

Session 5: “Life reveals the children of God!”...B.F. Westcott

What do you think this means?

We can tell what a tree is by its fruit...and similarly we can tell what a man or woman is by that person's conduct.

1 John 3:10-18, “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. ¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

John tries to make it very simple...he says... “Anyone who does not desire to do what is right is by that fact shown not to be of God.”

Righteousness is the key.

We can't obtain righteousness by our acts...we can prove that we have the righteousness of Christ by trying and seeking to live like Him.

John says to be righteous is to love our neighbors...

Why did John feel that this was such a critical point in defining Christianity?

- ***It is a duty which has been impressed upon Christians from the first moment that they entered the Church. The Christian ethic can be summed up in one word....LOVE!***
- ***The fact that people love one another is the final proof that they have passed from death to life.***
- ***Not to love is to become a murderer. Jesus said that anger, bitterness and contempt were sins just as serious (Matthew 5:21-22)...hatred in the heart is as if there is murder in the heart.***
- ***The Christian life is the imitation of Christ. He forgave those who crucified Him. “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” Philipians 2:5***
- ***John insists that we will have plenty of opportunities to prove our love for Christ...be helping and loving someone else...even if they don't love us.***

And...Remember:

- ✓ *Righteousness always provokes hostility in the minds of those whose actions are evil.*
- ✓ *Wherever Christians are, even though they say nothing, they act as the conscience of society; and for that very reason, the world will often hate them.*

1 John 3:19-24, “*This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*”

There is only one test....to know in whom you believe....and to know that you are “really” a Christian!

John’s test...simple and far-reaching. It is love.

Now....just because you love other people does not mean that you are Christian....but...it is the final, clinching test question!

Romans 10:9, “For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord...and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

Now...do you love your fellow man? Do you try to keep God’s commandments? Then....be calm, be at peace, be assured that you will see God.

Our hearts might condemn us...but God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

What two things set us apart?

- 1. Believing in the name of God’s Son...Jesus the Christ!*
- 2. Loving one another...as He gave us this commandment.*

Does anything hinder you...this day....in you loving your brothers and sisters in Christ?

It is simple to know in whom we have believed....Heart Knowledge!

How Do We Know We Are God’s Children?

1 John 3:24b – 4:1

“This is how we know that He (Jesus) abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave to us. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if their source is God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Note: Spirit and spirit(s)....

Difference is that the Christian has the Holy Spirit...not some, just any spirit working in us!

Early Church had manifestation of the Spirit....Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There are different thoughts on this!

Most modern churches do not know what the manifestation of the Spirit means...because they are afraid of it.

Question: When did the church lose it...and when did the gifts of the spirit diminish...and where does it say in the Word that the gift of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was extinguished...or inappropriate for the Church?

Why would we listen to man....and not listen to the Spirit?

Many are guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit....

Are we guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit?

The Ultimate Heresy....

Found in 1 John 4:2-3, "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

For John, Christianity...and the Christian Faith can be summed up in one sentence: "The Word became flesh and lived with (amongst) us." John 1:14

Any spirit which denied the reality of the incarnation was not of God.

John lays down three (3) tests of belief:

- 1. To be of God, a spirit must acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.*

To deny this statement, John felt that:

- ✓ It is denying that Jesus is the center of history (everything revolves around this figure...this man).*
- ✓ It is denying that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God.*
- ✓ It is denying Jesus' Kingship (He came not only to sacrifice, but to reign).*

- 2. To be of God, a spirit must acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh. (Must know and understand that Jesus came in the flesh...and felt pain as we feel pain).*

- 3. To be of God, a spirit must acknowledge that Jesus arose from the grave.*

SALVATION DEPENDS ON YOUR SPIRIT BELIEVING THAT JESUS WAS MAN AND....GOD'S SON.

***Hark, the Herald Angels sing, Glory to the newborn King.
Christ, by highest Heav'n adored; Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.***

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.*

1 John 4:4-6, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit^{al} of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”

There is a great truth...and a great problem revealed in this scripture!

***Truth:** Christians do not need to fear the heretics.*

***In Christ,** the victory over all the powers of evil was won.*

***Problem:** The false teachers will neither listen to nor accept the truth which true Christians offer.*

John returns to his favorite contrasting theme....the opposition between the world and God.

The world, as we have seen before, is human nature apart from, and in opposition to, God. Those who have their source in God will welcome the truth; those whose source is the world will reject the truth.

The answer must be that:

- *There are no limits to the grace of God (but there are always consequences to our choices).....and,*
- *There is such a person as the Holy Spirit.*

1 John 4:7 – 21, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

This is a closely interwoven passage...best when read in its entirety!

Several teachings from this passage:

I. TEACHING ON LOVE

- **Love has its origin in God (v. 7)**
God is love. To be like God and be what we were meant to be, we must also love.
- **Love has a double relationship to God.**
It is only by knowing God that we learn to love, and it is only by loving that we learn to know God (v. 7 – 8).
Love comes from God, and love leads to God.
- **It is by love that God is known (v. 12)**
We cannot see God because God is spirit; what we can see is His effect. We can't see wind or electricity...but we can see its effect.
The effect of God is love. God is known by the effect He has on the individual.
- **God's love is demonstrated in Jesus Christ (v. 9)**
When we look at Jesus, we see two (2) things about the love of God.
 1. *It is a love which holds nothing back (God loved men and women, boys and girls so much that He sacrificed His most Beloved possession.*
 2. *It is a totally undeserved love. How in the world could God love such poor and disobedient creatures as we are?*
- **Human love is a response to divine love (v. 19)**
We love because God loved us. It is the sight of His love which awakens in us the desire to love Him back...as He first loved us...and also to love our neighbors as He loves them.
- **When love comes, fear goes (verses 17-18)**
Fear is the characteristic emotion of someone who expects to be punished.
God's true nature is not to punish...but to forgive...and love. That is why He still bids the lost to come. Punishment comes only when there is rejection of God's love...Mercy is always waiting...but Mercy and Grace never forces the human to love. Rebellion has always been what separates man from God.
Once we know God's true nature and accept it as fact (He loved us so much that He gave of His own flesh and blood), fear is swallowed up in love.
The fear that remains is the fear of causing Him grief in His love for us.
- **Love of God and love of other people are indissolubly connected (vs. 7, 11, 20)**
The energy of love discharges itself along lines which form a triangle...whose points are God, self, and neighbor.
The only way to prove that we love God is to love the men and women whom God loves.
It is our destiny to reproduce the life of God in humanity.

What great things does this passage say about Jesus Christ?

1. **It Tells Us That Jesus Is the Bringer of Life.**
God sent him that through him we might have life (v. 9)
There is a world of difference between existence and life. We all have existence, but we do not all have life.
Living with Christ turns mere existence into fullness of life.
2. **It Tells Us That Jesus Is the Restorer of the Lost Relationship with God.**
God sent him to be the atoning sacrifice for sin (v. 10).
Jesus bridged the awful gulf between God and us.

3. It Tells Us That Jesus Is the Savior of the World (v. 14)

People need to be saved from themselves; they need to be saved from the habits which have become their chains; they need to be saved from their temptations; they need to be saved from their fears and anxieties. In every case, Jesus offers salvation; He enables us to face the present and to meet eternity.

4. It Tells Us That Jesus Is the Son of God (v. 12)

He and He alone can show us what God is like; He alone can bring God's grace, love, forgiveness and strength.

Jesus is the one that introduced mankind to the Spirit of God....

It is the Spirit which sets us free...It is the Spirit which convicts and convinces us to do what is right...and to stay away from evil.

It is the Spirit...in whom Jesus introduced us, that makes us dare to address God as Father (Romans 8:15-16).

What a Wonderful God...What a Wonderful Savior...What a Wonderful Spirit....in whom we yield to the awesome presence of God!