

The Cross-Centered Life Q&a 5

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of testing ourselves to see if we are in the faith and examining our lives in light of the characteristics of a Christian.

Duration: 1:11:00

Scripture: 1 John 1:5, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 5:13

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, Paul Washer discusses the concept of a continuous style of life in relation to being a Christian. He uses the analogy of someone trying to prove that he is a sinner by capturing a single moment of him kicking a cat. Washer explains that true conversion involves a transformative experience where one sees God's holiness, recognizes their own sin, and receives God's grace through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that a single act of sin does not define a person's style of life, but rather it is the consistent pattern of their actions over time. Washer also references the book of 1 John, highlighting the tests of true faith outlined in the passage.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to 2 Corinthians, chapter 13. If you have read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, you realize that there were several significant problems in the church in Corinth. And you can even say that at least certain individuals were not behaving as Christians.

They were not acting as Christians. Now, from a contemporary view, most preachers today would look at the church in Corinth and think, basically, they're all Christians. It's just some of them are very carnal.

That's not the way that the Apostle Paul handles the situation. When he addresses the church and rebukes them for many of the errors they have in doctrine and many of the errors they have in their manner of living, he doesn't simply assume that they're all Christians. He doesn't look at the carnal and give them assurance.

He does something else, and it's found here in 2 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 5. Let's look at what he tells the people in the church of Corinth to do. Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves.

Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless, indeed, you fail the test. Many times today, a young person in churches, young people, even nine, eight, nine, ten years old, will make a profession of faith in Sunday school or vacation Bible school, and they will be baptized. And because they are their parents and they live in something of a Christian culture within the church, maybe they continue going to church.

And they may even appear for a while to have some concerns for the things of Christ. Let's say that they start getting older. They start at 15, 16, 17.

They start rebelling against their parents. Either they do not want to go to church or when they are in church, they demonstrate ungodliness in their conversations, in their manner of living outside of the home. And oftentimes, maybe parents will become concerned because the child now has spent several years walking in rebellion.

And oftentimes, the parents or even the pastor will come to that child, that teenager, and say something like this. You're a Christian. I remember when you were saved.

And I remember when you were baptized. But you're not living like a Christian. And that is a shame.

You are a Christian and you need to start living like it. That sort of counsel and admonition is completely foreign to the New Testament. This is the way the pastors of old would deal with a person who professed faith in Christ and yet begin to walk away and live in rebellion.

They would go to that person and a parent who had better theology than parents have today would go to their child and say something like this. When you were nine or ten years old, you made a profession of faith in Christ. And for a while, there seemed to even be fruit so that you were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

But now, for a lengthy time, you have turned away and you are living as a carnal person, as a worldly person, as a person who has not the Spirit of God. If you keep walking on this path, it will be proof not that you have lost your salvation, but that you never truly were saved. That the entire Christian life that you once appeared to have was just a fog.

It was just a mist. It was a play. It was a hypocrisy.

They would go to that young person and say, now listen to me, you have professed faith in Christ and you even still profess faith in Christ, but you are not living as a Christian. Therefore, test yourself. Examine yourself.

Isn't it amazing? Today, even if a sincere young person comes to a pastor and says something like this, Pastor, I'm doubting my salvation. I'm not sure if I'm a Christian. The great majority of time, this is how the pastor will respond.

Well, let me ask you a question. Was there a point in time in your life when you prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart? And if the child says or the teenager says, well, yes, then the pastor will ask, well, were you sincere? And the young person will say, well, I think so. At that moment, I think I was sincere.

Well, then you're saved and you need to stop listening to the devil who is trying to condemn you. Again, counsel that is completely, totally foreign to the scriptures. A wise pastor would sit down with that teenager who is struggling with assurance and go over minutely their conversion experience to try to discern and help the young person discern.

Was there a genuine understanding of the gospel? Was there a genuine repentance? Was there a genuine faith? Did they understand what it meant to look upon Christ? Then the pastor would go and begin to look at their life after their profession. Was there any evidence, any experience of the love of God being shed abroad in that person's heart? Is there any evidence of ongoing sanctification? Because he who began a good work in them will complete it. Is there any evidence of discipline? Because if you are without discipline, you are an illegitimate child and not a child of God.

But all this kind of biblical counseling is for the most part lost today. So that you have young people who can live in horrendous sin and yet they believe they are Christians because one time in their life they repeated a prayer. They may have even had an emotional response.

They may have even seemed to walk for a while with Christ, but eventually they turn away. And by turning away, they prove that they were not good soil. That the seed of God was never truly planted in them.

That they are not converted. Now, Paul says here that we should test ourselves, examine ourselves. Now, how do we do that? We need a standard.

Even when someone grades a test score of multiple choice, true and false, the teacher will have a standard. They'll have a page over here that has all the right answers and they'll compare this test to the answer sheet. They will examine the student's work in light of the standard.

Now, what can we use as a standard to see if there's any evidence that we're Christian? Well, we shouldn't compare ourselves to other Christians. Paul tells the church in Corinth, you compare yourselves with yourselves and that's not wise. Now, why is that not wise? Well, you may compare yourself to other teenagers in your group.

And you may be just as moral as they are. But there are many youth groups that are absolutely filled with immorality and worldliness and carnality and entertainment. So you could compare yourself with another lost person in the church and think you're doing okay because you're doing better than they are.

Or you could make another mistake. You could look at a saint who has walked with God longer than you've been alive. And you could look at their faith and their godliness and their knowledge and wisdom.

And even though you might be a true believer, when you compare yourself to them, you come up lacking and you fall into false condemnation and lose all assurance. Fortunately, in the Scriptures, God has given us a standard. In several places in the Bible, we can look and see certain characteristics of a Christian.

Of a Christian. Now, we're going to concentrate on 1 John tonight. But before I do, remember what we looked at in 2 Peter.

Remember there were certain virtues that are found in the Christian life. Now that doesn't mean that the moment you're born again, these virtues are found in you completely and totally mature. No.

But they begin to be found in you and they increase and grow as God begins to work in you. Another place where we could look, which was used oftentimes by the earlier Baptists and the Reformers and the Puritans, is actually the Beatitudes. Just turn there for just a moment.

In the Beatitudes, Matthew chapter 5, verse 3, Jesus says this. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle or meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

All these are characteristics of genuine or true discipleship. Characteristics of genuine or true Christianity. Characteristics that will be found in some measure and growing in the genuine or true Christian.

Let me just show you how this works. Look at verse 13. I know we're not going to stay on this text, but because we're here, let's just look at Matthew 5.13. Look what it says.

You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Now, whenever you hear this text, it's usually about missions or having an impact on the world, right? Got to get the salt out of the salt shaker and God affect the world and we're the salt of the earth and we purify things. We keep it from rotting and we give it flavor and all of that is true.

But if you look at this text in the context, look what it's saying. Saying you are the salt of the earth. Salt has certain properties, doesn't it? Salt has certain properties or elements.

But if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is good for nothing. It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Salt has certain properties, characteristics.

You take those properties or those characteristics away and you no longer have salt. You take those properties or characteristics away and you replace them with something else and you might have something, but you no longer have salt. Do you see that? And that's what he's saying here in the Beatitudes.

The true characteristics of a Christian are that they're poor in spirit. They realize they have nothing but God in Christ. They mourn.

Why do they mourn? They see their sin and the sin around them. It breaks their heart and makes them contrite. But of course, they do not stay mourning because they see the grace of God in the face of Christ and they're filled with joy.

It's this paradox of being broken and joyful at the same time. Blessed are the gentle. I think the word is better translated meek and I think it comes from the book of Psalms where it says the meek shall inherit the earth and the meek are described as those who trust in God and trust in his word.

They hunger and thirst for righteousness. One of the characteristics of a Christian is that the Christian hungers and thirsts for righteousness. Years ago, 150 years ago, when I was a seminary student, I was just feeling miserable one day.

I mean, just horrible. So I went to see Dr. T.W. Hunt, a very, very godly man who I admire greatly, a prayer warrior. And I walked into his office and I sat down in the chair and he would always look at me like this and then go, Paul, what's wrong? I said, Dr. Hunt, I just want to be more godly.

I'm not godly. I just I want to be more righteous. I want to be like Christ.

And I'm sick and tired of being like I am. And I need to pray more and I need to read the word more. And I just, I'm just not what I should be.

And I want to be more. While I was having this conviction fit in front of T.W. Hunt, he got up out of his chair, walked around his desk, put his hands on my shoulders, and he said this, In the name of Jesus Christ, I pronounce you blessed. And he sat back down.

And then I kind of looked at him like a deer looks at headlights right before it gets run over. And he goes, Paul, you didn't understand what I just did. And I said, no, Dr. Hunt, I don't understand.

Have you never read Paul? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Paul, if you came into my office content with where you are. I would have to assume you were unconverted and lost.

But you come in here hungering, thirsting and starving to be more righteous. Does that describe you? Now, I don't want to heap condemnation upon you. It is not all the time that we are passionately starving for righteousness.

Even though I wish I was always passionately striving for righteousness. But one of the marked characteristics of a Christian is that they will hunger and thirst to be more like Jesus. And if you're out here tonight and you are just so miserable and even doubting yourself because you're hungering and thirsting for righteousness, instead of allowing that to condemn you, it ought to give you assurance.

Only God's people hunger and thirst after righteousness. And know this, the promise to you is you will be satisfied. You will be satisfied.

Now, also he says, blessed are the merciful. It is a people who find it very, very difficult to tear other people apart because they know what they themselves deserve. I remember one time in a church I was in, a woman who had committed horrible crimes, even within the church, had destroyed families, had done all sorts of things.

She walked in one morning and fell just down in the front of the church, weeping and crying. And people just stood there like this. I mean, no one went to her.

I got up out of my seat, I walked over and I knelt down beside her and I put my arm on her shoulder and I began to pray. After a while, she seemed to get some relief and she sat down. And later on, a group of people came to me and said, How could you do that? Don't you know what she's done? And I said, I have to do it.

Because if there's no mercy for her, we all go to hell. You see, Christians grow in mercy. They grow in grace.

They grow in grace. In purity of heart. Blessed are the pure in heart.

Now, I don't think you kind of really get the idea of what's going on here when you think of purity in heart. This word means something like unalloyed. No mixture.

Let's put it this way. No competing loyalties. Now, again, I don't want to heap condemnation upon you and say that if you have competing loyalties in your heart, you're not a Christian.

A Christian's heart will be inclined toward Christ and will desire that Christ be everything and will struggle, though, while it is in the flesh. While the Christian is still in the flesh, he will struggle with the fact that there is a battle raging in him. He wants to be holy and completely for Christ and sometimes the fire is very hot and other times things creep in and compete with that.

But the Christian, when that happens to him or her, they cannot be content. They are miserable. He goes on and he says, blessed are the peacemakers.

You know, as we have seen, one of the characteristics of a true Christian is that they are useful to God. This word does not mean blessed are the pacifists. It means blessed are those who will labor and work and even fight for peace.

People who care about the conflict in this world. People who care about the war within man and within society. The rift between God and man.

The rift between people. So they're always trying to make peace. Blessed are the persecuted.

As a matter of fact, in this text, blessed are those who have been persecuted. The Greek, the tense here indicates this is not that they're just one time they were persecuted. No, they are marked by persecution.

Listen to me, young person. They say there's no persecution in America. Maybe it's because Christians aren't living for Christ.

Because all who live a godly life will be persecuted. It doesn't mean that someone will put a gun to your head or that they'll burn you at the stake necessarily, but you will be persecuted. And I want to tell you this, if you are a genuine Christian filled with the Holy Spirit and living for Christ, you will be persecuted in most churches.

So you see, here we go again. We saw second Peter. We saw Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica.

We see here it's the same thing. What? True Christians give evidence of their Christianity. It's not that they do these things in order to become Christians, but they have become Christians by faith through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

They have become new creatures and they just live a different way. And so you can begin to compare your life by the characteristics of a Christian as they are revealed in Scripture and ask yourself, to what degree do I look like that? Now, let's go to 1 John 5, verse 13. This is an amazing thing.

You know, when John wrote his gospel, he told us why. He said that he wrote it so that we'd believe that Jesus is the Christ. When he writes this epistle, John the Beloved tells us why.

Look what he says. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. Now, primarily he is speaking here, I think the main purpose of this letter is not that John has given us a bunch of tests so that I can take you through them and prove to all of you that you're lost.

That's not the reason why he wrote this book. You see, what had happened here was some false teachers had entered in and caused a great deal of confusion. Probably the early beginnings of what's known as Gnosticism.

They had caused great confusion and made the true believers think that maybe they weren't even the people of God. But these false teachers were horrible. They were heretical.

They did not give Christ His supreme place. They denied many of the things about His person and work. And they were ungodly, immoral people.

And these wolves had come into the flock of God who had been walking simply by faith and growing in godliness and made them believe that they weren't the people of God. So John comes and he writes this letter and he says these things. What are these things? The things written in 1 John.

These things I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God. Why did he write these things? So that after you read these things and compare your life to them, you will see that you are Christian. Now, this does have an opposite effect also.

You see, tonight I'm not here to try to make a bunch of Christians doubt their salvation. When I preach this, what's going to happen is this. True Christians are going to walk out of here more assured than ever that they're saved.

But some of you will look at these things and begin to fear. I don't see these things in my life. Now, before we begin, let me say something.

Do you know in Christianity there's just extremes everywhere. There's extremes in my life. The Christian life, because we all are growing little by little, is kind of like a pendulum.

You know, you'll swing over here and maybe be walking in Christian liberty and go too far. And you realize I've gone too far. I'm getting close to worldliness.

And so you swing back, but instead of swinging back to center, you swing over here and become a legalist. And then you realize, oh, I'm a legalist. So you swing back, and usually you don't swing back to center, but hopefully you don't go as far as you went before.

And gradually as you mature, you swing down right into centeredness, being right in the Scriptures. Now, there is a problem today. A lot of people are beginning to see that a lot of people, a lot of people who call themselves Christians in America, are lost.

And that the gospel that we preach is really superficial, and especially our invitation for people to come to Christ is not only superficial, it's heretical. And people are returning to the idea that in order to be saved, you must repent and believe. But herein lies the problem.

You are to repent and believe. But that does not mean that in order to be saved, you must have a perfect Puritan repentance. Or that you must have a perfect Puritan faith.

That you must be broken and collapsing and realizing all these horrible things about yourself and fully understanding the doctrine of radical depravity and everything else and throwing yourself upon Christ. And if you don't have an experience like that, you're lost. That's not true.

In order to be saved, you must repent and believe. But many times, that repentance that saves us is so small and so meager. And that faith that saves us is just like a mustard seed, so small and so meager.

Now, they will be genuine, but they'll be small. But here's the thing, the evidence that that little repentance and that little faith is real is that it doesn't stay small. It begins to grow and deepen.

Let me tell you something about my testimony at the risk of being crucified on YouTube. OK, I'm going to tell you something about how I got saved. The day that the Lord regenerated my heart and made me a new creature and I knew that I had been born again, I was saved, I was not overwhelmed by my sin even though I was a wicked, wicked man.

I wasn't. I didn't fall on the ground, tear my clothes, think how great a sinner I was. Do you know what happened to me that day when God regenerated my heart? I only knew this, He loved me and I believed in Him.

He loved me and I believed in Him. So someone says, ah, Brother Paul, you weren't saved. Well, just hold on.

I knew I was a sinner. But the thing that happened to me that day that God did to me was He overwhelmed me with His love and I knew that I believed in Him. But if that was all that happened, I would doubt my conversion.

But after that day, after that day of being overwhelmed with the love of God and believing in Him, I began to study the Scriptures. And do you know what happened? My repentance, that little repentance I had the day I was saved, it began to deepen and grow. And I can tell you that 28, 29 years later, however later it is, that my repentance right now is much deeper than it was when I was first saved.

And when I first got saved, you know, I thought it was all Jesus. You know, you've got to believe in Jesus. But, you know, a person comes to Christ realizing that salvation is only in Jesus, they really don't know what they're talking about.

But over the years, God breaks you and shows you how weak you are so that in the end, you really begin to understand it's all just Jesus. What I'm trying to tell you, young person, is that the evidence of salvation is that on the day of your salvation, you repent and believe. And it may be a small, meager thing.

But the evidence that it is true is that your repentance will deepen. Your faith will deepen. You will come to understand little by little how great God is and how holy He is and how sinful we are.

And your heart will break and break deeper and deeper and deeper. And that faith that saved you, you will begin to realize several years after you were saved, you'll realize, I really didn't understand what was going on there. But more and more as I see how weak I am and how unproductive my works and how quick I am to betray Him, I now understand more and more that it really is faith and faith alone.

Let me show you how the Christian life is. I'm getting off of the path here, but that's what I usually do anyways. Let me share with you what the Christian life is.

You're walking along. This is the closest I get to drama, ok? You're walking along and you're a lost person. You're just lost.

And then one day, someone preaches the gospel to you. You're walking along. They preach the gospel.

You listen. And it pleases the Lord to call you. And you see God in a way you have never seen Him before.

And you see you in a way that you've never seen you before. And you see Christ in a way you've never seen Christ before. And what happens is, when you see God and His holiness, you see your sin.

And your sin breaks your heart. Before, you were just happy walking in sin. But now, this vision of God has broken your heart.

But you're not left there to die in despair because in your brokenness, God also shows you His grace in the face of Jesus Christ, and you're filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And then the next day, you get up, and as you're walking through your Christian life, this happens over and over and over. As you're growing in the Word and growing in Christ, you see more of God.

And the more you see of God, the more you see of you, and the deeper your brokenness. The less you trust in yourself, but you're not left in despair because also you see more of God in the face of Christ, and you're filled with even greater joy unspeakable and full of glory. And you walk like that through the entire course of your life so that at the end of your days when you are an old man or an old woman, you are infinitely more broken than you were when you began.

But you are also infinitely more joyful than you were when you began. Do you see that? There's a transaction that occurs. God is emptying you, emptying you until all you have, all you need, all you want.

That's the Christian life. That's the Christian life. Now, just so you're not left hanging, when you die, here's what happens.

If you want to know... Well, I've never been there personally, but I'm going to tell you something of what heaven is like, okay? The purpose of all of this. You walk into heaven, okay? Now, kids, listen to me. I know about the streets of gold and the gates of pearl, but I mean, how long can you walk on streets of gold before it gets kind of boring? And swinging on gates of pearl, I'm sure that's fun for a season.

But I mean, that's not going to fill us with joy throughout all of eternity. I mean, we're going to be there for an eternity. There better be something really special up there or we are all going to get really bored.

So what is it? You walk into heaven and you're strengthened, you're changed, so that you can behold God. You behold God and see Him in a way you have never seen Him before. And you are filled with such ecstasy and joy that if you had not been strengthened, it would kill you.

And you worship and live with a joy unimaginable. Now, let's pretend there's days in heaven. So after all that happens, you go to bed.

You wake up the next morning. It's the next morning. It's the second day.

What do you do? Step outside your house. I'm making a lot of this up. Step outside your house and you see God.

But you see God today in a way that so eclipses what you saw the day before that it's as though you never saw Him. And you are filled with such ecstasy and joy that far surpasses the first day. That you have to be strengthened with even greater strength so that it doesn't drive you mad.

And you live in the light of that glorious revelation filled with joy unspeakable. And then you go to bed and you get up and you do it over and over again. You see, eternal life, when you get saved, eternal life starts because eternal life is knowing God.

And so when you're saved, why are you saved? You are saved to track down, to trace down, to chase down God. And the more you see of Him, the more you are transformed and the more your joy is complete and you keep chasing that vision and chasing that vision. The neat thing about it, though, is God is infinite.

This will go on forever. When you have spent an eternity of eternities in heaven, you will not even have begun to know God or experience the joy, the ecstasy that He has for you. That's a pretty good future.

That's a pretty good future. Chase hard after God. Chase hard.

Now, back to 1 John. I promise I'm not going to stray. My wife says that someone needs to put an electrode in my head and every time I stray, she'll just zap it with a button.

This is why I got such bad grades in preaching class. 1 John 5, verse 13. These things I have written to you.

Believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. Now, there's a series of tests in 1 John and I want to look at them with you. We're not going to go through all of them, but we are going to go through some.

Let's start in 1 John 1, verse 5. This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. Now, when it says God is light, immediately you're thinking God is holy, God is without sin, and all that is true and all that is found in this passage. But there's something else I want you to see.

These false teachers believed that God was esoteric. That means that He was dark and hidden and you couldn't really know Him or know His will without some secret knowledge that they had. And what John is saying is saying, no, no, God is not dark, He's not hidden, not esoteric, He's not running from you.

God has revealed Himself to us in the person of Christ and He's basically saying to them, look, God has told us who He is and He has told us what His will is. Okay? Now, verse 6. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, that means if we say we are Christian. He's not talking about so-called spiritual and carnal Christians here.

No. If we say we have fellowship with Him, if we say we are Christians and yet we walk in the darkness, we lie when we say we are Christians and do not practice the truth. Now, but if, verse 7, we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Now, what is this saying? First of all, let's look at the word walk. Peripateo. It means to walk, walk around.

Another thing I want you to understand is that verb is in present tense in the Greek which indicates a continuous action. He's talking here about a style of life. Okay? Now, what do I mean by style of life? Let's say that, and I couldn't believe this would be possible, let's say that you don't like me.

And so you say, I'm going to prove to you that that guy is a sinner. So you get like a Nikon camera, just a snapshot, you know, Nikon camera, not a video camera, and you just follow me around. You're just waiting behind every bush.

One day I come out of my house and there's a cat there. I don't like cats. And you see me go like this.

Boom! Goodbye, kitty. Now I'm going to have all the kitty lovers hating me on YouTube. And the moment I do that, you snap a picture.

Bam! And then you come to the conference next year and you blow it up. Me kicking the cat. And you say, look, Paul Washer in sin.

Well, if it had been a dog, it would have been sin, but with a cat, I'm not so sure. Now please understand, I'm just kidding. I love all animals.

I have enough trouble. Why did I do that? But you take a picture of me and you blow it up and you say, look, Paul Washer's lost. He's not walking in the light.

But you see, that's not very accurate. That's not my style of life. You caught me at one moment in time when I sinned.

Now, what would be more accurate is if you took a video camera and you followed me around for an entire year, 24 hours a day. Then you would be able to see my style of life. Now what he's saying here, young person, now look at this.

This is so important and so brilliant, the Holy Spirit, in saying what He says. He says in verse 6, if we say that we have fellowship with Him, if we say we are Christian, and yes, we walk in the darkness, what does that mean? Our style of life, the way we live, not just a moment in time or a week or a month, but you look at our entire life after our so-called profession, and you look at our style of life after we claim to know Jesus, and you see that we are living in a way that contradicts what God has told us about His nature, His person, about who He is, and what He has told us about His will. Your life contradicts what God has told us about Himself.

Your life contradicts God's law, God's will, the things written in Scripture. He says if your style of life, your manner of living over a period of time is a direct and constant contradiction of what God has told us about Himself and His will, you're lying when you say you're a Christian. Do you see that? Now, that's the first test.

The first test is this. The true Christian will walk or have a style of life that is inclined towards, in agreement with, conformed to what God has told us about Himself and what God has revealed to us about His will. Now, let's go to the next test.

Verse 8. If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and His truth is not in us. If we say we have no sin, we're not Christian. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. This is also so wise because look at the first test. I told you that the evidence that you are Christian is that your style of life is in agreement with what God told us about Himself and what God told us about His will.

So you're maybe sitting there right now going, well, then I'm lost. Because there are times when I know I don't look like God, act like God, or conform my life to His will. I mean, I struggle sometimes in that area.

But the Holy Spirit is so wise, He immediately comes back with this. He's not talking about sinless perfection. He's talking about a style of life.

Do you see the difference? As a matter of fact, if you do not think you sin, you are not a Christian. You are not a Christian. We could go out today and go to all kinds of horrid places and find all kinds of people who would argue with us that they're doing nothing wrong.

So one of the great evidences that you are a Christian is not sinless perfection. One of the great evidences that you are a Christian is that you acknowledge your sin before God and before others. Your sin breaks your heart and brings about conviction.

The Holy Spirit working in your heart causing conviction. And you repent of your sin and return to God asking for forgiveness. That's why in Romania, the believers, the true believers were mocked with this title.

They were called repenters. Because they were always acknowledging their sin and repenting of it. One of the greatest evidences of genuine Christianity is not that you're without sin.

It is that when you sin, it breaks your heart. And you confess your sin and you run back to God. Now what does it mean to confess your sin? The Greek word homologeo.

What does it mean? To speak the same thing. Confession of sin, young person, is not you before bed going, you know, God forgive me of all my sins. That's not confession.

Confession is to speak the same thing. Now, what do I mean by that? Let's say that I've just been short with my wife. I've just been impatient with her.

And I walk out to go to the office thinking I'm justified. But before I get to the car, the Holy Spirit makes it very, very clear. You have been impatient with your wife.

It's sin. What is confession? Confession is when I speak the same thing. When I agree with God.

God, what you say about me is true. I was impatient with my wife and it is sin. I confess that.

I agree with you. I speak the same thing. And then I go back into my house and I ask for forgiveness.

Do you see? Confession is something that marks the believer. And here's where we have something again. The unity of Scripture.

Remember what Jesus said? Blessed are those who mourn. Lost people don't mourn over their sin unless they get caught. The true Christian mourns over his sin and confesses it to God.

His life is marked by brokenness, but that's not a bad thing because brokenness leads to joy and a broken and contrite spirit, heart, the Lord will not despise. As a matter of fact, it's precious to Him. So if you can just live in sin, you have even no knowledge of it.

You just go straight forward into sin and you're not bothered by your sin. You're not convicted by your sin. You're not brought into confession.

You live a lifestyle of sin without God's discipline. You are not a Christian. Let me show you how it works.

Here's a man who gets up in the morning and he's late for work. It's snowing outside. He's got a meeting that day.

His boss is going to be mad because he's late. He grabs all the papers and everything he needs for the meeting. He's got it under his arms.

And he reaches for the doorknob of the door to go out of the house. And all of a sudden, his wife comes down with her hair looking like Medusa and the big fuzzy slippers on and everything like that. And she goes, Honey, will you take the trash out? He spins around and goes, Why are you asking me that? Don't you know I'm late? It's snowing.

I've got to clean the car. I'm not going to get out of here. I'm probably going to get fired.

My boss is mad at me already and you want me to take the trash out. He goes, gets in his car, feeling totally justified. He gets to work.

He's totally justified. She deserved it. He's not bothered by it.

She deserved it. Well, now let's say a few months later he becomes a Christian. He becomes a Christian.

Really a Christian. And then a few months pass. He's being disciplined.

He's going to church. And the same scenario occurs. He gets up late for work.

It's snowing outside. He's got all his papers under his arm. He's late.

He doesn't know how he's going to get there on time. And he reaches for the doorknob like this. And as soon as he does, his wife comes downstairs with hair like Medusa, big fluffy slippers, and says, Honey, take the trash out.

And he turns around and goes, What's wrong with you? You take the trash out. I'm late for work. I'm probably going to get fired.

You take the trash out. You always do this to me. Why do you always do this to me? And you say, Well, what's changed? I'll tell you what's changed.

The moment he does it, it's like a knife went through his heart. He's nauseous. Maybe he bucks up against it.

And he goes ahead and gets out the door. Gets to his car. He's feeling worse.

Men, you know exactly what I'm talking about. If you don't, you're lost. He bucks up.

He goes to the office. He's sitting there trying to work. He can't think.

As the old preachers used to say, the hounds of heaven are upon him. He is miserable. And he gets his cell phone and he dials.

And he says, Honey, forgive me. I acted like a monster. I am so sorry.

I've offended you. I've offended the Lord. I'm sick of myself.

Please forgive me. And she says, Oh, it's alright. No, no, it's not alright.

Please release me. Tell me you forgive me. Honey, I forgive you.

And he's released. Do you see the difference? Now, at the same time though, he is going to grow in sanctification and godliness so that sooner or later that's not going to happen much. But it will happen.

What I want you to see, young person, is there is all kinds of young people in youth groups. They can commit... I mean, there are people in good churches and youth groups that commit every manner of immorality, horrid thoughts, everything. You know what I'm talking about.

Maybe it's even you. And you're not bothered by your sin. You can keep it hidden.

You've got everyone fooled, even your parents. But that is evidence that you are not Christian. And those of you young people who are Christians, who sometimes you hate your sin and you struggle with it and you confess it, but you can't seem to get much relief from it, take great assurance in this.

One of the greatest evidences that you are Christian is not that you're totally free from sin, but that you now hate your sin and you fight against it. And when you lose, you confess it. Are you a Christian? Now let's look in verse 3 of chapter 2. Another test.

The first test is that the true Christian will walk in the light. The second test is that a true Christian will acknowledge his sin and be broken by it. Oh, let me say this before we go on.

Pastors usually get a... I get a smile out of pastors on this. A sad smile, but a smile because they know it's true. Isn't it amazing that whenever you're preaching in your churches, or young people, isn't it amazing that whenever the pastor is preaching and it seems like God has showed up in a special way, and maybe as the preacher is preaching, people begin to confess their sin and people maybe in some churches would come forward and pray and there might even be weeping.

Isn't it amazing that almost always the people who come forward weeping and broken are the most godly people in the church. And the people who are most wicked and apathetic sit back there as cold as a stone. What you're seeing is the division of the sheep and the goats.

Because one of the greatest evidences of conversion is a sensitivity to sin. Now, the third test. Verse 3. By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments.

Now look at this. How much clearer could John be? Verse 4. The one who says, I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar. The one who says, I've come to know Jesus, I've come to know Jesus, but does not keep His commandments is a liar.

Now you say, well, Brother Paul, that can't be right. I'm afraid it is. But Brother Paul, you just got through saying that all Christians sin.

Yes, they do. Well, then what does it mean? Again, we're talking about a style of life. Now, young person, let's be honest here.

Let's be very honest. I can use myself because I didn't become a Christian until I was 21. Prior to becoming a Christian, I didn't care about God's commands.

I didn't care about God's will. I didn't know even when I broke it. And I didn't want to know.

And I didn't confess it. I had no relationship, no real relationship whatsoever with the commandments of God. But when I became a Christian, something radically changed.

The will of God suddenly became important. And not just the will of God with regard to Lord, where do you want me to go to school or who do you want me to marry? No, the will of God revealed in His commandments. I had a new relationship with the Word of God.

I had a new relationship with the commandments of God. The commandments of God were now taking hold on my life. I wanted to know what God wanted from me in His commandments.

I wanted to follow those commandments. I began to follow those commandments. And when I broke those commandments, they broke me back.

My heart was broken and again I was led to confession. You see, an entirely new relationship with the Word of God. Do you have that? Young person, do you have that? Is the will of God important to you? Do you want to know His will? Now, don't lie to yourself.

This is a crucial moment. Are you just nonchalant and totally uncaring? You're all happy about this Jesus stuff. There's really nice music, but it's nothing that you take home after church.

The commandments of God mean very little to you. You might say they do, but you're never studying God's Word. You never want to know what His will might be for a certain area of your life.

It's as though God had never spoken. That's the way you live. Or do you have a real, observable desire to know God's will through His revealed will? The Word of God.

And do you have a desire to follow? And is your life marked by beginning to follow God? And when you do not follow His commands, does it break your heart and lead you to repentance? You see, people come to me and they say, Brother Paul, I got a new relationship with God. And I always go, do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don't have a new relationship with sin, then you don't have a new relationship with God. Do you have a new relationship with God's Word? Because if you don't have a new relationship with God's commands, you don't have a new relationship with God.

The evidence you have a new relationship with God is your relationship with sin changes. And your relationship with God's will changes. Is that you? Have I described you? If not, run tonight to a counselor.

Run to Christ. Let's go on. Let's look at verse 6. The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

One of the evidences of Christianity is that you walk as Jesus walked. You live as Jesus lived. Now, maybe right now you're thinking, well, Brother Paul, we're all going to hell.

Who walks as Jesus walked? The best way for me to teach you this is an illustration. We raised quarter horses and Charlay cattle in Illinois, and sometimes there were big snows and things. My dad, he would wake me up in the morning.

I had a little boy. He'd wake me up like 6 o'clock in the morning. The only verse my dad ever taught me was, Paul boy, get up.

There's no rest for the wicked. And when my dad said get, you better be up before he got to up. You jumped out of bed.

And we'd go out and feed the cattle and feed the horses. And a lot of times the water would be frozen, so we'd have to carry buckets of water out to the horses. And my dad was a very big man, very strong man with a long stride, and he would grab a bucket here and a bucket here and pick it up and take off walking in the snow across the feedlot.

I wanted to be like my dad. I'd grab a bucket. I'd grab a bucket.

Grab a bucket. Pick them up. And take off walking just like my dad.

And I would try to put my foot in his footprint in the snow. I looked like a drunken spider going out through the snow. If someone would have seen me, they would have laughed.

They would have thought at times I looked ridiculous because I was stepping out much farther than I could ever reach. They would have laughed. It's my incompetence, my inability.

But they would not have doubted that there was a little boy who wanted more than anything else on this planet to walk like his dad walked. Can people see that in you? We're not talking about perfection. We're not talking about walking on water, raising the dead, perfect theology, or a life without sin.

What I'm talking about, young person, listen to me. When someone looks at your style of life, can they observe, here is a teenager, here is a young person who desires more than anything else to walk like Jesus walked, to imitate Jesus Christ. Or do they see here is a person who desires more than anything else to imitate all his or her unbelieving friends? To imitate the famous people of this world? The wealthy and the entertainer and the famous? When they look at you... You see, this is not about dotting all the i's and crossing all the t's.

This is not about perfection. Listen to me. You know what this is about.

It's about passion. It's about a heart. That's why I'll take a missionary who is as dumb as a brick and is a bull in a china shop if he has passion for Christ.

If someone looks at you, will they see someone who wants to imitate Christ, who wants to be like Christ, who wants to walk like Christ? Will they see that in you? Will they hear that in you? Isn't that a marvelous question? So the one who is truly Christian desires to walk as Jesus walked. Now again, I do not want to put a burden on you that I myself cannot lift. I am not talking about perfection.

I am not talking about perfection. Even the most mature believer in this room, they will be marked. You'll look at their life and you'll see that they want to walk as Jesus walked.

But what you can't see is even they still have battles in their heart. Sometimes they get distracted. Sometimes, believe it or not, other things will take the place of Christ.

But when it happens and they come to the full realization of it, it kills them. It hurts them. And they throw that idol down and say, Lord, how could I be so stupid? I just want to be like You.

Is that you, young person? Come on now, answer the question. Do you want to be like Christ? Is it observable to anybody? Let's go on. We've got two more tests.

I know I've gone on very long. Verse 7. Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard.

On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. This test is simply this. One of the greatest evidences that you have become a Christian is that you love the people of God and you want to be with them and you want to serve them.

He says the one who loves his brother, the one who hates his brother. Brother here is not referring to someone of another race because in fact there are no other races. There's only one race.

It's the human race. But it doesn't mean someone of another nationality or skin color and it doesn't mean loving the poor. Now we need to love all nationalities and skin colors and we need to love the poor, but that's not what this is talking about.

Brother here refers to Christians. Now, do you want to be with other Christians? Now I have to be very, very careful here because a lot of people would say yes, but they are just carnal members, lost members of a youth group who just want to be with other lost people in the youth group. Now what I'm talking about is do you want to be with other Christians talking about Jesus, serving Jesus, praying to Jesus, sharing God's Word, having true and genuine fellowship with other Christians? Do you want that? Or would you rather be with people who didn't talk so much about Jesus? Answer that question.

It doesn't mean that every time that you get together, if you don't talk about Jesus, you're lost. It doesn't mean that if you have some friends who are not Christians, that you're not a Christian. But in your style of life, in the passion of your heart, is it obvious to all that you long to be with other Christians, to bless them, encourage them, serve them, support them, help them? Do you love the church of Jesus Christ? When a man tells me, I ain't going to church, I love God, but I ain't going to church.

I ain't going to go over there just filled with a bunch of hypocrites. I always tell him, congratulations, you do well, the work of your father, the devil, who has been an accuser from the beginning. You see, a true Christian knows that the people are imperfect, that even the most mature Christian is wrong many times, dislocated.

But you have a love for the people of God. Not a love that is from the strength of will. Not a love because you're just a loving person.

No, this love comes from the seed of God that has been implanted in you. You have a heart that loves God and loves His people. Let me show you how important this is.

Hold your place and go to Matthew 25. Verse 31. But when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne, all the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left and the King will say to those who are on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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