

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Volume 4, Issue 10

March 2008

## Profession or Possession: What Do You Have? (Part 1) (I John 5:13)

This is one of the most important messages that I have ever written. For a couple of years this thought has been upon my heart. For various reasons I was never able to put the message together until just a few weeks ago. Sadly many people struggle with the assurance of their salvation. They have a desire to serve the Lord and are trying to serve Him as best they can, but sometimes they question and wonder, “Am I really saved?” Sometimes they will sin and the devil may tell them, “A real Christian would not have done that.” This leads to a period of time where their doubts almost overwhelm them. Sometimes they may wonder if they really were saved when they say that they were saved. They may wonder, “Did I truly repent?” “Was I really under conviction?” “Have I truly believed?”

On the other hand, some seem to never question their salvation. They can give you a definite time and place, but their life never reveals any evidence of salvation. So the question that we have to ask ourselves is, “Are there evidences of salvation?” The answer is, YES! In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus talks about false prophets. In 7:16, He says, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” The context is explicitly talking about false prophets, but the application can be made to many different things, even true or false believers. Jesus says that you can know a tree by its fruit. You may not be able to look at an apple tree and know what it is by its bark. But you look at the fruit, and you will know for sure what kind of tree it is. The same goes for an orange tree, fig tree, and any other kind of tree. So it is with false prophets; and so it is with believers. You can know if you are saved by how you live your life.

With God’s help, I want everyone who reads this message to

-2-

determine if they truly possess or only profess salvation. As I said, too often, many claim to be saved, but do not live like they are saved. The Bible teaches that those who truly possess salvation will be different and have certain characteristics. I also want to help those who are doubting. I want to reassure those who doubt, but really possess, that they can have assurance in Christ of their certain salvation. Often, those who doubt, should not doubt; and those who do not doubt, should doubt. By God’s grace, I want every one to look at themselves and make their “calling and election sure” (II Peter 1:9).

When I was growing up, I remember my pastor preaching a message similar to this just about every year. I remember him turning to I John and preaching about knowing whether you are saved or not. As I look back, I can see the wisdom in preaching such a message. It can encourage those that are being bothered by the devil, and it can shed light upon those that may be confused about their salvation.

One final thought before we get into the message: doubting does not mean that you are not saved. Some naive preacher may say, “A true believer will never doubt his salvation.” That is untrue! A true believer may doubt. Some of the greatest Christians of all time faced doubt about their salvation. One example is Charles Spurgeon. He was greatly used of God and saw thousands of people converted under his ministry, but there were times when he struggled with his own assurance of salvation. There have been times in my own life where doubts would creep into my mind about my own salvation. I am sure, for many of you, that would be your own testimony. May the Lord use this message to reassure those who may doubt, but may those who only profess be convicted by the Holy Ghost to come to truly possess salvation.

The Holy Ghost inspired the Apostle John to write the book of I John, and He is concerned about our assurance. The word know occurs 27 times; the word knoweth occurs 6 times; and the word known occurs 5 times. There are two Greek words translated know in I John. Sometimes they have a slight distinction, but in I John they are nearly interchangeable. The Holy Ghost wants us to be sure of our

salvation. He also wants everyone to examine their own lives to see if they are truly saved. As you read through I John, you will see that the Holy Ghost has given us some marks or evidences of salvation. These are set off by the word know. As the Lord led me, I was able to pick out five proofs or evidences of salvation. (As you will see, sometimes different verses cover the same idea.) If we are truly saved, then these will be true of our life. If these marks are not in our life, then we do not truly possess salvation. May God help us to determine whether we have true possession or only profession.

One who truly possesses salvation will, first of all, **Be Looking after the Commandments**. I John 2:3-5 says, *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”* A true believer will be concerned about what God says in His Word. He will want to read his Bible, he will want to listen to preaching about the Bible, and he will obey the Bible when he reads and hears it. The Bible is very clear: if you do not care to know what the Bible says, then you are not a believer. You may not understand all that is in the Bible, and you never will, but you will have a yearning to know what God says. The more you hear it, the more you will want to hear it. The more you read it, the more you will want to read it. God’s Word will be precious to you, and you will want to know it and obey it.

Notice some details about looking after the Commandments. First, we see The Objective. What is the objective? It is to **keep** His commandments. The word keep is used in verses 3-5 of chapter 2, and is used again in I John 5:2. Keep means “to attend to carefully; to take care of; to guard; to observe; it has the idea of observing or holding something fast in memory.” One writer said this about these verses: “Our knowledge is genuine through its abiding results in a growing willingness to obey.” The Holy Ghost through John makes it readily clear—a true believer will want to read and obey the Word of God. He will not be flippant in his attitude towards the Bible, nor will he be careless in his reading or adherence to it. The Word will be precious,

and the true believer will yearn to know what God says in His Word.

The objective is mentioned, but also The Object is made clear. What are we looking after and keeping? The commandments. Now we ask, “What does that involve? And does that mean only the Ten Commandments and things like that?” The answer is, NO! The Ten Commandments are a good place to start, but those are not the only commandments. Furthermore, the commandments are not just what we think of as commands. Commandments is talking about all of the Bible. You will see that in 2:5 where word is interchanged with commandments. The object of the true believer is God’s Word. Again, he will want to know what it says and he will want to obey it.

Let me give you some ideas about the commandments. Consider how far reaching the Word of God goes. It does not concern itself only with the church and our relations to it, but it goes into every possible aspect of our lives. I mention only three commandments found in the New Testament. There are many, many more. The first commandment *Concerns Daily Living*. In I Timothy 6:11, Paul writes, *“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”* A true believer will be concerned about his daily life and how pleasing he is to the Lord. He will want to live holy because he wants to obey God. He may stumble every once in a while and sin, but his love for the Word and God will be so much that he wants to obey it and please His Master.

A second commandment *Concerns Church Policy*. In I Timothy 3:1-13, Paul gives the qualifications for pastors and deacons. These are not suggestions that a man may follow if he feels like it. Nor are they merely suggestions for a church to follow when choosing a pastor or deacons. These are the commandments, the very Word of God, on the subject of pastors and deacons. The true believer will want to abide by them and a true church made up of true believers will abide by them as well. Only those who care nothing for the truth of God’s Word will shun these commandments on church policy.

The final commandment that I will mention *Concerns all of Scripture*. II Timothy 3:16-17 says, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*” The true believer, as I John says, will keep the commandments, the Word of God. He will not object to the preaching of the Word, nor will he rebel when the Word is put into practice. The true believer will want to obey the Word of God—all of it. The true believer will understand the parts of the Bible that were only for a time (the sacrifices, etc.) and not to be practiced today. But he will not dismiss requirements for holy living today as “Old Testament.” The true believer will follow all of the Bible—Old and New Testaments—so that he will be pleasing to his Father, his Savior, and his Comforter.

The final aspect of looking after the commandments concerns The Objection. What about someone who says, “I do not care what the Bible says. I will do what I think is right.” Or they may say, “I do not care what the preacher says. That is his interpretation. I will not listen.” If someone has no concern for the Bible, and will not follow the preacher’s admonitions when they are based upon the Bible, he is not a believer. I John 2:4 says plainly that one who says he is a believer but does not keep God’s commandments is a liar, “and the truth is not in him.” Do you honestly desire to keep God’s Word? You are truly saved. Do you refuse to obey God’s Word and rebel against what it teaches? You are unsaved and bound for hell. May the Holy Ghost convict you of your sin, and may you truly be saved before it is too late.

*(For the completion of this message, please see our April 2008 NewsLetter and our May 2008 NewsLetter.)*