

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Profession or Possession: What Do You Have? (Part 2) (I John 5:13)

Last month we began examining our lives to see if we truly possess or only profess salvation. The first evidence of a true believer is that they will be looking after the commandments. The second evidence of salvation is that they will **Be Living Like Christ**. Four verses in I John talk about the believer and his likeness to Christ—2:6, 2:29, 3:6, and 5:18. The two verses in chapter 2 have a positive aspect to them, while the ones in 3:6 and 5:18 carry a negative aspect. Combined they give a strong identification of true believers.

The first aspect of living like Christ is The Practice. I John 2:6 says, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” I John 2:29 says, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” What powerful statements John records about true believers! It does matter how one lives. The way one lives is a result of the inward change that the Holy Ghost has wrought in their heart at the moment of salvation. We are not saved because we live right, but if we are saved, we will live right. John is very concerned about how a professing Christian lives. In 2:6, he writes concerning our walk. That word walk means “to walk about; to conduct one’s life.” The last little clause in 2:6 is talking about Jesus. It is referring to Jesus’ total life. John does not pull any punches. He is writing to the Christians of his day, and being inspired of the Holy Ghost, he is writing to us today. In plain language he says, “If you talk it, walk it; if you speak it, live it.” It is not enough simply to name the name of Jesus, and then disregard what He says about how you live. A true believer will want to live right. If he does not want to live right, then he is not a true believer!

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It is interesting to me how John begins 2:6. “He that saith” is obviously referring to what one testifies about himself. Apparently people in the first century are just like people in the 21st century. They like to name the name of Christ, but so often will not live like Christ. John gives the command that if they name Christ, they “ought to walk, even as he walked.” The command is simple enough—if you want to say you are Christ’s, then walk like Christ walked—holy, obedient to the Father, etc. People need to hear today that Christ expects His people to walk and live like Him. It is repeated throughout the New Testament by Paul, Peter, James, and John. Our practice—our lifestyle, our manner of living—should be like Christ’s.

The thought of how we live is restated in 2:29. In 2:6, a command is given; in 2:29, a consequence is given. John writes, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” Is Jesus righteous? Yes! Do all people live righteous? No! Those who do live righteous have been changed by the marvelous grace of God. Some people like to think that they live pretty good lives. But that is because they measure themselves by their own standards, or compare themselves to other people. God looks at them and sees them as sinners. The only ones who do righteous acts are those that have the righteousness of Jesus in them. Some may be morally good, and may look good to our eyes, but doing good is not a measure of righteousness. Up to a certain point, the morally good will look good. But compare them to God’s Word, and they will fall short. The true believer will practice righteousness. That is what the clause “that doeth righteousness” means. The true believer will persistently be right in his actions because he has the righteousness of Christ in him. It is not Bible salvation to profess salvation, and then live like the world. The righteousness of Christ will come out, and the true believer will live like Christ.

There is a second part to living like Christ—The Prohibition. John writes about how we should live, and then he writes about how we should not live. I John 3:6 says, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” I John 5:18 says, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but

he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” These verses do not teach sinless perfection or eradication of the sin nature. There are some denominations that teach that, but they misunderstand these and other verses. I John 1:8 plainly says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” He will add to those thoughts with a verse on confession in 1:9, and another verse about sin in 1:10.

So if these verses do not talk about sinless perfection or eradication, what do they mean? They talk about the believer’s practice. The true believer will sin, but he will immediately confess it and get right with God. The verbs used in 3:6 and 5:18 are present tense verbs describing a continual action. What John is saying is that a true believer will not practice sin. There are some who like to talk about being saved but living in a backslidden condition for many years—sometimes 15-20 years or more. John does not allow for that kind of believer! A true believer will not habitually live in sin. He cannot because the Holy Ghost lives inside of him and will convict the believer when he sins. We may stumble and sin, but the true believer will want to get right as soon as he sins. It is the natural response of a believer. If he sins, he will confess. If one can live in sin, and never be bothered by it, he is not a true believer. The Bible says a true believer will not practice sin.

A third characteristic of a true believer is that they will **Be Loving the Christians**. I John 2:9-11 says, “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” John adds to this in 3:14-16, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*: because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.” John makes it clear that a true believer will

manifest his faith in his actions. In this case, it is how he relates to other believers.

Stories have been told of how church members have gone to church for years and never spoken to the members across the aisle. That is not the indication of a believer, but rather the indication of an unbeliever. He may be in church, but he is not in Christ. John describes The Desire of the believer in 3:14. A true believer will love other believers. The love that is described in these verses is the same love that God has for us. The true believer has the love for the brethren just like God has for them, because God’s love is in him and is flowing out of him. You cannot experience the love of God in your own life, and not love the same ones that God loves. If one does not love God’s people, he does not know God.

But in a practical sense, what does it mean to love the brethren? For one thing, it means that one will be faithful to church. If one truly loves God and thus loves the people of God, he will want to be around them. When Sunday morning comes, he will be in church. When Sunday night comes, he will be back in church. When the midweek service comes, he will be at church in the middle of the week. When revival time comes, he will be at church during the revival meeting. The true believer loves God’s people and will want to constantly be around them. A true believer will not make up excuses to stay out of church. He may miss on occasion, but the Holy Ghost will draw him back to church.

There are some who profess salvation that never darken the halls of the church. They may come for some special occasion, but their practice is to miss church. According to I John, they do not truly possess salvation. Again, I John 3:14 says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” If one truly believes in Jesus, he will want to be around others that truly believe in Jesus. He will want to be around Christians. He will be faithful to church.

Not only does John write of the desire in loving Christians, but he

makes mention of The Declaration. As he did when talking about looking after the commandments and in living like Christ, John uses strong language to condemn those who profess Christ, but whose lives do not match what they say. He called them liars if they do not keep God's commandments in I John 2:4. He said that a true believer will not practice sin in I John 3:6 and 5:18. Now he says, inspired of the Holy Ghost, that one that says he is a believer, but does not love the brethren, is in darkness even until now (I John 2:9). Some may argue about what the darkness is, but I believe Scripture is clear in John 3:19-21 that darkness is unbelief, and things associated with it.

John continues this declaration in I John 3:15. There he identifies one that hates his brother as a murderer. In I John 4:20, John calls one that says he loves God, but hates his brother, a liar. Being a true believer will change the way you live. You cannot say something, and not have it affect your life. Many profess the name of Christ, but their life does not match what they say. That is not true Biblical Christianity. True possession will make one live differently. What if one says he is saved, but does not want anything to do with other believers? What if one professes salvation, but never wants to be in church? He does not love the brethren, and I John 3:14 says, "He abideth in death." Do you love the brethren? Do you love to be in church? You are a true believer and truly possess. Do you never go to church and never care about being there? You only profess. Trust in Christ today and truly possess salvation.

(For Part 1 of this article, please see our March 2008 NewsLetter.

For Part 3, please see our May 2008 NewsLetter.)