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**WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM**

1 John 2:1-11 (Key Verse 3)

*“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.”*

In today's passage we going to continue to receive direction from Apostle John on how to live in the light. In order to live in the light, we must come to know who Jesus is. Therefore, from today passage we are going to learn first who Jesus is and who we are before him. We are also going to learn how do we know that we have come to know him. From the key verse it says, we know we have come to know him if we obey his commands. Therefore, we are also going to learn what does it mean to obey his commands, how can we obey his commands? And finally, we will learn what is the result when we sincerely obey his commands. I pray that God may have mercy on us all to receive one word and be filled with the true knowledge of who Jesus is.

The passage today begins with a deep plea and affection from the author towards believers, he said in **verse 1a**: *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.”* This plea was filled with deep concern for Christian believers, deep concern for us too today that we may not sin. This is important because sin, is a very serious matter. It is a serious matter because God hates sin, He is holy and righteous. Also, sin is a serious matter because it drives us away from God, when we are sin, we are driven away from the light, we wonder around and run away from God. The will of God is that we may have fellowship with him, depend on him and live for him. But the misery of sin is that we become separated from God and become filled with so much meaninglessness to a point where we even hate God. To help us, the author (Apostle John) started this letter with deep affection and concern, encouraging us not to sin.

On the other hand, as we all know living life without sinning is impossible for us humans, so the author's plea that we may not sin does not suggest that if we sin we are not Christians, but rather it is a plea on what attitude we should have towards sin. It is a plea to not loosely sin, to not be passive about sin but be intentional about resisting sin and use all avenues that the Lord has provided us to overcome sin, such as studying word of God, prayer and repentance daily. Furthermore, because it is impossible for us to completely reject sinning and live without sin, the author reveals to us further the mercy of God which covers us. Let us look at **verse 1b**: *“But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”* When we sin, we become separated from God, because God hates sin, because he is holy. The result of sin is judgement to eternal death. But because of the love and mercy of God, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

Generally, an advocate is a defense lawyer who acts on behalf of the accused and uses evidence to prove the innocence of the accused. Now in our case, it says when we sin, when we are certainly guilty of our crime Jesus speaks on our behalf. The nature of Jesus's advocacy is that he speaks for the guilty, not to condemn us but to free us from the sentence of sin, to exempt us from eternal death, the consequence of sin. To restore us and unite us with God. This is the nature of Jesus' advocacy, to redeem those who are certainly guilty, clear cut destined for eternal death. Also, the advocacy of Jesus is accessible for all people, rich or poor, young or old, for all race, for everyone basically. Jesus is an advocate for all people, he speaks before God on behalf of all people.

How is this possible? How is Jesus able to do this? To speak for guilty sinners and free them from the consequence of their crimes? Let us look at **verse 2**: *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”* Jesus is the perfect advocate, able to speak on our behalf before God because he died on the cross for the sins of all mankind, for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is the perfect atoning sacrifice for he came down into this world, lived among sinners and yet he did not sin. He is the perfect sacrifice for our sins, a lamb without blemish to wash away our sins and restore us as children of God. Jesus is the perfect advocate for there is no one else qualified like him to stand before God as our Advocate.

After the author had shared with the believers concerning our attitude towards sin, and the mercy of God through Jesus Christ our advocate he went further to emphasize knowing who Jesus Christ. Let us look at our **key verse 3**: *“We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.”* Here knowing Jesus is not just about head knowledge, but deep knowledge in our hearts, deep acceptance that indeed Jesus is our advocate, our atoning sacrifice, our Lord and savior, deep knowledge that indeed we need him. How do we know that we know Jesus? The key verse tells us

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plainly that we know that we know Jesus when we obey his commands. In our ministry we are so blessed with the gift to study the Bible deeply every week, to meditate on God's word and write testimony. But the question is, is all this leading us to truly knowing Jesus or is it just head knowledge? Knowing Jesus is not just about knowing the scriptures, but it is about keeping his commands.

In **verse 4-6** it says: *"Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.* Here we can see that knowing Jesus should be reflected in our actions, we should respond to his words by obeying them, we should respond to Jesus' word to repent by taking action and turning away from a life of sin. When we truly know that indeed Jesus is our advocate and know the price he paid to redeem us, we should respond by turning away from a life of sin, we should take the author's plea to no longer sin. If we do not do as Jesus commands, they author says we are liars, the truth is not in us. We do not know who Jesus is.

Now the question is what is the reason we become liars? What makes us say we know him and yet we do not obey his commands? The cause of this is the attitude we have towards Jesus, when we think we can do something for Jesus to save us. When we think if we help out at church then Jesus will be happy with us, when think when we tithe, help with pick of students, when we never miss worship team practice or Bible studies then Jesus will be happy with us. Yes, these things are good, and definitely Jesus will be happy with us when we do them, but we should not do them to earn brownie points with Jesus, but rather the right attitude is to do them because of what Jesus has done. The right attitude towards Jesus is when we know that, our salvation is fully in his hands 100%, and that there is nothing we can do to add to it, not even 1%. When we have this attitude towards Jesus, his greatness becomes clearer to us, his magnificent love for us becomes clearer and complete in us. We become changed, we begin live in Jesus. In **verse 5b-6** it says: *"This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."* This is what genuine Christianity is about, when we grow in the full knowledge of Jesus, live in him, obey his commands, and imitate his life. Let us pray that God may have mercy on us that our Bible studies and testimony writing may not just be a social gathering exercise, but rather it may lead to know who Jesus is and to obey his commands.

The author went further and revealed to us a command that we should obey as Christian believers who know Jesus Christ our perfect advocate. Let us look at **verse 7-8**: *"Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining."* Here the old commands refers to that which God gave to his people in **Leviticus 19:18** which says: *"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."* Here we can learn that from long ago God's desire for us is that we love one another, that we love our neighbor as ourselves. However, because of sin, mankind was never able to truly love one another, we did not even know how to love one another. And as a result, we came short in fulfilling God's command. We fell short because on our own we are not capable of loving one another, our own form of love is influenced by many things such as possessions, looks, feelings, and moods.

But glory to God who sent us our advocate Jesus Christ, the Righteous one, who is able to make us to truly love one another when we know him. In **John 13:34** Jesus said: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* In Jesus the original command is made new and perfect, before we could not love one another but through Jesus our advocate who fulfilled it completely we can learn from him, imitate him and fulfill it. Through today's passage we have learnt the importance of knowing who Jesus is, knowing that he is our advocate, and how keeping his commands shows us that we know him. But now why is the author putting emphasis on the command to love one another? To answer this let us look at **verse 9-11**: *"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 around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them."*

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Living in the light is at the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this is what Jesus brought into this world that we may live in the light, that darkness may fade away. Jesus brought us into the light so that we may not stumble. When we live in sin, we live in torment, guilt and restlessness. Our world today is filled with so many problems, war, betrayal and many bad things because of the darkness of sin. But glory to God for we have been given the privilege to come to know Jesus, our advocate, our atonement for our sins. Through Jesus we have been brought into the light. And one of the signs that we are in the light is when we love one another, when we love our brother and sister as we love ourselves. When we struggle to love one another, we should come to Jesus, surrender our lives to him, repent and eagerly pray that he may be revealed in our hearts.

When I first came to the UBF ministry, Shepherd Lesedi told me that he will be moving in to stay with the missionaries, later on he also stayed with Sh. Khomo at the missionaries' house. I really found it strange and wondered how this guy could stay with another family share a room with another brother when he can afford to stay at his own place and not have to bear with other people. However, as time went, I saw him happy living in the missionaries' house with Sh. Khomo, the house was filled with so much love. It was like this because they were in Jesus, they knew Jesus and because of that, love overflowed among them. Also as I began to grow in the ministry, more and more of Jesus was revealed in my heart that later I too could live in common life with Sh. Khomo. We never fought with Sh. Khomo, but rather we loved one another, and all this was because of Jesus. I thank God for granting me the privilege to know Jesus, I pray that God may help me to come to Jesus daily, surrender my life to him, acknowledge that there is nothing I can do, but Jesus alone is the one able and capable to save me from my sins. He is the one and only advocate who can speak on my behalf before God.

I pray that God may have mercy on us all to accept Jesus as our advocate, surrender our lives unto him, keep his commands, so that we may remain in the light. Sin has caused so much pain and suffering in many people's lives, it has broken families, took lives and left many in depression. But today we have been urged by Apostle John to make every effort not to sin, we have been urged to not sin loosely, not be passive but be intentional and not sin. This is because God hates sin, God is righteous and holy. But because of his love and mercy for us, God sent us Jesus who is our advocate, who can speak on our behalf before God if we sin. Jesus is a worthy advocate for he died for us, he is our atoning sacrifice. The key verse emphasized the importance of having this knowledge about Jesus, and that when we have this knowledge, we will keep Jesus' commands. I pray that God may help us to receive Jesus deeply in our hearts, keep his commands, love one another so that we too can live in the light and not stumble.

Amen, Key Verse.