

3. The test of knowing Him

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I don't know about you, I used to hate taking tests, I mean any test – from pop quiz, mid-term to final exam. In Korea, all the students had to take entrance exams that were provided by certain schools to go to those particular schools. I took the entrance exam for the senior high and college I attended. When I finished my final exam as the senior of the college before the graduation, I threw my pencil against the wall and promised to myself that I would never take another test.

Little did I know that the life itself is a test. When we come to know Jesus as our Savior and Lord, guess what He does to us? He gives us tests. Does He do this to flunk us and give us bad grades? Absolutely not. The main reason for God's tests in our lives is for us to learn from our shortcoming. He knew what we are made out of before He got us and He knew what kind grades we would get all day. The test is mainly for us to know.

One of the test methods He uses is allowing difficulties come along by other believers in the Lord or even non-believers. Depend on how we act in the moments of difficulties and our feelings toward the other person, our scores will be graded. I don't even care to know how many times I failed miserably, only to repent and ask God to forgive me.

A. THE ADVOCATE AND THE PROPITIATION

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

There is always forgiveness for confessed sin. Yet, apostle John wants it also to be clear that the Christian should be concerned about sin. One reason in writing this letter was that we may not sin.

The weakness comes from none other than our flesh, which is not consistently willing to rely on Jesus for victory over sin. God promises that one day the flesh will be perfected through resurrection. Wouldn't that be glorious?

It is God's desire for the believers not to sin. Yet if we do, there is provision made – an Advocate, a Defense Attorney on our side. Our Advocate is Jesus Christ Himself.

It is as if we stand as the accused in the heavenly court, before our righteous Judge, God the Father. Our Advocate Jesus stands up to answer the charges, "He is completely guilty your honor. In fact, he has even done worse than what he is accused of, and now makes full and complete confession before You." The prosecuting attorney satan couldn't be more pleased for the Defense Attorney to admit the guilt of His client. He was beaming. He thought, "This is gonna be a slam dunk."

The gavel slams, and the Judge asks, "what should his sentence be?" Our Advocate answers, "His sentence shall be death. He deserves the full wrath of this righteous court." Our accuser satan is agreeing with the Defense Attorney Jesus whole heartedly for the first time.

But then, our Advocate asks for "Side bar" to approach the bench. As he draws close to the Judge, he simply says, "Daddy, this one belongs to Me. I paid his price. I took the wrath and punishment from this court that he deserves." The gavel sounds again, and the Judge cries out, "Guilty as charged! Penalty satisfied!"

Our accuser starts going crazy, "Wait a minute. You cannot do that. Aren't you even going to put him on probation, or ankle bracelet or at least a leash around his neck or something?" "No!" the Judge shouts. "The penalty has been completely paid by My Son. There is nothing to put him on probation for. Shut your face, I wrote the Book" Then the Judge turns to our Advocate, and says, "Son, You said this one belongs to You. I release him into Your custody. Case closed!"

Please note that the Advocate is for the believers only, but the Propitiation is for everyone in the mankind.

B. KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

1 John 2:3-6 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Those who are not in the family of God naturally don't want to live according to the commandments of God. But for the believers, we shouldn't live the way we want, but God.

Remember that throughout this epistle John is answering the Gnostics who claimed to have a superior knowledge that no one else had, of course, it was heresy. The apostle John is saying that the important thing is to know Jesus Christ. And how can we have the assurance that we know Him? Obedience to Christ is essential and is the very basis of assurance.

Speaking of Gnosticism, we find a few good evidences of its return in recent days. Resurfacing of the gospel of Judas which is not godly, nor an inspired one at all and the movie and novel of The Da Vinci Code were two examples of Gnosticism being repackaged for a postmodern culture.

It would be a wise thing for us to take inventory spiritually and see whether or not we qualify to enjoy the spiritual experience which apostle John talks about. If a true believer is out of fellowship with God, it is usually for one of three reasons:

1. He has disobeyed God's will.
2. He is not getting along with fellow believers.
3. He believes a lie and is living in a lie.

According to a recent survey by Barna Research, only 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church ranked their relationship with God as the top priority in their life.

How can Christians today detect satan's lies? How can they identify false teachers? How can they grow in their own knowledge of the truth so that they will not be victims of false doctrines?

The Holy Spirit is He who enables us to detect truth and error and to remain in Christ. He is our protection against ignorance, deception and untruth.

Once the believer starts to live in a lie, he loses his character to those who are around. His insincerity, or lack of truthfulness, is at first a role that he plays. Then it is no longer a role – it has become the very essence of his life. His character has eroded.

Proverb 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Is it any wonder that God warns us? David tried to cover his sins and it cost him his health, his joy, his family and almost his kingdom. If we want to enjoy the life that is real, we must never cover our sins.

Some of you may have heard this from me, but bear with me. When a person truly comes to know Jesus Christ as His Savior and Lord, his whole life starts to change by the power of the Holy Spirit who now resides in his heart. Is he perfect? No way! But he tries very hard to please the Father in heaven by obeying His commandments according to the Word of God, the Bible. His vocabulary, the things he likes, the friends he hangs around, his reactions after insults or difficulties in his life, his interaction with non-believers and the most of all, his love for God in praying, reading the Word of God daily and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to others.

If some of you say that you are saved, but your life has not changed one thing like the man I just described, then you have to wonder yourself, if the conversion to Christianity was truthful or not. Because if your salvation is true – I am not doubting yours, but asking you to ask yourself – “Why is it that my life is remain same as carnal as before?”

Can you take a test for your own eternal life? Ask yourself this very important question: “Is my life as same as before Christ came into my life?” If it is not radically different, ask yourself why and ask the Lord about the reason. He will answer you.

C. THE ABSOLUTE IMPERATIVE OF LOVE

1 John 2:7-11 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

When you read this portion of the Scripture, you have to wonder if apostle John was going through some sort of split personality mental stage. “Old commandment, not new commandment, but it is a new commandment.” Oh yeah, whatever!

This seems to be a contradiction. But it is not love itself, of course, is not new, nor is the commandment – that men love God and each other – a new thing. Jesus Himself combined two Old Testament commandments, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, and said that these two commandments summarize all the Law and the Prophets in Mark 12. Loving God and loving one’s neighbor were old, familiar responsibilities before Jesus ever came to earth.

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

The commandment to love one another is not new in time, but it is new in character. Because of Jesus Christ, the old commandment to “love one another” has taken on new meaning.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Many of you heard a story that goes like this:

An unbeliever had a dream. In his dream, he met Jesus. As he stood on the top of a hill with Jesus, the man asked Him, “I heard that You love everyone. How much do you love me?” After Jesus climbed up on a cross and stretched His arms wide and answered, “This much,” and died for the man’s sin.

The cross points in four directions to show that the love of Jesus is:

Wide enough to include every human being.

Long enough to last through all eternity.

Deep enough to reach the most guilty sinner.

High enough to take us to heaven.

This is a new love, a love the world had never really seen before the work of Jesus on the cross.

D. THE SPIRITUAL STATE

1 John 2:12-14 I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. 13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

Some Christians stay in that position of little children and never move out of that area. Childlike faith is good, childish action is not.

‘Fathers’ are the saints who have known the Lord Jesus for many years and have grown and matured.

The “young men” are not as mature as the fathers, that is, they haven’t had the experience the fathers have had, but they have learned the secret of overcoming the enemy by the blood of Christ.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Obedience to Christ is essential and is the very basis of assurance to know Him.

2) The Holy Spirit is the One who enables us to detect truth and error and to remain in Christ. He is our protection against ignorance, deception and untruth through the Word of God.

- 3) If we want to enjoy the life that is real, we must never cover our sins. Rather we need to confess them to the Lord as soon as we commit them.
- 4) Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength. Love your neighbors as yourself.