

Day 234, 1 John 3

by David Servant

True believers can be identified by their moral and social behavior, and their obedience to God brings confidence and answered prayer.

Scripture: 1 John 3:10

Topics: "Authentic Conversion", "Sacrificial Obedience"

Description

David Servant preaches on the moral and social tests of authentic conversion as outlined in 1 John 3. He emphasizes the importance of believers purifying themselves and standing out in behavior among non-Christians. True Christians are characterized by habitual righteousness and love for fellow believers, contrasting with the behavior of those who do not truly know God. The chapter highlights the necessity of sacrificial obedience, especially towards fellow Christians in need, as evidence of genuine faith and assurance before God.

Transcript

John continues to focus in this chapter, first on the moral test, and then on the social test of authentic conversion. The application of both these tests disqualify multitudes who claim to be born again.

John begins by reminding his readers that those who have a hope of seeing God purify themselves, knowing that He is pure. That is logical, and that is the moral test. If I expected to have an audience with the Queen of England today (I happen to be in England as I'm writing this), I would be preparing myself, wouldn't I? I wouldn't be driving towards Windsor Castle in my pajamas.

But do true believers never stumble into sin? Are they perfect? No, notice that John uses the word "practice" seven times within the space of seven verses (3:4-10). To "practice sin" indicates some degree of habitual repetition. Thus, to extract, as some do, a single verse from this chapter, such as 3:6, which says, "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him," to prove that true Christians never sin, is to ignore context.

Be that as it may, let us not miss John's clear message. In their behavior, true Christians stand out in contrast among non-Christians. John writes that by both the moral and social tests, the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious (3:10). How that contradicts what we so often hear about not being able to judge if people are Christians because "only God knows what is in their hearts." John indicates that "God's seed" which abides in us, which must be a reference to the Holy Spirit, prevents us

from sinning.

Next, on to the social test. "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren" (3:14). "Christians" who hate Christians are not Christians. And there is basically one reason why non-Christians hate Christians. It is because their deeds are evil and true Christians are righteous in their behavior, and that is certainly an evil reason to hate someone. Perhaps that is why John writes that "everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (3:15). Granted, there are things to legitimately hate about wicked people. But to hate someone whose deeds are righteous is to reveal one's utter depravity.

I'm afraid that the significance of 3:17---"Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"---is missed by most of us living in wealthy Western nations. We rarely encounter a fellow Christian who is truly "in need" by biblical standards, this is, lacking essentials such as food and covering. Yet there are multitudes of such Christians around the world. As I suspect that you already know, the primary goal of the ministry of Heaven's Family is to link Christians like us, who have "the world's goods" (3:17), with Christians who are suffering very pressing needs. If we close our hearts against them, we show that the love of God does not abide in us. But when we, in obedience to God, make sacrifices on their behalf, we "assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us" (3:19-20). That is, when our hearts condemn us for not making those sacrifices for our spiritual family in need, our repentance restores the assurance that we are genuine believers and "of the truth" (3:19).

How tragic it is when Christians are taught that guilt is from the devil, and that they should rebuke it in Jesus' name. According to John, it is quite possible for a true believer to possess a heart that condemns him, and for good reason.

The great blessing of having a non-condemning heart (due to sacrificial obedience) is that "we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him" (3:21-22). Obviously, there is a correlation between obedience and answered prayer. Proverbs 21:13 says, "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered." That's a promise of unanswered prayer!

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