in nature.

The participle makes this a description one could say an occupation or calling. It describes the type of person this is, namely, one that testifies that he or she is an active believer who abides - μενω (meno) Pres. Act. Inf. “to remain,” “abide,” “wait for,” Christ. To abide in Christ means to possess an inward, enduring personal communion with Christ, to live a life in word and deed according to the word of Christ, to obey His commands in a loving way.

The last part of this verse moves the reader from knowledge to deed. The far demonstrative *ἐκεῖνος* (*ekeinos*) dem. pron. n.m.sg., “that,” is not even used in most translations because it seems redundant. However, the distant demonstrative points to Christ as he walked on earth some forty for fifty years ago - “even as that One walked” back when He was walking on the earth, *καὶ* (*kai*) indeed in that same manner thus continue to walk. Here the force of the present infinitive comes alive in an active manner of life in Christ.

In essence what John describes in these verses is the difference between a believer and a disciple. A believer is justified and has a relationship with Christ, but is sometimes immature and selfish, he knows only unconditional benefits but is not active and is still in his flesh. Whereas a disciple is one who is justified and is cooperating in the process of sanctification, he is yielding to the Spirit and is in fellowship with Christ, maturing in Christ and has a sacrificial attitude, knowing the difference between the unconditional benefits of being “in Christ” and the conditional benefits which produce fruit. Dr Salvesen provides a helpful chart³:

True Believer	True Disciple
Only Justified	+ Cooperating with Sanctification
Only Relationship	+ Fellowship
Immature	Becoming Mature
Selfish	Sacrificial
Knows Only Unconditional Benefits	Knows unconditional and conditional benefits
Not Active	Reproduce (Rewards)

³ John Salvesen, Sermon notes (www.bcbc.org, June 6, 2010)