

The Christian's Assurance of Salvation  
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Well, it is really great to be here tonight and we are going to talk about... is everything ok with the sound? Are we all right? Ok, tonight we are going to talk about how do you know that you are a Christian? How do you know that you are, to use the modern vernacular, how do you know you are saved? How do you know that you have been born again? That is a very, very important question in light of the admonitions that we have in Scripture.

For example, as I touched on in this room last night in Matthew seven...

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...in the Sermon on the Mount is warning people and in this particular case in Matthew seven he is not warning Atheists. He is not warning people who have given themselves over to the world totally and deny that he ... deny his deity or anything like that. Jesus Christ is looking at you, those of you who would say he is Lord and saying, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father will enter in."

When he goes up in chapter seven verses 13 and 14 he talks about a narrow way and he says a few will find it. And he is not saying few within the context of the world, but few within the context of those who profess him to be Lord.

It is almost as though Jesus as looking forward to a time when the gospel would be cultural, when the gospel would be so superficial that many would profess him as Lord and yet not be genuinely Christian.

There is one theologian that I was reading recently who said this on this passage in Matthew seven. He said this. "From these words of Christ we can possibly assume that in the countries where there is no persecution and many proclaim Jesus as Lord, compared to the countries where there are terrible... where there is terrible persecution and just a few call him Lord, we might be able to say that there is just as many Christians in that persecuted country as there is in the one that seems to have a great amount of Christians."

Because, you see, we have taken the gospel and reduced it down to do you want to go to heaven and, if so, would you like to pray this prayer and ask Jesus into your heart? If someone does that we tell them they are Christian. That is not true.

Salvation is by repentance and faith and if you have truly believed unto salvation you have been regenerated which means you have become a new creature and you are going to live a different life. And so works do not result in salvation. Please do not think that. No human being is justified before God or has a right standing before God based upon his own virtue and merit. It is only by faith in the virtue and merit of Christ. But the result of genuine salvation is that that person will be a new creature with new desires which will drive his will in a new way towards obedience, as Christ says, obedience to his Father. Because he says, "Not every one says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Now, what are the evidences of conversion? Well, first of all we have got to get over a milestone. American evangelicalism has kind of been raised on this idea of you can't judge a book by its cover. And we are very, very quick to say, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

Maybe we should say, "Twist not Scripture, lest ye be like the devil," because most people when they quote that have no idea what they are talking about, because in the same passage where Jesus said, "Judge not, lest ye be judged," he said, "You will know them by their fruit."

But tonight we are not talking about you or me looking at someone else to try to judge their fruit. We are talking about us looking at us. Or we looking at us. Are we Christian? And I want to... maybe it is an over simplification, but in the time we have I want you to just think about three things and we are going to spend the greater amount of time on the third, but I want you to think about three things that are categories of assurance.

Now, what do I mean by assurance? Assurance is this, the confidence that you can have biblically that you are truly Christian. How can you have confidence that you have truly believed? It goes something like this.

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will be saved. That is true. But now here is the question. But how do you know you believe? Because, again, many will come before him on that day and say, "Lord, Lord," and he will say, "Depart from me. I never knew you."

So how do you know you believe?

Well, let's look, first of all, let's go to John 3:16 and we are going to look at the first category.

It is a verse everyone is familiar with.

It says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Now here I want you to simply look at an assurance that comes from a propositional truth, a statement in Scripture and then you look at that and rationally ask yourself, intellectually ask yourself do I believe?

Well, let's look at it. Here is the proposition.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Now the question is: Do you believe in him? Now we have to over simplify this to get through it tonight, but you need to ask yourself this question. Do I believe in Jesus? The essentials of the Christian faith regarding the person of Jesus Christ, do I believe it? And what are some of those?

Well, there is a long list, but let's go through just a few. First of all, do I believe that he is God in the flesh? Do I confess and believe? Intellectually do I accept the proposition that this Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Son of God, the second person of the trinity who became a man? Do I believe that he is fulness of deity?

And the second question is: Do I believe that he is fulness of humanity? Because there have been divergent groups out there and exist even today that deny the deity of Christ and so they are not Christian. But there are others who deny his humanity, because they have this kind of Greek philosophical problem that spirit and flesh can't mix, God and material does not come together.

But the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who became a man, really God and really man, one person, two natures in one person without confusion or diminishing either one of those natures. He was really God in the fullest sense of the term. He was really man. That he lived a perfect life and that his primary purpose for coming here was not to be some social prophet, but it was to die. And it was to die for this reason, because the greatest problem in the Scriptures is this. If God is just and God is good, he cannot forgive you.

Sometimes if I am asked to address a university setting on the subject of hell I will always have someone come up to me and say, "I was appalled by what you taught on hell, that you would actually think God would throw men in hell."

And I always tell them this. "Well, you know, heaven is appalled also, has a great philosophical problem to solve."

And they say, "Well, what is that?"

They are appalled that God didn't send everybody to hell. And here is the reason. If God is just and you are not, what is he supposed to do with you? Can he simply forgive you? No. Not from the biblical text he cannot forgive you. Why? There is a thing of justice.

The trite teaching in evangelicalism today may say something like this to you. You know, instead of being just with you God was loving. The logical conclusion to that is that God's love is unjust. You see, God can't pass over sin because he is a just God. Because he can't pass over sin, the question is: How does he demonstrate mercy? There is only one way. God's justice must be satisfied and he is the only one who can satisfy it. So in order to satisfy his justice that he might forgive you and still be just, God becomes a man, walks on this earth, lives a perfect life and goes to that tree and on that tree bores the sins of his people and was crushed under divine wrath.

That is why right before Christ died he said, "It is finished." He had paid it in full. He had satisfied God's justice. All the demands of justice against his people he satisfied them by suffering in their place and now God can be just and the justifier of wicked people like you.

And that solves the problem. So you must believe in the atonement that Christ had to die as a substitution. If you believe that he died as an example or to show us a better way or just for the honor of God, you are wrong. You are deadly wrong. He died as a substitution in your place.

The old Puritans used to say, "He stood in your law place and was condemned and suffered the wrath of God against you."

You also must believe that on the third day he rose again from the dead, that it wasn't a figure, it wasn't a metaphor. It wasn't some shining example. No, he rose again from the dead really, physically, truly, genuinely. He rose again from the dead. His body was animated. He came back to life.

And what does that demonstrate? Romans chapter one tells us that by that resurrection though the Spirit of holiness he was declared to be the Son of God. That doesn't mean that he became the Son of God at that moment. It means that the Father vindicated his Son. He raised him from the dead.

Now, here is something you need to understand. A lot of times apologists will argue about, you know, the great proof of the... of Christ's person is the resurrection. And I would totally agree with that. But here is what I want to tell you. If you don't like that evidence, if you say, "That is not enough," then I need to warn you. But that is all you are going to get. And if that is not enough then you have serious problems with God.

God raised his Son and he said, "In that way I declared, I vindicated his claims that he is the Son of God."

But Romans 4:25 also tells us something else, that he was raised because of our justification. And that means when God raised him from the dead, God was vindicating another claim. He is Savior. And when he died he paid it all. He paid everything and God is saying, "With that resurrection, I accept it. Accepted what he did on behalf of his people. His people can now come to me freely by faith and be fully pardoned, justified."

Justified is a legal term. It is a forensic term. It means this, that the person, God looks at that person and legally declares them to be right with him and treats them as right with him, not based on their own merit or virtue, but based upon the merit and virtue of Christ, the unchanging work, the unchanging person of Christ. It is all of him.

It is so all of him, young Christian, listen to me. If you are truly Christian and you truly understand the gospel, if someone were to walk up to you and say, "Wow. You are such a good person. If anybody is going to go to heaven, it is you," that that statement would make you so nauseous that you would want to vomit. And you would scream out, "Not unto me, oh Lord, not unto me, but unto thee be the glory." You would say, "Get away from me. That is the greatest of all blasphemy. I am not right with God because of me. It is only because of him."

He is risen from the dead.

Another thing that you need to know about the resurrection, Peter tells us in chapter two of the book of Acts that, "This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made him both Lord and Christ." And what is that saying? The resurrection is evidence of his enthronement.

Jesus is not merely a coming king. You can use that language, but it is kind of dangerous if you put his kingship in future tense. Jesus is King. According to Matthew 28, he says, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." The word "all" there is translated from a Greek word that means all if it means something else they would have translated something else. All authority.

If you go to the book of Daniel you understand that the Son of Man is brought before the Ancient of Days and at that moment all the other kingdoms pale to nothing and he is handed all authority. That happened 2000 years ago. Jesus Christ is King. And because of that the psalmist can say that all the nations of the world, including their kings should kiss and do homage to the Son lest his anger fire up on them and they are destroyed.

He is King. He is King. He is King.

There is a sense we know from Romans chapter 13 that you and I are to submit to the government as conscience allows. We are to submit to the government, but at the same time we also know that every government on this planet is nothing more than a cut flower. They are pretending. They are all like little boys running around sitting on paper mache thrones with little tin caps on, because there is only one king. He was a rock that was cut out without hands. And he was cast down to the earth and with him all the other kingdoms were destroyed. And his kingdom fills the earth and so he is King.

Now, another thing that you must believe in Jesus—and we have already touched on this—is that salvation is by faith alone. It is repulsive to the mature Christian for anyone to even suggest that there is a mingling of faith and works. It is repulsive and it shows a great stupidity in our understanding of the inward man. I mean, I have walked with Christ for almost 30 years and yet it is still frightful at times to look into my own heart and my motives. My best day, my best praying would only consign me to hell. The only right standing I have with God is because of Jesus Christ. Christ plus nothing, Christ plus nothing.

Sola Fide was the claim of the Reformation, by faith alone, by faith alone in Christ.

Now, intellectually you sit there rationally and you ask yourself: Is that what I believe? If it is not, I can sincerely tell you, you have serious problems when it comes to Christianity. I will even tell you, you are not Christian. I am sorry, my dear friend. We may live in a Post-modern world, but Christianity is not a Post-modern religion. There are certain things you must believe or you are not saved. That is why Christianity is such a scandal.

Do you understand that I only have to change one article and tomorrow I will be on the Oprah Winfrey show, really. I say Jesus Christ is the Savior. All I have to do is say he is a Savior and everyone in the world will love me. I can even say he is the best Savior of the bunch and the whole world will still be glad.

But when you say, “No, he is the Savior to the exclusion of all other saviors,” that is when the world hates you.

Do you realize that in the early Church they were actually persecuted and killed and the charge against them many times was Atheism? Did you know that? Christians suffered and died under the charge of Atheism because the Christian religion said all the gods of Rome did not exist. They weren't gods.

You see, everyone is just having a wonderful party. Everybody has got thousands of gods. They trade them like baseball cards and everyone is having a good time and then the Christian walks in and says, “No, I am sorry. All your gods are false gods and the worship you render unto them you are rendering unto demons.”

You see, that is what makes Christianity a scandal. And it is a scandal. Although we are granted in the Christian faith to die by the hand of our enemy, we are allowed to do nothing to our enemy but serve him, bless him and pray for him. But even though I must die and never oppose those who would want to take my life because of Christ, I still must stand up in my final moment and tell them they are still wrong. Jesus Christ is the only way. He is God in the flesh.

Now my question to you is: Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

You say, "Well, you know, I have got some serious problems with this and, you know, I just don't think that, well, you know, Christ is... is everything you are making it to..."

Well, let me just share with you from a historically Christian point of view, a biblical point of view. You have the right to say that, but what you are saying is terrifying. It is pathetic and it is puny, because one day you will stand before this king and you will melt before him like a tiny wax figurine before a blast furnace. He will not debate you. He will not listen to you as you plea to the fact that he didn't give you enough information. He is the Son of God and God has set his King upon his holy hill, the psalmist tells us. And that is it.

Now that is what makes Christianity a scandal. It is.

Now, do you believe that? Rationally, intellectually can you say, "I believe that. I believe that"?

Well, does that mean you are saved? Well, that is good evidence you are headed in the right direction, but that does not necessarily mean that you are saved.

You see, you don't really look at just one thing. We are going to look at a couple. Let's go to the next one. Go to Romans chapter five.

He says in verse five, "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Now I want you to think about this. We talked about the intellect and we talked about being rational. You look at a promise that says, "He who believes in Jesus has eternal life," and you say to yourself, "I believe these essential things about Jesus. I have eternal life."

But let's just wait. It says here that the love of God in the believer's life has been poured out into his heart. So now we are talking about experience, experience, not so much feeling as experience, that you have had an encounter with God.

Now, let me share with you something that is very important in evangelism and it may help you to understand some things of what I am talking about. If you talk to a person about Jesus and they seem to be very affirming and you say, "Would you like to be saved?" or whatever the language is that you use, "Would you like to be saved or ask Jesus to come into your heart? Or whatever," and they say yes, you say, "Well, pray this prayer with me."

And they say, "Ok."

And then they pray that prayer. And then you ask them. What do you usually ask them? Well, did he come in? Did he save you?

And the person says, “Well, I don’t know. Yes.”

And I have heard evangelists say, “Well, of course he did. You asked him to come in and if he promised that he would come in and you asked him to come in and you believe you are sincere, then he came in and you need to stand on that.”

No, my friend, you don’t need to stand on that. That is dangerous. First of all because you are taking Revelation 3:20 and you are pulling it out of context and using it for a purpose for which it was never written. It is not a passage to be used in evangelism. It can be used possibly as an illustration, but that is about it. It is not promising that if you ask him to come in, he will come in. I am sorry. It is not. He is not knocking on the door of the sinner’s heart. He is knocking on the door of a church. It is real important you look at that.

Also, do you really want to swing out into eternity based on the fact that, ok, I asked him to come in and the guy that was witnessing to me said he would come in and if he didn’t come in he is a liar so I guess I am ok. Do you really want to swing out into eternity with that kind of logic?

You want to stand before God with that kind of reasoning? But that is what most people do today, don’t they? I mean, let’s just go out on the street and start asking people. I mean, we could go tonight where guys are partying and girls are partying and say, “You know, I will witness to you and tell you about Jesus.”

“Oh, I know all about Jesus.”

“Well, if you died right now, where would you go?”

“Well, I would go to heaven.”

“Well, how do you know?”

“Well, I asked him to come into my heart.”

Do you know that... I want you to try to wrap your mind around this. Decades ago before there was this superficial type of evangelism that we have today, if you asked somebody, “Are you going to heaven?” and they were a genuine Christian, they would say something to you something like this. “Yes, I have great assurance. I have great assurance.”

They saw that assurance was something that could increase, could decrease. They would say, “I have great assurance.”

“Well, why do you have great assurance?”



“I am looking unto him. I am looking unto Christ. I am trusting in Christ. I am going on with Christ. I continue believing in him.”

Nowadays it is, “Well, I did that already. I prayed that prayer.”

It is almost like a flu shot or a vaccination that they got. I went through that rite.

Do you see how dangerous that is? And I think if you witness to people enough you know that this is pretty prevalent.

But here is what I want you to see. There is an... experimental is the old word, aspect to assurance that when you see salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby the Holy Spirit regenerates your heart. You are going to know something happened. It doesn't mean necessarily you are going to have to... you have got to be able to nail down the day and the time and all these different, but here is what I am going to say. You are going to know that you have had an encounter with God. Now that encounter may manifest itself in many different forms. Some people it is just peace, but it is a peace like they have never had before in their lives.

Some people it is a supernatural joy. Some people are simply overwhelmed by the love of God. Some people are literally torn apart under their sin and then all of the sudden have a realization of forgiveness and joy. Every person is different and I don't want you to be condemned by looking at someone else's experience, but I want to tell you this. If the only thing that you got out of Christianity was, well, I think I am saved because I asked him to come into my heart and that guy said that Jesus had to do it or he was a liar, don't trust in that.

Have you experienced the love of God? I mean is it real to you? Is it a reality in your life? Not necessarily constant, not necessarily always stable and always increasing, but has there been an encounter? Do you know that something has happened to you?

Now this is why the first part that I went over is so important, because there are so many people today who says that they say they have had an experience. You know, I talked to somebody about Jesus.

“Oh, I know Jesus.”

“You do?”

I have had this happen to me so many times.

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, tell me about it.”

“Well, one time I didn’t have any money and I prayed and I said, ‘Jesus, if you are real give me money.’ And I walked down the street and I found 10 dollars.”

They had an experience, but it is not conformed to Scripture, do you see?

And you see how when you are looking at am I saved, you don’t just look at one thing and that is what is wrong with evangelicalism today. It is like did you pray that prayer? Did you ask Jesus into your heart? Were you kind of sincere? No. The first thing you ask yourself is: Do I believe what the Bible says I must believe? Can I say rationally and intellectually I believe that?

Secondly, have I had an encounter with God? I like to use an illustration that kind of goes this way.

Let’s say that I showed up here, you know, a half hour late. Everybody is kind of angry. And they say, “Why did you show up late?”

And I walk in just like I am right now and I says, “Well, listen. Don’t be angry with me. I have got a good reason.”

“Well, why were you late?”

“Well, when I was coming here on the highway I got a flat tire. I was changing the tire. The lug nut rolled out into the highway and I just wasn’t thinking. I ran out there, stooped over, picked it up and when I stood up there was a logging truck weighing 30 tons coming at me at 120 miles an hour. It was like four feet in front of me and it ran me over and so that is why I am late.”

Now, being rational university students and having studied copious amounts of classical logic, you are going to come to one of two conclusions. One, I am a liar or, two, I am a mad man. I am a lunatic. Ok, delusional.

Now what is the basis of those two possibilities? You are going to say, “It is impossible, physical impossible to have an encounter with a 30 ton logging truck going 120 miles an hour that runs you over head on, it is impossible for that to happen to you and your clothes still be neatly pressed and your head be on your shoulders.”

Do you see?

Well, now let me ask you a question. What is larger, a logging truck or God? How is it that so many people have supposedly had an encounter with the living God, that he has regenerated their heart and made them alive, taken out their heart of stone that could not respond to divine stimuli and put in its place a heart of flesh, entered them into the new covenant where he says that I will so change them and so lead everyone of them that they will follow my commandments, they will act like new creatures? Now how is it that so many people have had an encounter with this God they are not changed at all?

You see?

Now another thing about this experience that I just want to talk about for a moment is this. I addressed this a little bit yesterday, but I will do it again. I want to show you what the Christian life is not and what it is.

Many people think the Christian life is I am going to stop doing all the wicked things I love and start doing all the righteous things that bore me to tears in order to save my soul from hell or in order to please God.

That is not Christianity. That is religion in its worst form.

Christianity is God changes our heart. This is not poetic language. This is not metaphor. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. You were born, regardless of what anyone will tell you, you were born with a radically depraved heart. Now I know that doesn't sound very good, but it is true. That is why no one ever had to teach you to lie. No one ever had to teach you to do be selfish. You just were. It is a manifestation of the fall.

People say, you know, I have heard people say, "Well, you know, if only children would leads us..."

They have obviously never had children. What children can do to other children is horrifying. You see, you were born with a heart that hated God. Yeah. Romans 1:30, haters of God. Romans eight that a mind, a carnal mind is hostile to God, at enmity with God, has declared war on God.

Now here is the big question. What can then draw you to God if you hate him so much? As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches that man hates God so much that the more the natural man sees God the more he will hate him and the more he understands God's commandments, the more he will push against them.

Now let me give you an example. One time a pastor he asked me. This is years ago. And he said, "I want you to come and teach on the attributes of God in our church."

And I said, "Well, that is pretty controversial. Are you sure you want me to do that? I don't want to split your church?"

And he said, "What are you talking about? It is the attributes of God. We are Christians."

I said, "I know. And if I get up there and I teach from the Scriptures and in agreement with Church history, classical theology on the attributes of God, this is what is going to happen in your church. When I get around to the holiness and justice, sovereignty and wrath of God, you are going to have some of your finest little old lady church members stand up and say, 'That is not my God. I could never love a God like that.'"

You see, that is why Sunday morning is one of the greatest hours of idolatry in the week, because people are worshipping a God and they don't even know his attributes. But if someone got up and taught those attributes, they would stomp their foot, rush out of the church and say, "That is not my God."

Let me ask you. For all of you that have been in church for so many years. How many sermons, how many years of sermons have you heard on the attributes of God? Some of you have never heard one sermon. How do you know you love him? You may be loving a god you created with your own mind. Do you see? And if someone actually taught you what the Bible says about God, it might just make you furious and expose to you, you still hate him. The god you love is a projection of what you want. You see?

So how does someone love God? Here is the way. You have heard the term "born again." That means regenerate or regeneration. God regenerates their heart. The Spirit of God that created the world... Remember, Genesis chapter one, the Spirit of God is hovering. Through the mediation of the Spirit we see the world being created. Through the mediation of the Spirit we see a person who has truly been saved, God regenerates their heart. He makes it new. He recreates it. Many theologians, and I would totally agree with this, would say that the regenerating of a human heart is the greatest demonstration of the power of God, far exceeding the creation of the universe.

Because God created the universe ex nihilo, out of nothing. But to recreate a mass of moral corruption into the image of God, now that is an amazing thing.

So God changes our nature and because our nature is changed, guess what? Affections and nature go hand in hand. If your nature is evil, your affections will be evil. That is why tonight as we are here right now there are students out there with evil natures, young men. Let me just give you one... this is an isolated incident, but it... there is millions we could draw from, but this is a good one.

Young men are getting ready tonight to go to bars. They are getting dressed up. They are excited as almost predators. They are going there to find a girl. No commitment do they desire. They only want one thing, the satisfaction of physical lust.

Now I can say the same thing about some of the girls. But now I just want you to take this. Now look at this man, this young boy, what he is doing. His affections, he is talking to his friends. They are all about it. They are going out tonight. They are going to find somebody. Ok? Now not one thought enters into his head about how that would kill the father of that girl that he plans on getting, how it would just literally break his heart in a million pieces if he knew what is going on that there is a young man going out to prowl for his daughter with no commitment whatsoever and the young man will boast about it. And, see, what you have got there is evil desires. Why are they evil? Because it is an evil heart. And so you have an evil heart, evil desires which leads to an evil will. He is making decisions to go do something that to your culture seems like almost a game or a sport, but actually it is predatory and abominable, loathsome.

In other cultures and other times in our culture that young man would have been caught by the people of the town and whipped publicly for his disgrace. Do you see?

Now how can that young man be changed? Only if God comes and changes his heart and changing his heart into the image of God in true righteousness and true holiness automatically his desires change and when his desires change those desires drive his will in a different direction. Instead of trying to feed up on a girl, his desire now is to know a girl and to live for her benefit, to serve her for her prosperity. Do you see that?

The question is: Has God changed your heart? Has God changed your heart?

I will give you one other illustration. Let's say that I am a preacher and I move to Virginia and I become pastor of... and let's say this is a church and I become pastor of this church, ok? And one of you come up to me as soon as I get there and go, "Brother Paul, there is a guy over there hasn't been to our church in five years and he is doing all kinds of horrible things. You need to go get one of the lost sheep. You are the pastor."

So I go up there and go to that trailer, knock on the door and he opens the door and of course he is kind of from the South and so he knows how to treat a preacher and so he says, "Well come on in, preacher."

And so I sit down with him and I say, "I hear you haven't been in church for five years."

He goes, "That is right." He goes, "Preacher, I know it is wrong." I know it is wrong. I have just been out here. You know, I love hunting and fishing, all these things. Just haven't had, but you are right. I need to do the right thing and I need to get back in church. Ok?"

"And I hear you have been drinking a lot."

"You are right, pastor. I have just... that old liquor has got a hold of me. I just love that stuff. But you are right. I need to give it up and I need to come back and just do the right thing, ok?"

"And I hear you have been running around on your wife."

He goes, "That is true. Those women, pastor, they just drive me wild. I just, you know, I don't know what to do with my heart. It is just wayward, but you are right. I need to give it up. I need to do the right thing. I will be in church on Sunday."

So on Sunday to everyone's amazement he is sitting there in church and all of you say, "Praise the Lord, a sheep has come home."

No, a goat just came into the building. He is lost. He is not a Christian, because this is what he is saying.

“You are right, pastor, I need to stop doing all the wicked things I love and start doing all the righteous things I hate in order to go to heaven.”

Do you see? No change of heart.

Are you a new creature? Now that does not mean that the Christian, the true Christian does not struggle with his flesh, have to fight the world. It doesn't mean that a Christian doesn't struggle with sin and all these different things. But let me ask you a question. Can you say your heart has been changed by an encounter with the gospel? Have you experienced the love of God?

Now that was the second. Now let's go to the third. We have looked at the intellect, just rationally we have looked at a promise and say, “I believe that promise.” And then we have looked over at this idea of experiencing God, of having this realization that a change has been wrought in your heart that has led to new affections. You really are a new creature. You have experienced that. You are different than you were.

Well, before we go on, let me say something very important. We have to be very, very careful here. Although everyone, as I said, will know a change has been wrought, something has been done, it is different in each person's life. I said that, but I want to say it again.

For example, there are children who have been raised under godly parents. They have been kept from the evil in this world. They have been sheltered. They have been raised as they should be raised in innocence in their childhood. They have been taught the Scriptures and on and on. And they may come to know Jesus without this radical outward conversion experience that someone like I would have had when I was in college being a complete heathen. Ok?

So I don't want us comparing, but I do want us to realize this, that even that child will know my heart has been changed. Something has happened to me. Now I am not just following Jesus in obedience to my parents. I am following him because of him. I know him. Ok?

Now, let's go on to the next test and the next test is really hard for people because we live in a culture of a pseudo tolerance where everybody is right and nobody is wrong and no one has the right to infringe upon anyone else's opinion because everyone has a right to their own opinion. Ok?

Do you know what is amazing? I always wonder why it is that when that is quoted, only the first half of the statement is quoted. Everyone has a right to their opinion.

Do you know what the original statement is? I think it was Benjamin Franklin.

Everyone has a right to their opinion if they can defend it. Ok?

But we live in a culture that basically says this. You can't judge a book by its cover.

Now the statement you can't judge a book by its cover, I don't even know why we are going to deal with it but we need to for just a moment. What does that really mean? It means this. That I cannot say that a certain person does not have the intellectual capability to carry out a certain job just because he did not graduate from an Ivy League school. That is what that means. It doesn't mean that you can't know somebody through their deeds. It just means you had better not be superficial when you judge.

Now Jesus said in Matthew 17 verses 16 and go to 19 and 20 and this is what you will find. He starts this whole teaching on fruit by saying, "You will know them by their fruit." And then he ends it by, "You will know them by their fruits."

He says the same thing twice. It is very rare. And I think that Christ being the incarnate Word is so wise. He knows men. He has seen his own people Israel and the superficiality of religion that they could go into the temple, offer sacrifice and such and then go right out of the temple and worship Baal and not see a problem with it. God knows people.

And so he goes, "Look, I am telling you. You will know by their fruits."

Now, listen to me. I am telling you again. You will know them by their fruits and then he says, "Anyone who doesn't bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire," you see.

So, the next third test that we are going to talk about is you will know someone is a Christian by their fruits, by the way they live. It is for this reason that the apostle Paul could say in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse five, "Test yourselves, examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith."

Do you see that?

Now the church in Corinth is kind of famous for a lot of wrong things it was doing. And what is amazing is people use, especially 1 Corinthians, to say you can be a Christian and be as wicked as all get out. Isn't that amazing that we would take a whole book of the Bible and use it to defend the idea we have that you can be as wicked as wicked can be and still be a Christian?

See, here is what you need to understand. We are going to talk about this in a moment. There was wickedness going on in 1 Corinthians. There was. That is one snapshot of some of those individuals. Can a Christian... does a Christian sin? Yes. Can a Christian fall into heinous sin? Yes. Can he stay there as a style of life without discipline? Absolutely not.

You see, there is the difference. When we talk about you will know them by their fruits, we are not talking about you look at somebody in one moment in time or you look at yourself in one moment in time and you say, "Uh, oh, because of that I must not be a Christian or because of that they must not be a Christian."

No, that is not what this means. This means looking at your own life through a period of time, from the moment of your supposed conversion until now, look at your fruit.

In proper evangelism I hope it is proper, it is the way I do evangelism if someone even tonight came up to me and said, "While you were teaching God saved me," I would go, "Well, praise the Lord." And I would sit down and talk to him, and if all the things fell into place I would go, "Wow, there is a lot of reason for hope here."

But then I would say this. "But I want you to know something, if you truly have been born again, you will walk out of here and although you will have struggles with sin and sometimes it will be three steps forward and two steps back and although you will still be capable of falling, if you have truly been born again you will begin to walk with Christ and you will go from glory to glory. You will grow. You might not grow as fast as others. You might not grow at the same pace or in the same way, but you will grow and you will begin to bear fruit and when you don't bear fruit it is the Father pruning you and when you step off the path it will be your Father disciplining you. If you are truly born again, you are trapped now. You have a Father over you and he is not derelict. He is zealous to guard you. Zealous."

So you will know them by their fruits.

Now, let's go to the book that is so important for this and it is 1 John chapter five verse 13.

Now just... you know, you probably read this book, but have you ever seen this? Seen what? The purpose why the book was written.

You know, John is an amazing guy. When he writes his gospel and then he tells us why he wrote it, so that we would believe that Jesus was the Christ the Savior of the world. He tells us why he wrote his first epistle. In verse 13 he says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

So why did he write 1 John? Did any of you know this? The whole book of 1 John was written so that those who profess faith in Christ might have biblical assurance that they are really saved.

Isn't it amazing that probably most of you have been in churches for years and you never heard that?

So what is your assurance going to be based on? Isn't it amazing how you can be in evangelicalism so long and not hear the Bible? It is amazing.

Now he says, "These things..." What are these things? The entire book. He gives us a series of tests or characteristics of a genuine Christian and we are to compare our life to



those tests. And as we compare those tests or those characteristics to our own life we grow in assurance.

Now let me tell you the difference between security and assurance, ok? Security is this. Those who believe in Jesus Christ have eternal life. That is security. Assurance is the how do you know you believe? Everyone who believes is saved. That is security. Assurance is: But how can you be ensured that you believe? Because Jesus himself says many are going to think they believe and they don't.

Paul told the church in Corinth in chapter 15 possibility of believing in vain. So how do you know that you really believe, that you really believe unto salvation and that you have truly been born again?

Well, he gives us a series of tests and we are going to go through a few of those and I want you to look at your life in light of a proper understanding of these texts.

Go to 1 John chapter one. Look at verse five.

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

Now what does that mean? Well, first of all, whenever we get this idea of light and darkness, we know that God is not dark. God is pure. He is morally, he is pristine. He is impeccable. He is without sin. There is no shadow. There is no twisting with God. Ok?

He is holy. But I think there is something more going on here. There his a bunch of false teachers that later became known as Gnostics and they entered into this group of people and here is something interesting about them. Their ideas of God, of God himself and of teaching, it was very esoteric.

Now what do I mean by esoteric? It was very dark. And what do I mean by dark? You really couldn't know. You really couldn't know who God was and you really couldn't know what he commanded of you if you were just a little simpleton Christian. You had to be a part of this upper echelon super spiritual group called Gnostics in order to really understand what is going on. And John comes back to these simple Christians, these simple believers and he says, “No. God is light.”

What does that mean? God has told us who he is and God has told us what his will is. God has revealed himself to us and primarily through whom? Jesus Christ.

But God has told us who he is. So now let's go based on that, let's go to the next verse. Now look at this.

“If we say we have fellowship with him...”

What does that mean? If we say we are Christian, ok? It is not talking here about this

American idea of carnal Christian spiritual Christian. That doesn't really exist in the Bible. It is talking about if we say we have fellowship with him, if we say we are Christians... And then look what he says.

“And yet walk in the darkness, we lie.”

So there is your first test. The genuine Christian will walk in the light.

Now what does that mean? The genuine Christian will walk in what God has told us about himself. He will walk in what God has revealed to us about his will. He will walk in the light. His life will conform to the character of God and to the will of God.

Now some of you are probably getting kind of afraid. That is a pretty big statement.

Well, let's understand it. He says, “First of all,” he says, “if we say that we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness...”

The word “walk” come from the Greek word περιπατεω (per-ee-pat-eh'-o). πατεω (pat-eh'-o) means to, well, in Spanish it means to kick. But in Greek πατεω (pat-eh'-o) means to walk. περι (per-ee') is a prefix that means kind of go around, walk around, περιπατεω (per-ee-pat-eh'-o).

All right, now what he is... what you also have to understand when you look at this verb is that it is in the present tense. In the Greek the present tense indicates an ongoing action, ok? Progress. It is not like aorist, one point in time, but it is the full course.

So this is what it means. If you follow me around with just a snapshot camera, ok, and you wait until you see me one day just kicking a cat or something, ok? I am very angry, all right, impatient with my wife and you are hiding there in the trash compactor and you jump out in the kitchen and you snap the picture and you see this impatient person and you blow it up right here in the Christian meeting and say, “I told you that guy was lost. Look at that face. He is sinning. He is impatient with his wife. He is lost.”

Because it says that you have got to walk and he is not walking in the light right now. He is being impatient with his wife. He is lost.

Is that what John is talking about? No.

Now if you followed me around, though for several months with a video camera and you videoed everything in my life, every word, you would be seeing now something more real. You would be seeing a style of life. And so John is not talking about if you are truly Christian you will perfectly walk in what God has revealed about himself and about his will. That is not what he is saying. He is saying this. If you are truly Christian, you have entered into a style of life that more and more begins to conform itself to what God has told us about his character and what he has told us about his will.

Do you see that? Is that you?

Over all these years of walking with Christ I marvel at how patiently he works in the life of a believer, taking in my case almost 30 years and still things not being conformed to this revelation. But if I look at my life from the time I was converted when I was 21 until now at 49, I see this continuation of God working in my life so that more and more I will walk in the light, that I will be more and more conformed to his character, more and more conformed to his will. Do you see that?

Can you see that in your life? Can you see that since your supposed conversion you have entered into this style of life? And, again, I want to say this. I want to be very careful not to falsely condemn anyone. I am not talking about the moment you were converted you became perfect and just walked into the light. No. I am talking about the inclination of your life changed.

You know how people will say, “Man, the day I trusted Jesus my life changed.”

Well, that is true, but that is a little misleading. It would kind of be better to say, “On the day I met Jesus my life changed and continues to change.”

The reality of that encounter continues. The fact that on that day he changed my nature and I am learning to walk more and more in the reality of who I am now in Christ is that a reality to you? Or is none of this? If someone looked at your life and put your lifestyle right beside the lifestyle of an unbeliever and they saw no difference, you need to be afraid. I don't care if you have been in this group ever since you have been on campus and you have been in church ever since you were born and you know all the Christian language. If your life does not reflect something of this, you should be concerned.

But if you are a believer or if you are a person who is here this evening and you are sitting there going, man, you know, I just hate that I struggle so much with sin. I want so much to go on with God and I can see a little bit of progress, but it is not the progress I want. I hunger and thirst for more and sometimes I feel like such a failure, but I can't give up. I must go on because only he has the words of life... but...

Then congratulations. That is evidence something is going on.

I had a professor. Some of you may have known of him. He wrote a lot of books on prayer. T W Hunt and I came into his office one day in seminary and I mean just like this and I sat down just miserable. And he would always look at me and he would go, “Paul, what's wrong?”

And I said, “Dr. Hunt, I am just so... I am unrighteous. I am just so ungodly. I want to be more. I want to be in the Word more. I want to be more disciplined. I want to pray more. I want to be more godly. I want to be more faithful. And sometimes I just feel like such a failure.”

And he just looked at me. And then he got up from his seat and he walked over to me and he put both hands on my shoulder and he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ I pronounce you blessed." And he went and sat down.

This is a guy with his PhD. I mean in like a thousand different things. He is brilliant. And I am like, "Why did you just do that crazy thing to me?"

And he looked at me. He was an old man. He said, "Paul, have you ever read, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled'? Paul, if you had come in here today totally content in your spiritual state, I would have doubted your conversion. But I see a young man in front of me who wants to be so much more than he is in Christ. You should have great hope that he who began a good work in you will finish it."

Do you see? So for those of you who are Christian and you are really struggling, I want you to be encouraged. For those of you who are playing games and your life is just like an unbeliever, I want you to be terrified. Yeah, I do. You need to be.

Now let's go on. Verse eight.

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

There are these preachers that travel around on university campuses and they just stand on a corner somewhere and then they just call students' names. And most of these guys have had an encounter with some of them. They are what we call perfectionists. You go up and talk to one. They will believe they haven't sinned in 10, 14 years. It is unbelievable.

The evidence that you are Christian is not that you are without sin, but it is that you have a new relationship with sin. Where before you were a friend to sin and sin was a friend to you, you now hate sin and when sin gets you, when you give in to your flesh, you hate what you have done. And you confess it. You can't live with it.

Prior to becoming a Christian you walk around, you boast of sin, you invent new ways to sin. You become a Christian, something changes and when you sin, it hurts you. It convicts you and you find no peace until you go to God and confess. One of the greatest evidences that you are truly Christian is that you are confessional in this sense that you mourn over your sin and you confess it.

And what is amazing is the Christian who mourns over his sin and confesses it, is also the happiest person on the planet.

Now let me share something with you for Christians who struggle with kind of sadness and looking at yourself and always really feeling down. The more you know God, the more you are going to see his holiness. The more you see his holiness, the more you are going to see your sin which leads you to deeper depths of conviction, contrition and mourning. But if that is all you see, you are in trouble.

But we have got greater revelation of God's holiness and that greater revelation of your sin also comes a greater revelation of what God has done for you in Christ and that unconditional love and that grace abounding to the chief of sinners.

So although you are almost like a paradox, the more you walk with Christ the deeper is your contrition and mourning over sin and yet greater your joy. And there is a transmission that goes on. No longer is your joy found in your own performance, but it is founding the finished work of Christ.

So if the devil walks in, starts pointing out all kinds of things about you, you yawn and you go, "You don't even know the half of it."

This has never been about me. Have I ever said this was about me? This is not about me. I don't hope in me. If my hope was in me you could kill my hope with a dagger right now. The smallest pen knife would take down my hope. But my hope is not in me. It is in my older brother and if you don't leave I am going to call him. You don't want me to call him.

Oh, believers, I want you to know something. People sometimes, young men will come and they will go, you know, they look at guys who preach in a lot of places around the world and stuff and all these young guys think, man, this guy he reached some spiritual level and because he reached that spiritual level God really uses him.

No. No. The older you get, the more needy you become of grace and the more happy you are in Christ alone. The older you get the more of your sin you see. And you trust not in the flesh. You glory in Christ Jesus.

And when all your everything is based upon his perfect work as weak as you might be, you are as solid as a rock, because the devil can't touch him. The devil can't touch him.

A young guy one time he calls me up. He is seminary student he was just saying, "Brother Paul," he wrote me. He goes, "I am so ungodly and I am so unrighteous and I am so this and that." I know the young man. He was a fine, sincere Christian and he was just so struggling. He said, "I am so ungodly and ignorant."

And I wrote him back and I said, "Dear brother, you are much more ungodly and much more ignorant than you now know. Love, your brother Paul."

I [?] mercy and encouragement.

And so he calls me up on the phone and he goes, "Thanks."

And I said, "Look. I have watched your life in many ways. You seem to have made greater progress than I have. But I am happier than you."

And he said, "Why?"

I have given up on trying to find hope in my performance. And all, all, everything for me is in the unconditional love of my Savior. If you know anything about the ministry that the Lord has given me, you probably if you have heard anything you go, "Man, that guy just talks about sin, sin, he nails people. He is the meanest preacher that ever walked the planet."

Let me tell you something. When it comes to unbelievers who are professing faith in Christ and they are asleep in their sin and they are going to die and go to hell, yes, I am going to rip, rip, rip, because it doesn't appear to me that hardly anyone else is doing that. I am not going to let them go to hell except over my cries that they wake up and see their destruction.

But when I pastor, sometimes people come to church if I am preaching and they go, "Are you the same guy on you tube? Because all you do is talk about love, love, love, love, love, love. Why?"

Here is the reason. If the person truly becomes converted I don't have to do anything. They are sheep. They are going to follow him. As a shepherd do you know what my greatest worry is for the people who are truly converted? I don't want them coming under false condemnation. And I don't want them doubting the love of God.

You see, the whole deal depends on conversion. Do you see that? You get them converted and you talk to them about the unconditional love of God. Do you know what they will do? I will tell you what they won't do. They won't stand there and go, "Well, if it is like this, let's just sin."

No, you tell a true sheep about the unconditional love of God and that it doesn't matter what they do or how far they fail, Christ loves them and is going to restore them and work in them and a bruised reed he will not break and smoldering wick he will not put out, you tell them that and they say, "Well, if it be like that, then I want to love him more. I want to serve him more. I want to follow him. If I am really free," you see?

So I get ... get converted and I will be nice to you.

But here is another thing. If I am preaching on the streets in a place where everybody is just wild and wicked, a Sodom and Gomorrah on this present day planet, I stand up and I preach the love of God. The time for preaching hard is when people have become deceived by religion and when they think they are something they are not and when most

of the religious authorities in the world are affirming them in their false conversion. And for self preservation those preachers are saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

And people they are building their huge churches on the bones of carnal dead church members. That is why you preach that way.

Now let's go on.

Now let me say something, one more thing about sin real quick. And I know it is late and if you have to leave just go ahead. I mean, I know that you may have to go. I am just going to stay here until I finish, ok?

Now here is what I want you to see. This is very important. I don't know. Most of you are pretty young, but if you have been in church life of any amount of time there is something that seems to happen. And it just... it always.

Let's say that it is a typical, you know, Wednesday night or it is prayer meeting or Sunday night or something and God begins to move. Have you ever been in a service where God really begins to move and show people their sin? I mean, there is even maybe weeping will start and contrition and people will maybe just get out of their seat and just start praying and just God will move.

Do you know it is amazing? The people who are most broken about their sin, this never fails. The great majority of the people who are most broken about their sin, the Christians that are weeping and mourning over their ungodliness, are usually the most devoted Christians in the church. While the most wicked people in the church sit back. They are cold as a stone. No problem whatsoever.

What are we seeing? A division of the sheep and the goats on this planet. The sheep have heard their master's voice. They know that voice and their heart is broken. The goats just sit there in their self righteousness.

My dear friend, I want you to know something. One of the greatest evidences of conversion is not perfectionism. It is brokenness, brokenness.

Now let's go on to the next test, verse three in chapter two.

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments."

Now listen to verse four.

"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Now come on. You now how to read. What does that say? The one... this is basically... let me give it to you more dramatic way.

Verse four.

“The one who says, ‘Oh, I know him. I know him. I am a Christian, too,’ and does not keep his commandments is a liar when he says he is a Christian.”

Now you say, “Well, hold on. Didn’t we just get through saying that even Christians struggle with sin?”

Yes. So what are we talking about?

Once again, we are talking about a style of life. Do you see that? The unbeliever, he gets up in the morning. He is not concerned about God’s will. He is not concerned about obeying it. He is not concerned about knowing it. If he breaks it, he doesn’t care. He becomes a Christian.

What happens? The will of God begins to be important. And as he begins to walk with Christ it becomes more and more important. He wants to know what God has commanded. He wants to obey. He does begin to obey and when he sins he is broken over his disobedience and it leads him to confession.

Here is what I want you to understand. If you say to me, “I have got a new relationship with God,” then I am going to ask you this question. Do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don’t have a new relationship with sin, guess what? You don’t have a new relationship with God.

And then I am going to say, “Do you have a new relationship with God’s commands? Do you care about knowing his will? I mean specifically, not in this general, you know, kumbya sort of way. I mean, do you honestly get into the Word of God and want to know what he has commanded for you?”

And let me just say this. Do you want to know what he has commanded? And this is going to sound really trite. But if you understand it biblically, it is a demand that will just make you fall over. He has demanded that you love. Everything in Scripture is commanded, all summed up together in love, not this romantic kind of love, not this self centered love.

To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, don’t come to me after this and say, “Well, I know, brother Paul, but, you know, it says love your neighbor as yourself and I haven’t learned to love me yet, so if I haven’t learned to love me yet, I can’t learn to love my neighbor.”

Don’t do that. That is just pathetic. That is not what that means. Jesus is not saying, “You have got to learn to love yourself before you can love anybody else.”



No, he is saying, “Look. You have never had a problem with loving yourself. You have always loved yourself. So now go over, stop doing that and love people like you love yourself now.”

See the difference? Get that psychology out of here. Freud has nothing to do with the New Testament. And neither does Rogers or Skinner. This is Jesus.

Your self esteem should be esteem for God.

Have you ever had a terrible day? I know I am rambling, but that is ok. I am older than you. Have you ever had like a terrible day? I am 49. I have a lot of them and you just... horrible, you know, you just feel like, blah. I walked out yesterday morning to do the great job of ... well, actually it was this morning. I realized we hadn't taken out the trash last night. So I am walking out there and I am dragging these two big garbage pails that keep falling over and I get around the side of the house and there it is. In all my self centered looking at me and how terrible I feel and all this stuff, I look up and I see a sunrise that is absolutely gorgeous coming over the hill.

And do you know what happened? I went... And do you know what happened? I automatically felt tremendous. Do you know why? Because I was no longer looking at me. I had been swallowed up by something greater than myself. My eyes were now turned off of me onto a glory that was far greater than me.

So get your eyes off of yourself and your battle for self esteem and just look to him and look to his beauty.

Now, let's go on.

Verse six.

“The one who says he abides in Him, the one who says he is Christian, ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

So one of the evidences that you are a Christian is that you walk like Jesus.

And so you say, “Well, brother Paul, we are just all going to hell then. Who walks like Jesus?”

Well, you would be surprised. Christians, let me share with you something. If you ever get into this idea of perfectionism or reaching this level of spirituality where you never have to deal with the flesh and sin, you are just out of touch with reality. But at the same time one of the new covenant promises is I will cleans you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

I can assure you, believer, that if you are a believer he will cleanse you. He will work on you all the days of your life and you will be surprised. There are godly men and godly women out there who really do walk with God and they really do act like Jesus in a way. At least there is enough of Jesus that you can see to know they belong to him.

But let me share with you what this means to walk as he walked.

When I was a little boy my dad would get me up at like five in the morning. We lived in a horse ranch and we raised, what, charlet cattle. He would just work us to death. And so he would get up like five, 5:30 in the morning. He would come in my room and he would go, "Paul, boy, get up. There is rest for the wicked."

That is the first Bible verse I ever remember. There is no rest for the wicked.

And in that day it was still legal for parents to kill you. So when he said, "Get," you better be up before he gets to up. Get up, you up with your clothes on. I don't know how you did it. Your butt out of bed into your clothes, all right?

And my dad was this really big man and I was intimidated by him, but I really respected him. I wanted to be like him and so we would go out there and there would be snow on the ground and he would grab one great big bucket of water and another big bucket of water to feed the horses. All the water they had was frozen over so he would walk across this big barn lot and leave these immense strides, these tracks in the snow. And he is about this big and I am like this big. And I would grab my bucket and I would pull them up like this and they would still be on the ground. And all I wanted was to put my foot in his foot print.

I looked like a drunk spider going out across the barn lot. I mean, honestly. And somebody would have laughed if they would have saw me, but there is one thing. They couldn't have denied. There was a little boy who wanted to be just like his dad. Even though he was stretching out so far beyond his ability, there is no doubt that little boy wants to be like his dad. Do you they see that in you? They may laugh at your failings, your stumblings, all the things that you do wrong and everything, but will they look at you and say, "But there is no doubt. That person wants to be like Jesus."

Is that you? Is that a reality in your life? Do you want to be like Jesus?

Now, I want to go on to another test here. We have got to kind of hurry up, but he goes on in verse nine and he says, "The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him."

So here is one of the big tests. One of the biggest tests that you are truly Christian is that you love Christians.

Now, brother here is not referring to someone of another race because there happens to be... there is no other race unless there are some Martians among us. We are all just one race. It is called human.

It doesn't mean people of different nationalities or things like that even though we ought to love all people of different nationalities. It doesn't mean we ought to love the poor here. That is not what he is saying even though we ought to love the poor and we ought to do something for them. This context he is talking about believers, ok? About believers.

One of the greatest evidences that you are truly Christian is that you long to be with other believers. But here is the problem in contemporary evangelicalism. There are so many lost people in the church doing so many lost things that if you make friends with them, you might think, well, they are believers and I love them.

But they are not.

Let me ask you a question. When you get together with them, do you talk about Jesus and godliness and righteousness? Or is it just foolishness in the world? Can't wait to get out of church. You have done your duty. You did your time. Now let's talk about something like football.

When was the last time you just got together with another believer or a group of believers just to talk about Christ? You see? There is so much ungodliness in the church and if you think that just because you love the youth group that you are Christian, you need to be very afraid because there is good chance that a great part of that youth group and college group is lost.

Now I know no one talks like this today, but they need to, because it is true. It is true.

Now let me show you how you can really mess up a passage, ok? I mean, really just do a royal mess up on a passage.

You know, in Matthew 25 we get to the separation of the nations, the sheep and the goats? And he looks at the sheep. He says, "Come you, blessed of the Father. Enter into the joy, enter into the kingdom. Come into heaven."

They say, "Why?"

He says, "You know, I was in prison and you visited me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was hungry and you fed me," and on and on and on, right?

And what do most people do with that text? They say, "Man, we need to have a prison ministry and we need to clothe the poor and we need to feed the hungry."

That is not what that passage means at all. Do you see how you can just take a text and... now we need to have all those ministries, but that is not what that verse is talking about?

This is what it is talking about. Even in some of the countries where I have worked if you are thrown in prison you die there unless somebody on the outside of that prison brings you food water and clothing and medical attention.

And what is Jesus saying? He is saying this. Let's say that we are a clandestine church in Rome, ok? About the second century and we are all meeting out in the woods and we have this system in which we all leave gradually from the meeting and we all take different routes home and you get home at about four in the morning and you are all happy. You are safe and...

But then there is a knock at the door at about six in the morning, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. You get up and you open the door and it is two brothers in Christ and they go, "Brother, we have got a meeting. You have got to come right now."

"What happened?"

"Well, two of our brothers when they were coming back from the meeting they were caught by the Roman guard and they have been thrown in prison."

And so we all rush together and we have a meeting in our secret place. And we say, "Look, if someone doesn't go right now they are naked. They have been beaten. They need medical attention. They are dehydrated. They are going to starve. We have got to go."

And so two young believers, two young guys really know the Lord, full of zeal. They jump and say, "We will go."

And then an older pastor stands up and says, "Young men, thank you very, very much, but you need to understand something. If you go to the prison right now and you take those two Christians, those two brothers, you take them clothing, water and medicine the Roman guard sees you, they are going to know you are Christian and there is a good chance you are going to be beaten or killed and thrown into the same prison."

Now comes the question. Are you truly converted? Because if you are truly converted you will love your brother so much you will go anyways. When he is in prison, Jesus isn't saying, "I was a pedophile and you came and visited me in prison."

Jesus is talking about believers who have lost their homes, lost their clothing, lost their food, lost their welfare, been thrown in prison and everything for the cause of Christ.

Now the question is: Do ... are you truly converted? If you are truly converted, you will love them enough to risk your own life to help them. You will not let them perish.

Do you see how you can twist the Scripture to mean something it doesn't mean at all?

And here is the whole thing. If you truly are Christian, you will love other believers in Christ and you will want to talk about Christ. You will want to be a part of anything that is going on with Christ.

A lot of you guys, and I am just going to tell you this. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but I am a good statistician. There are some of you that come to all these types of these things just because you like some of the people and you talk about a lot of the things you like to talk about and it never has anything to do with Jesus. You make your way through the meeting. You barely make it through there. You got that over with. Now we can talk to our friends about other things or we can see if there is any cute girls or guys.

Do you see?

Do you actually fellowship together because you just love Christians? You see?

The last test is this. Verse 15 of chapter two.

“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Come on now. Grammar speaks. Words have meaning.

“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

This world, what is that? Everything, every ideology, every thought, every deed, every action, every system, everything that contradicts the person of Jesus Christ and his teaching. The world is a cesspool. If you are truly a believer, God will be working in your life from the moment of your conversion to pull you out of the world.

As it says in Ezekiel about the new covenant in chapter 36 he says, “I will take you out of your own land. I will take you out of one land and put you into another.” He will take you from Egypt and bring you into Canaan.

Now, I want to say this. For some people it seems to be quite dramatic. Guys get saved, you know, I have known many of them, drug dealers, prostitutes, all sorts of things. Man, they are saved and they are radically following Jesus Christ. They change their dress, they change the way they burn all their music. I mean, they... and you even get something near them that looks like the world and they will grab it out of your hand and burn it.

And then there is others who seem to struggle, but there will be progress. If you truly are Christian, little by little, God will bring you out.

You see, he is your Father and he is not derelict. And the Bible says that if you call yourself a Christian and yet you can live in the world and live in sin without God's discipline, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 verses five through 11 that you are an illegitimate child. You are not a child of God. He is not a derelict Father.

Most of us did not have examples of what a heavenly Father is like. Many of us has had fathers who were disconnected, who were about their job. We went to public school. We had other peers and authorities in our life. We did all kinds of things they never even knew about. God is not that way. He is a real father.

Have you ever seen the passage, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated"? Have you ever read that passage? Kind of spooky. God says, "Look, Jacob I loved. Esau I hated." And the word there in Hebrew is hate. That is what it means. Hate. I hated him.

Now how did God manifest his hate towards Esau? And how did he manifest his love towards Jacob? Well, if you look at Esau's life, God fulfilled every promise he ever made to Esau and to Abraham about Esau. He blessed Esau. Esau became a great leader of many tribes. He became extremely wealthy, so wealthy that he didn't need Jacob's gift when he came back into the Promised Land. Everything God ever promised to Esau he gave him.

So how does that show the hatred of God? There is one difference. He never disciplined Esau. He let Esau be Esau. He cut the rope and let Esau be Esau.

How did he show love towards Jacob? He beat the living daylights out of that guy. I mean, look at Esau's life. He was a godless man. We know that. And God seemed to bless riches upon him and everything else, but never worked to change his life.

Jacob, every day Jacob was disciplined.

Now let me ask you a question. Is God's discipline evident in your life? I don't mean condemnation. I don't mean wrath. I don't mean God being angry with you. Because that anger of God for the believer was poured out on his Son and it has been extinguished. I am talking about the loving discipline of God.

Do you feel like you are not your own? Do you know you are not your own? I remember one time when I was just... I knew God was calling me to preach and all these different things and I didn't want to do it and I was about 22, 23 years old and I went out in the garage. My mom and dad's house and I had this 66 mustang oil barrel [?] 289. It was something. And I got in that car and I said, "I am going to get in this car and I am going to drive all the way to California."

And it was like, yeah, and I will be there when you get there waiting on you, be in the car with you while you are driving.

And furthermore, as you... the father you drive away from my will actually the farther you are driving into it. I own you. I own you. You are mine now. I love you too much to let you be what you would be without me. I will not let you go.

He says in Ezekiel 36, "I will sprinkle clean water on you." And this is what he says. "And you will be clean."

God isn't up there going, "Oh, I have got all these children and if they would just cooperate with me. I wish I could make them do what I want them to do."

That is not the way it works.

Have you ever been to like Walmart and you see a 40 year old man, six foot two, 225 and there is this little kid that is like three years old screaming, tearing the whole place apart and the father is going, "Oh, Johnny, please, please."

Every time my wife sees that she says, "That guy just ought to grab that kid and make him do what he is supposed to do."

Well, I am going to tell you something. God is not politically correct. He will make you do what he wants you to do. He kind of like, you know, some people say, you know, God says, "We can do this the easy way or we can do this the hard way."

God goes, "We can do this the easy way or we can do this the easy way, because it is the same for me."

Now I say that, but I want to balance that out with something. God is not coercive or manipulative. Remember, he gave you a new heart. And he put his Spirit in you and it is the kindness of God that will break your heart and make you walk that path.

But I want you to see his sovereignty and his power. I want you to see that. This is not some God who just kind of hopes you will cooperate.

I am going to end by sharing with you what salvation really is and it is in an illustration in the book of Numbers.

God brings Egypt... God brings Israel out of Egypt with these mighty, magnificent signs. And then Israel serious disobedience. God tests Moses. He says, "Moses, stand aside. I am going to kill them all and I am going to make a people out of you."

He is testing Moses.

You say at that moment, well, the whole fate of Israel is in Moses' hand. Yeah, but Moses is in God's hand, still.

This is Moses' argument. Listen to it. It is brilliant. He said, "Lord, you can't kill them, because your enemies will say that although you were strong enough to bring them out of Egypt, you were not powerful enough to bring them into their own land. God, this whole work of salvation is not so much about Israel. It is about your reputation. You are doing this to demonstrate how powerful you are and if these people fail, your plan of redemption is failed."

Do you see the problem?

My friend, that is why God is not going to save you and to leave you to yourself to live like what is properly called today a carnal Christian and live in carnality the rest of your life. He is not going to do that. Why? Because what he is doing in the life of every true believer is a demonstration of his omnipotent power, that he can take you out of the condemnation of sin. He can justify you, but those he justifies he can also sanctify. He can change them. He can change them.

Is he changing you? Is he working in you? Does he control your life? Is he omnipotent? Is he sovereign? Is he truly a divine father or do you just walk anyway you want and then come to this Christian group?

I will leave that to you. Let's pray.

*Father, thank you for this time and I pray that you would work in the lives of these young people, that those who do know you would be so assured of their salvation and that those who think they know you and do not, that all their false fortress would fall down and crumble before them and they would cry out to you to be saved.*

*Lord, help us in Jesus' name Amen.*

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