

A Study of 1 John
“How do we REALLY know that we are Walking in the Light?”

The Opening of the Closing of 1 John

The first-century Christians which John wrote to had entered a dilemma of confidence in their salvation. Gnostics had entered the church family and hijacked the teachings of Christ. They were teaching things like Jesus really did not come in the flesh, that He was not the Christ, that He was not the Savior. They taught error concerning sin, including that one could actually attain a level of fully conquering sin within themselves. Some even taught that you could do anything you wanted to, just as long as you had Jesus in your heart. These Gnostics were endangering the souls of the Christians by undermining the confidence which Christ provides for all His children.

By the time John penned the letter, many of the local Christians had their faith shaken, forgetting just how saved they really were. *Hosea 4:6 states “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”* It was the lack of knowledge of the workings of God in salvation that John set out to restore. He reminded them all that if they were walking in the light that we do have fellowship with God and a continual cleansing of our sins. The question is, “How Do You REALLY Know that You are Walking in the Light?” That has been the focus of this entire series.

The Apostle John provided four “Lightmus” Tests for these faint-hearted Christians to know they were walking in a P/H “Pure and Holy” walk with God. The first three “Lightmus” tests are as follows:

- 1) We must have a Correct View of Jesus:
He said that we must understand that Jesus came in the flesh, is the Christ, is the Son of God and is the Propitiation for our sins.
- 2) We must have a Correct View of Sin:
The Christian can have great confidence that their sins are forgiven if they are confessing, repenting and running from their sins. The cleansing that Jesus gives us is a continual based on the continual walk with Jesus. We can have great joy in thanking God for the cleansing of our sins.
- 3) We must have a Correct View of the World:
The Christian who is walking in the light has a perspective of the world a temporal and lustful nature. The world and the worldly ways thereof should not make us feel comfortable, but uneasy as we wait for the blessed coming our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last of the “Lightmus” test to be discussed concerns our personal relationships with each other. We must have a Correct Perspective of the Brethren.

IV. The Correct View of the Brethren

- 1 John 3:1, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

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We are of the same family.

When we were born-again into the Kingdom of God, with it came a common Father. That is why we call ourselves brothers and sisters in Christ, for we are truly descended from our Father. *John 1:12-13, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

- It doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman.
- It doesn't matter if you are black, white, red, yellow or any other skin color which God designed.
- It doesn't matter if you came out of Hinduism, Islam, Atheism, Gnosticism or materialism, if you came out of it in the name of the Lord and into Christ, then you are a brother or sister!

When someone comes into covenant with Jesus Christ, they are sharing the greatest bond that human beings can experience.

- Galatians 3:26-27, For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Story: “Brother, I'm a Brother!”

Years ago, my oldest daughter and I were in California on a Sunday. We went to a church of Christ which happened to be only in name. Once we were in there, we discovered that they were a very liberal bunch. They had women serving on the table, women leading in prayer, women taking up the collection and the scripture reading. Besides that, the minister quoted Gandhi once, two Jewish Rabbis and one Bible verse. The lesson was not encouraging at all. We did not take the Lord's Supper and left shortly thereafter. My daughter and I felt ripped off as we headed for lunch in LA. We agreed we would try to find a scriptural church of Christ to worship in the evening.

About that time, I received a call from the manager of the hotel we were staying at. He said that we needed to come pay for our room another night or they will put our stuff in holding. I reminded him that we paid for four days, but he said it only charged one day to my credit card. I said we was about 25 miles away and asked if we could come back that night and swipe the credit card machine then. He said, “No, it has to be done now.” I told him we would change our plans and head over there right away.

It took about an hour to head over there, so Natalie and I visited along the way. She asked me why I didn't get angry when the manager was pressing for us to come pay the bill. I reminded her that we never know if we are talking to a family member of Christ or a potential candidate for the kingdom of God. She understood and we eventually arrived back at the hotel.

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I went in and gave the manager my card and he swiped it. I told him that I was sorry if I came across terse in anyway, we just had a bad experience at worship this morning and were trying to find another church to worship with in the evening. He asked, “What was wrong in the worship service you attended?” I told him it was not suitable in how they conducted it. I explained that I was a minister for the churches of Christ and we expect to follow the pattern laid out in the scripture.

He said, “Are you a member of the churches of Christ?” I said I was. He smiled from ear to ear, saying, “Brother, I am a brother!” It turned out that he was the associate minister at a local church of Christ, which was predominately black and conservative. He asked if we had eaten lunch yet, but we took him out to eat. We worshipped at his congregation that night and it was wonderful. The singing was awesome and the assembly was delightful. It was the highlight of our trip. He even gave us a massive discount on the bill at the hotel.

I must confess, there is not another association other than the Lord’s church that a black hotel manager of a hotel in LA and a white country man with his white teenage daughter can immediately bond. Only in the Lord’s church.

Song #744 God’s Family

We’re part of the family that’s been born again;
Part of a family whose love knows no end;
For Jesus has saved us, and made us His own;
Now we’re part of the family that’s on its way home.

When brother meets sorrow we all feel his grief;
When he’s passed thru the valley we all feel relief;
Together in sunshine, together in rain;
Together in victory thru His precious name.

And tho some go before us, we’ll all meet again;
Just inside the city as we enter in.
There’ll be no more parting, with Jesus we’ll be;
Together forever, God’s family.

Chorus

And sometimes we laugh together, sometimes we cry;
Sometimes we share together, heartaches and sighs;
Sometimes we dream together of how it will be
When we all get to heaven, God’s family.

A. We must have a genuine love for one another.

- 1 John 3:11-12 “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.”

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John seemingly referred back to a point in history from which the Christians would have heard this quote from. One cannot resist taking into thought the night of the betrayal of Jesus in John 13. It was that chapter we find Jesus taking the form of a bondservant by washing the disciple's feet. Peter wanted nothing to do with that because it was the act of a slave and he refused to look at Jesus in that way. It was in the dialogue that followed that Jesus educated the disciples about loving one another.

- John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus told them that they needed to be serving one another with all humility. Nobody was to be above another, but they would all be comrades. The opposite of that would be the Cain in his love for his brother Abel. One must recall from Genesis 4 that God had a problem with Cain's sacrificial attitude and accepted Abel's sacrifice. Cain did not listen to God and turned in hate toward his brother.

- Genesis 4:7-8 “If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” ⁸ Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

The word that John uses for *slew* brings with it the connotation of the slaying of an animal for sacrifice. Instead of loving his brother for doing well before God, he likely offered up his brother for sacrifice out of hate.

One does not have to slay his brother or sister like an animal to communicate the message of hate. There are many more subtle “*deaths of a thousand cuts*” that we can be participants in.

- Am I holding a grudge against a brother?
- Do you have severe anger and resentment against another?
- Am I being a stumbling block to another saint?
- Am I sowing discord among the brethren?
- Am I unwilling to listen to my brother?
- Am I forsaking the assembly on the Lord's Day?
- Am I forbidding my greeting from reaching the brethren's ears?

If we are not willing to love our brother and sister with 100% of our heart, soul and mind, then we must ask ourselves if we are really any better than Cain? Do not be deceived, for the one that loves not his brother and sister in Christ does not love Christ and is not walking in the light.

- 1 John 2:9-11, “The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and

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walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

Make sure that you are dipping this “lightmus test” into your heart and confirm that you are “pure and holy”. Love the brethren, for that is the blessed command that shows whether or not we are walking in the light with Christ.

- 1 John 4:20-21, If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Song # 719 Love One Another

Angry Words! O let them never From my tongue unbridled slip;

May the hearts best impulse ever Check them ere they soil the lip.

“Love one another”, thus saith the Savior; Children obey the Father’s blest command.

B. We must be there for one another.

- 1John 3:14-18, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But 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? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. “

There are many ways that we can be there for the other saints: from funds to forgiveness, from a helping hand to a handy help, from a hospital or nursing home visit, from a meal to an encouragement card, kind words, firm advice and loving discipline. There are countless wonderful ways to be there for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

John actually identified that whatever means we choose to show our love for one another, it must have a “*lay down your life*” tone to it. Are we willing to lay down our life for our brethren if it comes to that? We must be willing to hold to this correct mindset because Christ set it forth as a pattern. That leads into the next point about the basis of our love.

The late Gerald Paden wrote in his commentary on 1 John 3 about a student that he had in preaching school a few decades ago. This young preacher student named Jim Fowler and his story gives a deeper meaning to this passage. A few years prior, he was on the military battlefield before turning to mission work. Reading from Brother Paden’s account concerning this student:

“He and some of his fellow soldiers were under heavy enemy fire; they hastily dug a fox-hole in which to bury themselves. When an unpinned enemy hand grenade was thrown into their bunker, one of the soldiers voluntarily covered the grenade with his body just as it exploded. Thus he saved the lives of his colleagues in arms, at the cost of his own. When asked how he felt about the sacrifice of his buddy, the surviving soldier replied: ‘How should I feel? There I was, alive, covered with his blood.’ Without an attempt to diminish the virtue of the event, it must be

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remembered that Jesus' sacrifice separates itself from that battlefield experience in several significant ways. Only if the same soldier had fallen on the grenade that menaced a group of enemy soldiers would this act approach the borders of what Jesus did for His enemies. The 'grenade' that menaced our spiritual lives was not a man-made bomb, it was the sins we committed. The threat of death was not simply physical, but spiritual and eternal. But Jesus allowed the 'sword' of divine justice to 'smite him, the shepherd' for the sins of the sheep (Zech 13:7). Now the sheep stand 'alive, covered with His blood'". (The Epistle of First John. Sunset International Bible Institute Publishing. You May Know! Paden, Gerald. Page 60)

C. The basis of our love is that God loved us.

- 1John 4:7-9, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.”
- 1John 4:19, “We love, because He first loved us.”

Jesus said in John 15:13, following His command to love one another, “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*” There is nothing greater that Jesus could offer to prove His love for our souls other than His life. Think about the beating and suffering He endured at the hands of the Romans! Let your mind dwell on the fact His frail body had to shamefully hang naked from a cross so that we could be pardoned for our sins through Him. He is the beloved Son in whom the Father was well-pleased and He was willing to die for us. When that is the basis for our love of each other, then we have the correct perspective of the love of the brethren.

We can abide in His love.

- John 4:16 , “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

When we are loving our brother based on the love of Jesus for us, then and only then do we know that we abide in the love of God. John spoke more about this “Lightmus” test than the others; therefore let us pay attention.

Final Summary of the Series

How do you REALLY know whether or not you are walking in the light? Do you have a correct perspective of Jesus, of Sin, of the World and of the Brethren? If you do, then enjoy the knowledge that you are on your way to heaven. *1 John 1:7, “...if 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.”*

Invitation Song #448 The Greatest Commands