

## Tests of Eternal Life

1 John 2: 28 - 3.

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### Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

Here we get different tests applied to those who say they have eternal life and are dwelling in Christ. There is a great want of intelligence about this subject in the minds of many of the children of God. The end of 1 John 1 looks at man in one state, and 1 John 3 in another. Chapter 1 opens with a gush of eternal life from the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, with the result that it produced in the heart that received it — fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Then it notices that this life has the character of light; it does not flow into a heart without making manifest all that is in the vessel. But then we find "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But here (chap 3) it is looked at, not as the vessel that received it, but as what the water itself is.

Turn back to the way that grace presents itself in different forms throughout the New Testament. See the person of the Lord. None could meet Him, and feel that His eye was on them, without being sure that the question was settled between their souls and Him. They could not gaze on the Prince of Life without feeling that the answer to every question was in Himself. But after His death and resurrection, we find a further thing. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, through the Holy Ghost, stood up and proclaimed that God had taken that Jesus whom they had crucified and slain, and had put Him at His right hand. The first feeling amongst the Jews was, "Now all the thunderbolts of His wrath will fall on us." "No," says Peter; "you plead His death, and you will get forgiveness, notwithstanding your being His murderers." The same is brought out in Romans. Man is proved utterly guilty. God says, "My Son on the mercy-seat is at once the measure of your guilt, and the answer to it." Still sin comes again and again, and we have to come for forgiveness; but Rom. 6 goes further. There is not only sins forgiven, but "Our old man is crucified with Him," etc. If as a sinner you are counted dead, and are to account yourself dead, do not go on sinning. In Ephesians we get it more fully unfolded, because there we get the other side. There it is, I have got entirely into another region, and if the Christ there is one spirit with me, He does not judge me as a sinner merely, but looks at me as a new creature.

What is the blessing shown out in this epistle? The Lord Jesus Christ has left the earth, and has sat down in heaven. All the Father's delight is in Him, and is shining down on His people on earth. If the love of the Father towards the Son is the centre of the new creation, and that love is in my soul, what is the effect on me? Will it draw forth the life of the flesh? No, it will draw forth the life that I have from Him, and the outgoing of that life will not be sin. What hinders people from getting into this abiding in Him? Just this, that they have not done with the old man, and are constantly thinking, "I have a certain power of my own, and can present a certain service to God." It is quite the contrary. If I have to do with Christ, I get moulded into His likeness, "changed into the same image." When battling with your own circumstances, often "*I must*" comes into your mind. Do you find successful victory from this? No; but get, perhaps, one hour's blessed thought of God's having stepped in in atonement, met the failure, and that we are "accepted in the Beloved" — and what is the effect of this on you? The answer of the heart back to Him, and love to all who are in Him. Then everything unlike that blessed One, with whom our hearts are one, we shall like to get rid of, and take up all that is of Him. "He that

hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as *He* is pure." If we dwell in that light it will make its own marks.

Verse 4 should be rendered, "Whosoever is a doer of sin is a doer also of lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness."

Verse 5. The object of God is manifested. Christ was not merely to forgive sins, but to take away the very core of sin. "In Him is no sin." Take the whole of His course, do you find a single act independent of God? It is sweet to find yourself hanging upon God, and then there will not be independence, though there may be error.

Verse 6. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." Does this change the 1st chapter? By no means. There are three things brought out in this chapter — righteousness, love, and obedience. Verse 7. "Doeth righteousness," etc. The believer is not in a position that it could be *legal* righteousness, for he is in Christ. If I am in Christ, and if, being in Christ, all the affection of the Father flows to me in His Son, what becomes of *me* in that, place? When He was here, He sought only one thing in the affections of His heart, to be a doer of His Father's will. Do I love to be a doer of His will? It is not legality, but the effect of the Spirit in a soul recognizing God in the place that belongs to Him.

Verse 8. We get it brought out with more emphasis by the contrast. If I am really in the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ I do not sin. If instead of abiding in Him, I take my place as alive in the flesh down here, I need an Advocate with the Father: both passages stand. It is a very important question nowadays, when there is so much knowledge, who is a doer of God's will. In the middle of verse 10, he takes up *love*, and here again will not admit of a less standard than the heart of Christ Himself. Did you ever get into communion with Christ Himself, and find how everything in Him condemns everything in you? He is sitting up there as the expression of all that is delightful to God in a man. As the blessed Son on earth He met everything according to His Father's mind. He passed under the law, fulfilling it perfectly, and in His death and resurrection did the whole work that opened heaven. So He requires His people to be righteous as *He is righteous*, and so when it is a question of love it is as "*He laid down His life for us.*" If there be hatred, take care that it is hatred of the world against you because you are in Christ, not from you to a brother.

Verse 17. If you shut your heart from your brother how does the love of God dwell in you? We want not to be distinguished by opinions, but to have the life of God in the soul made known by its bringing forth fruit.

Verse 19. The effect of this is the assurance of our hearts before Him. It is wonderful, the effect of doing the truth in assuring our hearts before Him. The believer can say for certain, "Christ is in the Father, I in Him, and He in me." Well, if He has done all this, He says, "Do not now turn round to the flesh, but walk as my Son walked."

Paul did not go on as if he had water in his vessel to go on upon; he knew he had Christ, and from Him a spring of water ever flowing in. So with us, if we try to *spend* merely, and forget that the life is flowing in, we must necessarily come to a close. Are our hearts in the presence of God? Then practical failure does not in the least shake our heart. We may be broken down because of self-confidence. If you trust to yourself, you will be brought low, like Peter; but he could come before Christ, for he *knew* He loved him. What do your hearts condemn you of? Is it "God is greater than your heart," and something covered over? Or is it not rather that you have taken your own place of fallen nature? God has put you in Christ, and sees you in Him. If you get occupied with your difficulties, or with the evil around, you are sure to get under their power. Leave it all, and get occupied with Himself. If the heart knows the love of Christ, the *costliness* of that love, it becomes a mighty good. What can be

done to tell Him we own His love? It is unutterably sweet to feel that He has saved us to have us in communion with Himself; saved us to walk in His footsteps here; saved us to live in our little measure on the very principles He lived upon, when down here doing the great work of God. If your heart does condemn you for some failure, God says, "I do not see you as imperfect in My sight." We may be brought under the Father's judgment in His house. It is very blessed to have One who has His eye on His children down here, One who will not let us deceive ourselves. When would you have an hour's peace if you did not know that the only answer to the hypocrisy of your nature is the faithfulness of God? You would deceive yourself to a certainty if you were left alone.

In verse 22, we get a character of communion connected with what goes before, the position of being receiver going before Him. I want to receive from Him. Does it cause surprise to the mind of Christ that those God has put in Him come before Him to receive? None. There is a power found by us in communion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get into His presence in that Name we find Him a living Person there. In all these tests, who is it that tests? And what is His mind? Is it to discourage the heart? Is it a *strange* thing if He has taken you, and put you into the Son of His love, and put you forth as a testimony in this world, to have Him as One that watches you? No; it is a blessed thing. God never supposes that we could go through life without Him, or get into glory without Him.