

Place: Lurgan Baptist:

4:6:2006

Reading: 1 John 2:1-11

BACK TO BASICS

4. HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN?

John deals with this subject in this very passage. If we were to go out onto the street and conduct an interview with people, asking what it means to be a Christian we would probably receive a variety of answers. *There are many opinions of what a Christian is.* The basic definition is one who believes in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Lord. The Lord Jesus stated that definition when He said, “ *He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already.*” (Jn 3:18) The issue of determining who is a Christian becomes difficult when considering people who claim to believe. Many who profess to believe in Christ may act like Christians to a certain degree, but they turn out to be impostors, or are simply misinformed about the nature of salvation. (2:19)

When you think of what a believer should be what comes to your mind ? I heard about a pious church member who thought himself to be a great Christian. One Sunday he visited the junior department of the Sunday School. The Superintendent asked to say a few words to the boys and girls. He stood pompously before them and asked, “ *Why do you think people call me a Christian ?*” From the back of the room a little boy responded, “ *Because they don't know you ?*” George Duncan tells the story of this business man, not all business men are like this, who was involved in a Christian broadcast the previous evening. A girl that was employed by him it. Of course the very next morning, he was in a bad mood, and things were not going well for him or for this girl. For some reason the girl seemed to get the brunt of it all, and the benefit of his temper, and as she went out of the office she said to another girl coming in, “ ***That's right, come to Christ, on Sunday night and go to hell on Monday morning.***” Is this not the way many unbelievers see Christians today ? Can I ask, are you a bitter, prickly so called Christian ? Do you take offence at the smallest matters ? Do you maintain a long memory of wrongs against you ? Do you have a forgiving spirit ? Do you have a Christ-like love ?

In the passage before us this *John proposes three tests for the professing Christian !* These x-rays probe into the latent depths of our spiritual experience, they get to the heart of the matter, they peel away all the extraneous layers and enable us to see what is left when the packaging has been removed. John introduces another of his distinctive and recognisable threads in this passage when he says on three occasions. In (2:4) he says, “ *he that saith I know Him,*” In (2:6) we have the same phrase again. “ *He that saith he abideth,*” and again in (2:9) that little phrase occurs, “ *He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now.*” John uses this phrase “ *he that saith,*” three times. He is using it to introduce us to a series of tests by which we can know beyond doubt that we are a child of God. So “ ***How do you know***

that you are a Christian ?” Well, lets see if you pass the tests ?

(1) THE TEST OF LOYALTY

Or faithfulness to the Word ! John says (2:3-5) So the first test to help you know, whether you are truly a child of God is the test of loyalty ! In (2:3)

(a) A REALITY IS EXPRESSED:

Now remember John was writing this letter to counteract the heresy known as Gnosticism, which comes from the Greek word meaning “ *to know*.” (gnosis) The Gnostic’s claimed that they were special elite beings who had a superior knowledge of God, and this word knowledge was part of their vocabulary. They claimed, that they knew God in a way the ordinary run of the mill Christian didn’t. For that reason John uses the word “ *know*,” many times in this letter. What he wants to bring to the believers attention at Ephesus is the true knowledge of God ! These Gnostics had a great intrigue with this special, superior knowledge, but they had no interest in keeping God’s commandments. They were living the lives of reprobates. So John says, “ *hereby we do know that we know Him*,” how John ? “ *if we keep His commandments*.”

Obedience is one way of knowing you are a Christian. If a person claims to be a Christian but is disobedient to the Lord throughout his life, the apostle says “ *he’s a liar and the truth is not in him*.” The Greek word translated “ *keep*,” conveys the idea of a watchful, observant obedience. It is not an obedience that is the result of external pressure, which might cause someone to say, “ *I have to do this, because I’m afraid I’ll get whacked with the divine hammer*.” No, this is a holy desire to obey the Lord because you love Him. The Christian can know that he knows God when the great desire of his heart is to obey Him. My no matter what you are giving to God, regardless of what you are doing for God, no matter where you are going for God, no matter how much you are believing God, it is not enough, the bottom line with the Lord is obedience. Do you recall the Saviour’s words, “ *If ye love me, keep my commandments*.” (Jn 14:15)

Churches talk all the time about the need of having revival. Do you know what real revival is ? When God’s people make up their minds they are going to obey God. Charles Finney one of the greatest revival preachers ever known said this, “ ***revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God***.” My do you claim to be a Christian ? Well, are you keeping His commandments ? What about the two ordinances the Lord Jesus left with the church ? Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both ordinances are commanded by the Lord. What about the command “ *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is*,” ? (Heb 10:25) What about the command “ *to be filled with the Holy Spirit*,” (Eph 5:18) ? Much of the N.T. is taken up with the Lord’s commands, some given directly by Him, others given apostolically by the Holy Spirit, Now says John, the general tenor of the Christian’s life is one of obedience to the Lord’s commands ! (a)

(b) A HYPOCRISY IS EXPOSED:

Look at (2:4) John is describing a man whose lips say one thing but whose life says another ! I would not risk calling you a liar, yet John says that if you say you know the Lord, but there is not an attitude of obedience in your heart, you are a liar and God's truth is not in you ! *John's point is that Christians obey, non-Christians do not !* Non-believers do not submit to the Lordship of Christ, they fulfil their own desires at their own pace. How scathing John can be, this apostle of love, as he exposes hypocrisy ! I tell you there are going to be a great many people at the great white throne judgment who will say,

“ Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name ? And in thy name cast out devils ? And in thy name done many wonderful works ? ” And then will I profess unto them I never you. ” (Matt 7:22) On the walls of a medieval castle were written these words.

*“ You call me Master and obey me not,
You call me Light and see me not
You call me Life and desire me not
You call me Wise and follow me not
You call me Fair and love me not
You call me Rich and ask me not
You call me Eternal and seek me not
You call me Gracious and trust me not
You call me Noble and serve me not
You call me Might and honour me not
You call me Just and fear me not
If I condemn you blame me not. ”*

(c) A MATURITY IS EXPERIENCED:

Look if you will at (3:5) In other words, the more we obey God's Word, the more we open the door for His love to accomplish His purpose in our lives. It is as we obey Him, in the everyday things of life, in the humdrum, in the daily grind, that we are being changed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. It is in the run of the mill ordinary experiences of life, that we can know increasingly what it is to become more like Christ, and at the same time we can feel the tidal wave of His love flooding our hearts and minds. *How do you know you are a Christian ?* Well, here's the first test ! (1) What is your attitude to the Word of God ? How do you look at the commands and desires of God ? When you read Scripture or are instructed from this pulpit do you act on those truths ? (1)

(2) THE TEST OF LIVING

Look at what John says in (2:6) Of course, nobody ever becomes a Christian by following Christ's example, but after we have come into the family of God, we are to look to Jesus Christ as the one great Example of the kind of life we should live ! This means “ *abiding in Christ.* ” You see, Christ is not only the Propitiation for our sins and the Advocate who represents us before

God, but He is also the perfect Pattern, He is “ *Jesus Christ the righteous,* ” for our daily life ! We ought to live like Christ lived ! Now will you notice that abiding comes before action, worship is to come before working. It will be a great day in some people’s lives when they realise that God is more interested in your worship, than He is in your work. Now are you abiding in Christ ? Are you allowing the life of the Vine (Christ) to simply flow through you ? Well, John says, “ *He that saith as He walked,* ” Now think of,

(a) *THE WALK OF THE SAVIOUR:*

Martin Luther said, “ *it is not the walk of the Saviour walking on the water,* ” that is intended here, none of us can walk on the water. But it is one’s everyday down to earth ordinary walk in the common experiences of life. Think about the walk of the Lord Jesus !

1. His Walk was one of COMMUNION:

The Lord Jesus lived in communion with the Father.

(Mk 1:35) He had a prayer life that was as rich as gold. His heart was a storehouse that was stocked with the Word of God, He radiated the presence of God, and He revealed the power of God. My if you are going to walk like the Saviour walked, you’re going to walk in communion with the Lord. “ *When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way.* ” 1.

2. His Walk was one of COMPASSION:

Christ loved the lost, He loved the saved. He loved His friends, He loved His foes, He loved His family, He loved the faithful, and He loved the forsaken. The Lord Jesus loved the down and out, He loved the up and out, He loved the all and out. “ *Red and yellow, black and white they were precious in His sight.* ”

3. His Walk was one of Commitment:

It was Christ who said, “ *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work.* ” (Jn 4:34) As one has well said, “ *Christ walked all of His life in the fields of faithfulness with the shoes of submission.* ”

My are you abiding in Christ ? If so, then you are walking like the Saviour ! Think about the walk of His Childhood when He walked in submission to His parents. Think about the walk of His Manhood, when He walked up and down the dusty roads of Galilee, and went everywhere doing good. Thank about the walk of His Saviourhood, when He steadfastly set His face to Jerusalem. (a) And then John talks about,

(b) *THE WALK OF THE SAINT:*

To walk as He walked means that we ought to desire to imitate the life of Christ ! Peter said, “ *For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also, suffered for us, leaving us an example,*

that ye should follow His steps.” (1 Pet 2:21) That is imitation ! Paul says, “ Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”

(Eph 5:1) The Greek word translated “ *followers*,” is related to our English word mimic or imitator. Be imitators, be mimics of God as dear children. Have you ever seen a little girl try to mimic her Mummy ? Have you seen her get on her Mummy’s dress and high heel shoes and go wobbling down the street ? What’s she doing ? She is trying to mimic her Mummy. Is that the way it is with you and the Saviour ? Robert Chapman was one of the early brethren, and he set before himself this great aim. He said, “ *Seeing so many preach Christ, and so few live Christ, I will aim to live Christ.*” One who spent a night in the presence of Murray McCheyne said, “ *Oh, that is the most Christ like man I ever saw.*” What will they say of you when you are dead and gone ? Will they say, “ *He walked as Christ walked ?*” (1) (2)

(3) THE TEST OF LOVE

You see, your love will be an indication of whether or not you are really a born-again child of God. Its all about extending to a brother or sister in Christ the right hand of fellowship not the right fist of hardship ! *Now Christian love means that we treat each other the way God treats us !* Its interesting to notice that John changes his emphasis here from commandments in (2:4) to commandment singular in (2:8) You see, the commandments were reduced as time went along. When Moses came he gave the ten commandments. When Christ came He reduced the ten to two. “ *Love the Lord, and love your neighbour.*” (Matt 22:37) Then Paul came along and reduced the two to one. Do you know what he said ? “ *Love is the fulfilling of the law.*” (Rom 13:10) Now this law of love was,

(a) ESTABLISHED IN THE PAST:

Do you what John says in (2:7) ? Loving one another is a command that has existed from the beginning. One has only to go back to the pages of the Old Testament to see that God commands that we love another. **Vertically** speaking we are to love God. We read in (Deut 6:4-5) “ *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*” **Horizontally** speaking, we are to love one another. An example of this is found in the book of Leviticus (19:18) “ *Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, I am the Lord.*” You see, when it comes to loving one another, you could say that this law has been on the books from the beginning. (a)

(b) ELEVATED IN THE PRESENT:

In (2:7) John says, “ *I write no new commandment unto you,*” but then he turns around in (2:8) and says, “ *Again, a new commandment I write unto you.*” Someone might say that in his old age his mind was slipping a bit, yet there is no contradiction in what he says ! Loving one another is not a new commandment because the O.T. instructs believers to do that, but Christ gave it a new meaning. Do you recall what He said, “ *A new commandment I gave unto you that ye love one another, as I*

have loved you.” (Jn 13:34) Its one thing for God to say, “ *Love one another,*” but when God personally demonstrated that love by coming to earth as a man, it became a fresh commandment. The O.T. commandment to love others received new meaning from Christ ! How did the Lord Jesus tell us to “ *love one another ?*” “ *As I have loved you.*” Well, how did Christ love them ? He loved them in spite of,

Their Failures: Peter denied Him with oaths and curses but He didn’t say, “ *I don’t want Peter in my church.*”

Their Faithlessness: For Thomas said, “ *Except I see, I will not believe.*”

Their Fighting: For on the road they disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.

Their Fears: For after Calvary they huddled together for “ *fear of the Jews.*” (Jn 20:19)

Now, do you love other believers the way Christ loves you ? Do you love them in spite of their failures, their faithlessness, their quarrels, their fears ? But you say, “ *they are so many unlovely, unlovable Christians,*” how true that is. But then you and I are not as lovable as we ought to be !

(a) (b)

(c) EXPECTED IN THE PEOPLE:

Do you see the contrast that John draws in (2:9-11)? He says,

1. Hatred is of the very kingdom of Darkness:

What a terrible picture is given of the man who hates another ! He is,

A Hypocritical Man: Look at (2:9) It’s a sad thing to think you’re in the light, when in reality you are in darkness. A man who says he loves Christ but does not love his brother is a hypocritical man.

A Harmful Man: (2:10) Are you a stumbling block to Christ or a stepping stone to Christ ? I heard about a man who came into a church that was quarrelling and fighting. He sat down, all he heard was harsh, the words of people around him, and all he saw was hard looks and he got up about half way through the service and left. As he was walking out of the doors one of the deacons stopped him and said, “ *Sir, why are you leaving ?*” And he looked back into the church, and then he looked outside and said, “ *I can get that out there.*” Is that what they are saying about us?

A Hindered Man: (2:11) He is like a man walking in darkness stumbling all over himself, making no progress at all. You see, if you are not a loving Christian, you’re not growing, for the Christian life only grows in the soil of love. 1. But,

2. Love is of the very Kingdom of Light:

(2:10) Now do you love your brother or sister in

Christ ? Is there anyone in the family you hate ? You may not hate anybody but are you on the

verge of gating somebody ? Do you have to fight to keep yourself from hating another believer ? I heard about a little boy in a Sunday School class and the teacher was teaching about love and she said, “ *Johnny, you don’t hate anyone do you ?* ” Johnny replied, “ *No, I don’t hate anybody but if I ever start I’ve got the guy picked out.* ” Now remember what love is. Its treating each other the way God treats us. Its not an emotional feeling, its an act of the will. Someone came to Dr. Ironside one time and said, “ *Dr. Ironside, I’ve got a problem. I just don’t love my wife anymore. Do you have a solution ?* ” Dr. Ironside said, “ *I certainly do, bend over.* ” He said, “ *what ?* ” He said, “ *Bend over.* ” The man bent over and Harry Ironside gave him a swift kick in the bottom and said, “ *Now get back out there and start loving your wife.* ”

My are you prepared to start loving your brother or sister in Christ ? This is an act of the will ! ***To treat them the way God treats you !*** Are you a Christian ? How do you know you are a Christian ? Do you pass the three tests ? The Test of Loyalty ? The Test of Living ? The Test of Love ? Maybe its time for self-examination ?