

Place: Lurgan Baptist  
19:11:2006

Reading: 1 John 5:1-5

## **BACK TO BASICS**

### **16. THE BIRTHMARKS OF A BELIEVER**

We have noted before that John is pre-eminently the apostle of love. John speaks more of brotherly love and of our love for God and God's love for us than anyone else in the Bible. It was John who wrote, "*by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" ( Jn 13:34 ) It was the apostle John who wrote, "*for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son .... life.*" ( Jn 3:16 ) It was John who wrote, "*God is love.*" ( 1 Jn 4:8 ) Now it would be very easy to think that John did not care about anything else other than love. He did not care about a man's doctrine or a man's deportment. Just as long as a man loves God and loves his brother, that is all that matters. *Are there not those who are saying the very same thing today ?* It does not matter what you believe about the Bible, about Christ, about salvation. Their motto is let's not fuss or fight about anything let's just love one another. Now that assumes that you cannot fight for something or against someone in love. Suppose a man is delirious with fever and is walking toward some railroad tracks, where a train is hurtling toward him, tell me, *what would the loving thing be to do ? Why it would be to go out and fight him if necessary to keep him from going to his death.* Today, there are those of us who believe that we must fight for the Bible and fight for the fundamentals of the faith, though we believe we can "*speak the truth in love.*" ( Eph 4:15 ) Now John was not only *a lover*, *John was also a fighter*. He was not just as concerned about a man's spiritual belief and a man's spiritual birth as he was about a man's love. You see, if a man is not a true believer, he has not experienced the new birth, and if he has not experienced the new birth he cannot live right and he will not die right. So John was concerned that a man truly be born again.

Now every family has certain definitive physical characteristics. You know that some people are in a particular family because of the size or curvature of their nose. You know that others are members of a particular family because of the size of their frame. Some families have the characteristic of red hair or curly hair. Now just as there are birthmarks of a particular physical family, there are also birthmarks of a man who is in God's spiritual family. This passage shows us four birthmarks of a born again child of God, four ways to know that you are a child of the King.

#### **(1) THE CONVICTION WE EXCLAIM**

***The birthmark of Conviction !*** A true believer has the unshakeable conviction that Jesus is the Christ ! Did you notice how John puts it, "*Whosoever believeth ....*" John is talking here about,

### **(a) THE CHRISTIAN'S PROFESSION:**

The true Christian believes that the human Jesus of the New Testament is the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament. He believes that Jesus is the Christ. Not a Christ. The word "*Christ*," comes from the Hebrew word Messiah which means "*the anointed One*." The true Christian believes that Jesus Christ is not an anointed one, that He is not one anointed among many, but that He is the Anointed One, the one and only anointed Messiah. You see, our conviction is Peter's conviction, when he said to the Lord Jesus, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*." ( Matt 16:16 ) And the first evidence that a man has been born of God is that he believes that the human Jesus is the Divine Christ. I would say to our Jewish friends this .... that you need look no further for the Messiah for He has come and His name is Jesus Christ. I heard about a preacher who was talking to a Jewish Rabbi one day and he was trying to win him for the Lord and show how Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

But after taking him from Scripture to Scripture he could not get him to agree and receive Jesus Christ as the Messiah. So he said to this Rabbi, "*Well, are you still waiting for a Messiah ?*" The Rabbi said, "*Yes*." He said alright I want to ask you a question, "*when your Messiah comes can he improve on Jesus Christ ?*" My .... you can improve on a counterfeit but you can't improve on the real thing, and Jesus Christ is the Messiah ! (a)

### **(b) THE CHRISTIAN'S POSSESSION:**

Its important to understand what the Bible means generally and what John means particularly in the use of the word "*belief*." That word does not refer to a mere intellectual assent to a fact. There are multitudes of people around the world who believe that the Lord Jesus lived, died, was raised from the dead. They believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but they have never been born again. When John uses the word "*believe*," he actually means what we mean by the word "*receive*."

This statement in ( 1 Jn 5:1 ) is explained by ( Jn 1:12 ) "*But as many as received Him ....*" You have not truly believed in Christ, until you have received Him as your Saviour and Lord. The jailor at Philippi asked the question, "*what must I do to be saved ?*" ( Acts 16:30 ) If you were to ask the Muslim that question he would reply, "*Repeat the words, there is no God but Allah and Mohamed is his prophet, pray five times daily, gave alms to beggars, keep the fasts, read the Koran and make a pilgrimage to Mecca*." If you were to ask the Buddhist that question he would reply, "*forget that you have a body, become indifferent to pleasure and pain and you may attain to Nirvana the state of extinguished flame*." Yet when the jailor asked that question the answer he was given was "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ .... saved*." My .... are you saved ? You see, its not enough to profess Christ, you must possess Christ ! (a) (b)

### **(c) THE CHRISTIAN'S POSITION:**

Do you see how he puts it ? "*born of God*." A child of God. Seven times John

uses that phrase “ *born of God.* ”

*Isn't physical birth an amazing thing ?* How the Lord takes the seed of a man and the egg of a woman, both of which cannot be seen without the aid of a microscope and joins those two together and life is formed. *Isn't spiritual birth an amazing thing ?* How the Lord takes the seed of the Word of God and the egg of the will of man and joins those together by the power of the Spirit and a child of God comes forth ! Think of it, we don't forth as ordinary citizens, we come forth as children of the King ! Isn't what John has told us, “ *Beloved now are we the sons of God ....*, ” ( 3:2 ) My .... are you despondent this .... ? Are you feeling sorry for yourself ? Then think about the great dignity that God has bestowed upon you. You are God's child. You can say to yourself this .... “ *wonder of wonders I'm a child of the King.* ” So the first birthmark is that of **Conviction.** (1)

## (2) THE COMPASSION WE EXPRESS

***The Birthmark of Compassion !*** Five times in these three verses John uses the word love. It is almost as if he cannot get away from it. He keeps coming back to the fact that a child of God is going to be marked by love.

John says that,

### (a) ***GOD'S CHILDREN LOVE THE FATHER:***

Look at ( 5:1 ) if you will. “ *Him that begat.* ” Is this not normal ? It is self-evident that a child will love his father.

John says, “ *we love him because he first loved us.* ” ( 4:19 ) You see, the more we come to know God, the more we come to understand what God has done for us in Christ, the easier it is for us to love Him. Now the scientist may see God as the great Creator, the philosopher may see God as the great Knower, the lawyer may see God as the great Judge, the Doctor may see God as the great Healer, but a true believer will see God as a loving Father. I heard about a little boy who had a father who was a bookkeeper. *You know how bookkeepers can be. They are very exact about the way that they keep their books.* This man had such a neat ledger and his office was in his own home. His little boy came by one day and the door was ajar and he just burst into the office, as his Dad was working on the books with that black ink and white paper, and he jumped into his Daddy's lap and as he did that pen just went right across the page and left a big black mark. It irritated the Daddy and he sat the little fellow down and said, “ *Oh, son look what you have done to Daddy's work, you've ruined the whole page,* ” and he began to scold the little boy. The tears popped out of his eyes, his chin started to quiver and he said, “ *Daddy, I'm sorry. I just wanted to sit in your lap and tell you how much I loved you.* ” That Daddy felt so bad. He put his work aside, picked him up in his arms, hugged and kissed him and they talked together and then he sent him out to play. After the little boy walked out he thought about God his heavenly Father, and he looked up and said, “ *Father, I'm so glad that you are not so busy hanging out the stars, setting out the moon, running the vast universe that I can't come and just sit in your lap and tell you that I love you.* ” Do you love the Lord ? Do you openly confess your heart's admiration for Him ? Do you express your appreciation to Him for His grace in your life ? (a)

### **(b) GOD'S CHILDREN LOVE THE FAMILY:**

For look how John puts it in ( 5:1 ) ! We have heard the old saying, “ *love me, love my dog.*” The idea here is similar, “ *love God, love His child.*” You see, to love me is to love my children, if you do not love them, then you do not love me. To love the Father is to love His child ! Well, how does love conduct itself toward those in the family ? Paul says, “ *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.*” ( 1 Cor 12:26 ) There is an understanding, a concern, an interest, on the part of all God's children for every member of the family. In his song of love the apostle Paul elaborates on this. Do you recall what he says ? “ *love suffereth long, and is kind, loveth envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*” ( 1 Cor 13:4 ) Hasn't John covered an incredible amount of ground on this vital subject of love ? The apostle is concerned about our interpersonal relationships. My .... the bottom line is this. Our love for each other is a tell tale sign of the reality of our faith in Christ. The birthmark of Compassion ! Have you got it ?

### **(3) THE COMMANDMENTS WE ENJOY**

***The Birthmark of Commitment !*** You see, love is not just in words, it is in works. It is not in saying but in doing. You can tell, whether or not you love the Lord, by one test. Do you obey Him ? Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said ? “ *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” ( Jn 14:15 ) When it comes to love, talk is cheap, intentions are worthless, it is actions that count. Do you notice how John puts in this passage ? “ *For this is the love of God ....,*” ( 5:3 ) In other words we have to,

### **(a) OBEY WITH DILIGENCE:**

Do you see that word “ *keep,*” in ( 5:3 ) it's a Greek word that means “ *to attend to carefully, to obey diligently.*” Obedience is no laughing matter with God. Do you know seriously the Lord takes obedience ? It's the bottom line of your faith in Him and love for Him ! Do you recall when *Saul was told by the Lord to “ go and smite Amalek.”* ( 1 Sam 15:3 ) He was told to annihilate an entire city and take no captives and to take no spoils. Well, Saul annihilated the city, but he did spare the best of the sheep, oxen, cattle and livestock. And as he was approaching the city after battle, Samuel came out to meet him and said, “ *where did you get these sheep ? And where did you get this livestock ?*”

And Saul said, “ *Well, I thought it would be a good idea to spare them and to make sacrifice to the Lord.*” And Samuel said, “ *Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord ?*” ( 1 Sam 15:19 ) Then he said, “ *to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*” ( 15:22 ) My .... ***the one thing that God wants from you more than anything else is your obedience.*** Not your money, not your excuses, not your substitutes, not your rationalization, God wants your obedience, and the one thing that God despises more than anything is your rebellion.

You see, you are never more like Christ than when you obey God and you are never more like the Devil when you rebel against God ! Every commandment in this Book, the command to remember the Lord, to be baptised, to be faithful in attendance, to be holy, to be Christlike, to be filled with the Spirit, to adhere to God's order for men to have heads uncovered, and women to have their heads covered, *every commandment as frivolous as it may seem to you, as out of date as it may seem to you is serious business with God.* For God's commands do not call for debate, they do not call for discussion, they call for obedience ! (a) And,

**(b) OBEY WITH DELIGHT:**

For His commands are “ *not grievous,*” or burdensome. The word means “ *heavy.*” It's the picture of a heavy load on your back. God's commandments should not be a duty, they ought to be a delight to a true child of God.

My .... we are not slaves obeying a Master, we are children obeying a Father ! And the more you love the Lord, the more you will delight in His commandments and the less heavy they will seem. Some of you parents have teenage boys. *Do you know how at times they grumble and gripe when you tell them to go out and wash the car on Saturday morning ?* But as soon as they begin to date girls things change. When they want the loan of the car, the first thing they will do every Saturday is wash it and wax it ! Now, what makes the difference ?

**Love !** Do you husbands recall how you used to open the door of your car for your wife when you first got married ? Now if you get out the car and they sit in the car waiting for you to open the door, you say, “ *hurry up or we will be sitting under the preachers nose.*”

*Someone has said that when a man opens a car door for his wife one of two things is new, the car or the wife !* You see, when you love the Lord, and do what you do for Him out of love, His commands will not be burdensome, they will be a blessing ! Do you recall that Laban made Jacob serve him seven years for the right to marry Rachel ? But the Bible tells us, “ *And Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed unto him a few days for the love he had to her.*” ( Gen 29:20 ) Are you getting these birthmarks of the believer ? (1)(2)(3)

**(4) THE CONQUEST WE EMBRACE**

*The Birthmark of Conquest !* Three times John uses the word “ *overcometh,*” here, which lets us know that a real conflict is going on. The Bible says that Christians fight against three formidable foes, *the world, the flesh, and the devil.* When John speaks about the “ *world,*” here he is referring to the invisible spiritual system of evil. Too many believers have taken a look at the world and said, “ *Well, if you can't lick them join them.*” So they begin to drink the world's booze, speak the world's language, watch the world's films, read the world's pornography. Our motto ought to be, “ *we can't join them we ought to lick them.*” John uses two different tenses of the verb “ *overcometh,*” here. The first and third time it is used in the present tense, it is a daily overcoming. The second time it is used in a tense

that means something took place in the past and was settled once and for all. “ *This is the victory that overcometh the world,*” it took place in the past. So John speaks here about,

**(a) *THE INITIAL VICTORY:***

***A victory that has been achieved once for all !*** When did that happen ? On that first Good Friday and Easter Sunday. That is where the victory was attained, that is where the triumph was achieved, that is where the battle was fought and won in a magnificent display of sovereign power. Christ did it ! Christ did it all ! All that He set out to do He skilfully accomplished when He crushed the opposing forces of darkness ! ( Col 2:15 ) My .... the great news is, the victory is already ours in Christ. The hard part comes when we seek to live in the good of it day after day ! That’s why John speaks about,

**(b) *THE CONTINUAL VICTORY:***

For in the present tense these words speak of continual conquest. Well, how do we get the victory ? Well, what does John say ? “ *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our fighting ?*” Is that what John says ? No ! “ *This is the victory .... faith.*” ( 5:4 ) I heard of an old lady who was scared of electricity, whom nothing and no-one could induce to use a switch and turn on the power. My .... in spite of all your spiritual failure have you never been persuaded to try the switch of faith ? You see, faith is the switch that turns on the power of Christ in our lives ! But its not a matter of faith in faith but faith in a great big wonderful God. After the American Civil War a poor man, a beggar wandered around from place to place with very little subsistence. Everywhere he went he bragged about the fact that he had Abraham’s Lincoln’s name on a piece of paper. He did not have anything else, he was about to starve to death, but he said, “ *I have Abraham’s Lincoln name on a piece of paper.*” Another fellow said, “ *I don’t believe that.*” The poor man said, “ *I certainly do and I will prove it to you.*” He reached into a grimy pocket and pulled out a worn and dirty piece of paper. The other man unfolded and said, “ *do you realise what you have here ? You certainly do have Abraham Lincoln’s name on a piece of paper. Abraham Lincoln has given you a very generous pension. Abraham Lincoln has made you rich and you are living like a pauper. All you have to do is redeem that claim and you will be rich.*”

John says, “ *you Christians don’t have to walk around defeated because Jesus Christ has made you victors. He has roundly trounced every enemy and you share in His victory* ( Rom 8:37 ) *Now by faith, claim His victory !*”

There was a little boy who was constantly antagonised by a big bully. This little boy’s life was miserable. Every day he would get out of school and here would come that big bully. One day he saw the bully. He took off for home. As he ran he looked ahead and there was his big brother, a senior boy in another school. He wheeled around behind his big brother, got hold of his knees, stuck his head our between his big brothers legs and said to the bully, “ ***All right, now, come on, come on.***” My .... when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ who is “ *not ashamed*

*to call us brothers,*” ( Heb 2:11 ) when we hide ourselves in Him, and appropriate His victory, then we can say to the world, “ **come on, come on.**”

*“ Oh, help me Lord to realise that You are all in all  
That I am more than conqueror in great things and in small:  
No need have I but You have met upon the cruel tree:  
Oh, precious, dying, risen Lord You are my victory.”*