

**A THIRD TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

1 John 2:9-14

**Intro:** In 1 John 1 after a brief but wonderful reference to our Lord Jesus as both “the Word of life” and “eternal life,” he told his readers that they might be a part of the fellowship that he and others were enjoying with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. He was indicating that what had convinced him and others with him that there was something uniquely different about the Lord Jesus was His life. Physically the Lord looked like any other person, but twice in verse 2 he said that it was “manifested” to them Who He was! The word “manifested” means that they did not on their own Who our Lord was, but it was revealed to them, made known to them, disclosed, that He was the Son of God Who had become a Man. But the revelation came to them by what they saw in His life – what He said, what He did, and, in general, His unique character. This knowledge has been for all of us what caused us to pay attention to Him and to discover that He was, and is, God the Son. Since we trusted Him as our Savior, we have learned that it was the Holy Spirit which “manifested” Him to us. And basically that discovery was through His life.

Now that is basic to this entire epistle. We can’t tell Christians from any other people just by looking at them. And the Apostle John is telling us in this epistle that it is not enough for us to verbally claim that we are the people of God. If we are genuinely Christians, our lives will show it. We are not perfect, but there are characteristics in our lives that you only find in people who really know Jesus Christ as their Savior. And the Apostle John then set out to tell us in this letter what those characteristics are. You will not find any of these characteristics to a perfect degree, but if you watch how Christians live, you see an increasing evidence of these traits that long Christians know the Lord. And before we get finished with this epistle the Apostle John will tell us that God’s ultimate purpose in saving us was to make us like Jesus Christ. We will never be God, but we will be God-like. And it basically is by the character of our lives that our claim to be the people of God, the children of God, is to be confirmed by the way we live. This is very important for every Christian to understand. And it is through our daily fellowship with God and with Christ that these changes will take place.

Verse 4 tells us that this relationship with God and Christ having begun by a new birth, is a life that leads to the fulness of joy.

So far in our study of 1 John we have learned that the first characteristic of a true child of God, has to do with *sin*. This starts in chapter 1, verse 6, and goes on down to chapter 2, verse 2.

Now although we have been saved from the penalty of our sins, we can still sin, and will be able to sin as long as we are in this life. But there are many people in this world who claim to be Christians, who claim to be the children of God, whose lives don't show any difference as far as sin is concerned. They live just like they have always lived, and like most other people live. Notice again verses 6, 8, and 10, and contrast them with verses 7 and 9.

Then in chapter 2, verse 1, the Apostle John tells us specifically that we are *not* to sin! When we do sin, we are to confess it to God, and He forgives us on the basis of the death Christ died on the Cross. He died as our Substitute, and His death covers all of our sins. Sin can affect in an adverse way our fellowship with the Lord, but it can never sever our relationship with the Lord. Once you are born into God's family, you will never be put out. But the first evidence to look for for your own assurance that you are a true child of God, is to ask yourself how you feel about sin. Does it bother you? Do you feel defiled? Do you find that you can't do a lot of the things that you used to do with a clear conscience because now you know it displeases God, and that is now what you don't want to do.

So sin is the first test, and I hope that you have passed it.

The second test has to do with the Bible, the Word of God. You probably never read the Bible before you professed Christ as your Savior, but now you are reading it. And you have found that it tells us a lot of things that we are to do, and many other things which we have done in the past which we are not to do any longer. How do you respond to these? How do you feel about the commandments in the Bible? Now I am not just talking about the ten commandments, but I am talking about the hundreds of other commandments that are given to us in God's Word. Before you were saved, the Bible was not one of your favorites. But now, if you are really saved, the Bible is going to be the most important book in your life. It is the Word of God. And the Lord Jesus said while He was here on earth, speaking to His disciples, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." We considered the commandments last Sunday in chapter 2, beginning with verse 3, and going down through verse 8. Do you seek the

Lord's help in enabling you to keep His commandments. If you do, that is a good sign. But if you don't, that's a bad sign. Do you read your Bible on a regular basis, or do you have to look for it before you go to church on Sunday morning. Look with me at chapter 2 and verse 3. How does this register with you? You need the Bible for many reasons, but one of the most important reasons is that it will strengthen you against sin. The writer of the longest Psalm is the Bible, Psalm 119, said, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

So our relationship with the Bible, gives us our second test. Do you pass? I don't mean do you do a perfect job of obeying God because none of us has a perfect record. But what I do mean is, do the commandments of Scripture describe how you want to live? If so, that is good. If not, that is bad.

But now this morning we come to the third test. It has to do with our relationship with other Christians. And it is in our churches that we have the closest relationship with others who call themselves Christians. Now again there are many people in this world who go to church, and call themselves Christian, who really have never been born again. But the Apostle John was writing in my text for this morning about people who are true Christians. Now look with me at the verses which Stephen Nagai read for us a few minutes ago.

Now the Apostle John was speaking to us in this passage and is saying that if we claim to be in the light, that is, we claim to be a member of God's family, but we hate our brother, that tells us something about ourselves!

People who aren't Christians don't usually go to church. A lot of churches put on a show like they would find in the world, just to attract people who aren't Christians so that they will come to church. But we get acquainted with our Bibles, we can't find a single bit of evidence that the apostles ever did this. The church is for the Lord's people. That is where we hear Bible teaching, or perhaps I should say, that is where we are supposed to hear the Bible taught. We come to church to learn about God and to have fellowship with others who are in the family of God. That is why the Apostle John speaks of another Christian as a "brother." And he was including sisters who are in God's family as well. But how do you feel about others who are supposedly your brothers and sisters in the family of God Who is our heavenly Father. Since you professed faith in

Christ have they become your best friends. Do you look forward to times when you can be with them. Now a lot of churches no longer have a Sunday night meeting. And you will see that the lights are out on Wednesday nights when churches used to be open for prayer meetings. If my math is right there are 168 hours in every week, and probably the majority of people who go to church only go one hour out of 168. Sometimes it is not physically possible for people to go only once. I blame preachers for a lot of this because people tell me that it is hard to find a place where you can know that the fellowship is based upon the teaching of the Word.

But the main question is directed to each one of us. How do we feel about the Lord's people. Here the Apostle John was talking about people who "hate" other Christians. You know, God in His Word has led those whom He has used to give us His Word, to use strong language, and it seems that that is to get our attention. The Apostle John, for example, calls people *liars* who claim to be what they are not. What did he mean by "hate"?

Even our Lord Jesus Christ used this word in stating a truth which shocks us when we read it. I am thinking about this statement which you will find in Luke 14:26:

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

We are even told in Scripture to love our enemies (see Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:27). Does the Lord really require us to hate those who are the nearest to us when we are told in other passages to love them? The answer is, no! Love and hate are used in these passages to speak of the one or ones who hold first place in your life as compared with others, in the case of parents, whom you love dearly, but not as much as you love the Lord.

So in our text, the Apostle was asking the question, who do you prefer to be with? Is it possible that there are people in the world you would prefer instead of being with the Lord and His people? And remember how the Greeks often used the present tense, as something that is going on continuously. We are not to renounce friends we have had before unless they are people who lead us away from being with the people of God. We all need to ask ourselves, what does it take to keep me away from meeting with the Lord's people? The Apostle John was not talking about an occasional time when we do something with someone else, but he was

talking about what we habitually do. It doesn't take much persuasion to get some who profess to be Christians to go with an unsaved friend, or friends, rather than to be with the people of God. Who has the greatest priority with us – is it the Lord and His people, or is it relationships we have had in the past? If it is the latter, then we need to take a good look into our own hearts. Actions often speak louder than words.

I wonder if even King David had such questions as these in mind when he prayed, and doubtless prayed often his prayer which is recorded for us in Psalm 139:23-24:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

That is an excellent prayer for all of us to pray, and to pray often.

Now from verses 9, 10, and 11 the Apostle John went on to verses 12, 13, and 14. It seems that here he followed up what he had just said by addressing himself to the family of God. Little children are those who have recently been saved. Young men are those in the full strength of their walk with the Lord. The fathers are the more mature ones who have actually been instruments in God's hand for the salvation of others who have become children of God. It seems that he was saying that they all needed the warning and the heart searching of verses 9, 10, and 11. He mentioned each group twice, and in each group were girls in the faith as well as boys, young women as well as young men, and mother as well as fathers – all with reference to the family of God. We all need to be on our guard continually. We live in the Devil's territory, and we are not safe until we finally get to heaven.

Everybody in the family of God, is included here, and all are mentioned a second time to show how important it is that we all pay attention to these wise words from an old servant of the Lord. Six times the Apostle John said either, "I write, or, "I have written." And six times he said why he had written to them: "because . . ." The strong in each category need the message of the Apostle, as well as the weak, but he addresses them all according to that which has made them strong. Sometimes an old man is included with the "little children" if he has recently been saved.

(Deal with each group in the order that they are mentioned. The order is: 1) "Little children."

- 2) "Fathers."
- 3) "Young men"
- 4) "Little children."
- 5) "Fathers."
- 6) "Young men."

I am not going to try to tell you at what level you are in the family of God. It is hard for us to say even for ourselves. Only God knows where we are in the family of God. But let us apply what is said of each group to ourselves, and then we are sure to deal with the one that belongs to us. Here are the vital points of true Christian experience, the result not only of walking with the Lord ourselves, but the impact that other members of the family of God have had upon us.

**Concl:** Let me conclude by comparing what the Lord said to His disciples as He spoke to them the last time that He was with them all before He went to Gethsemane where He was arrested, and shortly after was crucified for you and me – compare it with what the Apostle John said about what he had written in this epistle:

1) The words of our Lord found in John 15:11:

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

2) The words of the Apostle John at the beginning of this epistle, found in 1 John 1:4:

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. They sound alike, and probably as the Apostle John wrote his words he was thinking about what the Lord had said to them thirty or thirty-five years before. There is no joy that can compare with the joy that the Lord gives to those who walk in fellowship with Him, avoiding all sin, keeping His commandments, and loving each other in the family of God.