

Recognizing The True From The False

#3

1 John 2:3-11

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. A jeweler, in determining whether a jewel is of great value or worthless, must put the stone under the light and examine it with extreme care. The jeweler must apply a test to determine whether the jewel is: 1) true or false, 2) genuine or spurious, 3) real or counterfeit and this test must be done under the light.
- B. The Apostle John would have professing Christians expose themselves to the light of God and apply several tests to determine whether they are true Children of God. By applying these tests a Christian can determine whether his Christian life is: 1) true or false, 2) genuine or spurious, 3) real or counterfeit. In other words, he can tell whether he is a professing or a possessing Christian, whether he is saved or unsaved, whether he is regenerate or unregenerate.

II. THE TEST OF OBEDIENCE 2:3-6

- A. ***“We know that we have come to know him”*** – A person can experientially know whether he is a true child of God. This is the purpose for the writing of this epistle.
1 Jn. 5:13 ***“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”*** The word “know” is used 25 times in this letter in order to refute the Gnostic heresy. The Gnostic boasted all knowledge, for the Greek word gnosis means “to know.” The Gnostics claimed that they knew God and believed in Christ but had no desire to keep the moral law of God. They were antinomians. They gave intellectual assent to God but their lives were moral shams. John’s point will be that no religious knowledge is valid if it does not have moral consequences.

This is the age of profession, for many give intellectual assent to Christ but show no desire to follow Christ. Men want an easy religion. “Thousands of men and women every year are still undertaking to follow Christ without ever pausing to reflect on the cost of their enterprise. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called ‘nominal Christianity’. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the Church and dismiss religion as an escape from reality.”

- B. ***“If we obey his commands.”*** – How do you know whether you’re saved? Apply the test of moral obedience. Do you desire to keep the commands of God? The present willingness to keep the commandments of God is a sign of a valid saving relationship. It is proof that an act of union with Christ has already occurred. There is a desire to keep God’s law. A person comes to know God through Christ on the basis of faith. Faith is the condition of salvation but one proves, evidences, demonstrates the reality of his faith by obedience to God.

John’s point is that only if we obey Him can we claim to know Him. This does not mean perfection but a desire or a willingness to obey. No man has ever obeyed God perfectly in his lifetime. Salvation doesn’t make a man perfect but it does begin to change his desires.

- C. ***“The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”*** – This is a man who professes to know God but his life makes him a liar and God’s truth is not in him. A man’s words must be tested by his works. A Christian shows the reality of his faith and love for God by keeping the commandments of Christ. **John 14:15: “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** **John 14:21: “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me...”**

Just as there are phonies in every phase of life, there are phonies in Christianity. They often go to the right places, mingle with the right crowds and say the right things. They say they believe in Christ but they disobey the commandments of Christ as a pattern of life. They have no desire to keep his commandments; thus they must be unchanged.

Charles Spurgeon said, “An unchanged life is the sign of an uncleansed heart.”

- D. ***“But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him.”*** – Now John speaks about the word, not commandments in particular but the revelation of God’s will as found in the Bible. The one whose life is characterized by obedience demonstrates and proves that he is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And in this one the love of God has come to completion and is continuing on to perfection. When we begin to obey God we realize that God’s love has taken root in our hearts and this manifests itself in a practical love towards God and men.

Are you willing to obey God? Whatever He makes clear as His will, are you already pre-committed in your own heart to do? You may have a lot of problems as a Christian, you may have a sense of weakness or lack in your life, but one thing is clear: if you are keeping his commandments, if you desire to obey him, then you know him. You can be sure you know him. Christianity is not intellectualism or mystical emotion but moral obedience.

- E. ***“This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”*** – The word “abide” means to continue in and means exactly the same thing as fellowship. The person who says he is in God (has union or relationship to God) and abides in God (has communion and fellowship with God) has a moral responsibility and obligation to walk as Christ walked. Christ is the Christian’s example and we cannot claim to abide in Him unless we behave like Him. To walk as He walked must be put in the context of obedience. It does not mean to do the same things that Christ did (for Christ did many things we can never do) but it means to act from the same principle upon which he acted, to reflect the same kind of relationship to the Father that he had. Christ lived in conscious fellowship with the Father which resulted in continual obedience to the Father’s will **John 4:34: “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”** **John 5:30: By myself I can do nothing, I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me..** As the Christian walks in fellowship with the Father through Christ, he will be obedient to the Father’s will.

III. THE TEST OF LOVE 2:7-11

- A. ***“Dear friends I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.”*** – John now applies to professing Christians his second test, which is not moral but social. Does the professing Christian love other Christians? These professing Christians had heard about love since their conversion. Love was taught in the Old Testament. **Deut. 6:5: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”** **Lev. 19:18: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”**
- B. ***“Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you,”*** – The idea of love was not new but Christ invested it with a richer and deeper meaning. He gave a new dimension to love. **John 13:34: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** Christians are now to love as Christ loved them. A love which is selfless and self-sacrificing, which loves the unlovely and unlovable. Love is also new because we never end experiencing it or giving it out.
- C. ***“Because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”*** – Because the Christian has the indwelling Christ in his life, the darkness of sin is passing and the light of Christ is continuing to shine. The darkness is not past, far from it; shadows remain here, there, and everywhere, but it is passing, for the light is certain to conquer it ultimately. Sin is not past but is passing as the light of the Lord is progressively gripping the lives of true believers.
- D. ***“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.”*** – The person, who says he is a Christian and walking in the light but

hates his brother in Christ, is not saved at all. Hate is a feeling of dislike or hostility toward another. Hate can take two forms. Active: A person talks maliciously or attempts injurious actions toward another. Most of us think of hate only in this sense. Passive: Hate can also take a passive form – indifference, coldness, isolation, exclusion and unconcern for others. Someone has well said that indifference is the cruelest form of hate.

A habitual attitude of hostility, indifference or unconcern toward another brother in Christ is a mark of an unregenerate life. **1 Jn. 3:14: *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.***

- E. ***“Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.”*** – For John a person is either unsaved and in darkness or saved and in light. The person who loves his brother is abiding or fellowshiping in the light and there is nothing hindering his fellowship with God.
- F. ***“But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”*** – A professing Christian who has no love for other Christians is in darkness and walking in darkness – his very existence and activity is one of a total unregenerate. The darkness of living habitually in sin blinds or makes insensitive the heart of the person. A person becomes progressively hardened and insensitive to sin. A person who hates is in darkness and does not know where he is going or where this hatred will lead him. He has no idea that this hatred could lead to murder or to mayhem, to heartache and heartbreak. He goes blindly on, stumbling on in his hateful attempt to do evil to his friend or brother or companion. But the result is only damage to himself and all others about him. Every normal Christian will have feelings of hostility and dislike towards others at times but, by the power of God working in him, he can learn to love, forgive and forget.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. The Apostle John divides all humanity into two categories – those who are non-Christians walking in the dark and those who are Christians walking in the light.
- B. A person can only get into light when he meets the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, as a personal Lord and Savior. How does one come to know Christ personally? By believing that Christ is the Lord who died for sins.
- C. Jesus said, ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”*** (Jn. 8:12)