

TUESDAY 30 August 2022 "Validation of Salvation" (1 John 3:6-9; James 2:26)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

When you watch people interacting with each other, I wonder what convinces you that a person is married and that they love their spouse? Is it the ring on their finger? Do they have their marriage license framed and hanging on the wall of their home? Or is it the words they speak about their spouse when their spouse is NOT present, or the way they speak to their spouse when they are together in public? Or is it that they hold hands as they are walking in public places, or does the husband open the door for his wife and allow her to pass through the doorway first? Or is it that she prepares his meals and washes his clothes? So, what is it my friends?

So, here's a bigger question: **what is the evidence and the measurement of the love for and the relationship a person has with God?** Is it frequency of church attendance or amount of money given to charity or time spent reading the Bible or time in prayer? Or is it compassionate words and actions to encourage and help those in pain or in need? Or is it helping others carry their heavy burdens of life? Or is it forgiveness even when brutalized or slandered? Or is it living a devout spiritual life?

The past few days we've been digging deeply into the very complex but widespread challenge of what I'm calling the BELIEF / BEHAVIOR dilemma. *Yesterday we considered that no one can live consistently with their beliefs and their behaviors in opposition to each other. Our words and our behavior flow out of that which we believe and cherish in our minds and our hearts.*

So, we've been with the apostle James as he is writing the first letter to go out across the Roman Empire, from the apostles of Jesus to the Christians, the Jesus followers scattered by persecution. This letter, which bears his name, is found toward the back of our New Testament in the Bible, and yesterday I left you pondering this verse which James wrote: **"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."** (James 2:26) We also yesterday considered what the apostle John had written about this in 1 John 1:5-9. Today, let me add these words from John found in 1 John 2:1,2 **"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours, but for the sins of the whole world."** Oh my, that is such wonderful news for all human ears! John was not writing to his biological children, he was to his 'spiritual children', those people who have trusted in the Jesus Christ that he has proclaimed. Don't you love the fact that *John also proclaims here that when Jesus Christ ascended back to heaven He assumed the posture of our ADVOCATE, interceding with God the Father for us, especially when we who have believed in Him are sinning.*

God does not expect us to be perfect...we are human beings, with a natural bent toward sinfulness, living in an evil world, with a very powerful, Satanic, dark kingdom constantly at work in our world, seeking to draw every person into sinful thoughts, words and actions. *But God does want us to understand that the Holy Spirit will convict us when we sin, according to John 16:8-11, and at that moment God expects us to respond, especially if we claim to have a relationship with God and claim to be a Christian.*

Yesterday I used the example of you and me and our kids or grandkids. We love them and they love us. We have raised them to know the values of our family and what we believe to be right and wrong. We expect them to live in honor of what we've taught them. *But they are just like us, humans, and sometimes they rebel against what they know is right. When they do that, the relationship between them and us is strained, right?* We respond by pointing out to them what they have done is wrong and why it's wrong... and we wait, just like God waits on us when His Holy Spirit has convicted us of our wrongdoing. *We wait for our kids or grandkids to AGREE with our assessment, and that's the word "confess"! Confess means agreement that what they did is wrong. But that isn't enough, we also wait for them to 'repent' and that means change!* It means they demonstrate that they are sorry for their rebellion, and they turn from their rebellion back to desiring a restored love relationship with us. When we believe it to be authentic, we forgive them, right? And then we work together with them to reconcile and restore our relationship. *My friends it's exactly the same way with God and us! Do you see that?*

But, let me ask you, *what happens in your family when your child or grandchild is living in open, unrepentant rebellion against you and your values and what they know to be what your family cherishes as true, right and even holy?* Day after day, month after month they refuse to acknowledge their behavior is wrong and they defiantly continue living in rebellion against you. What do you do then?

That was the big question facing many Jewish Jesus followers in James' day. Many people claimed they had trusted Jesus to be their Messiah and their Savior. They claimed they were 'born again' and they said the Holy Spirit was guiding their lives, but the problem was their BEHAVIOR totally denied their claims! *They consistently sinned and refused to see it as sin or refused to repent.* The apostle John wrote some very powerful truth about that situation in 1 John 3.

John wrote, as led by the Holy Spirit: ***"In God there is no sin. No one who lives in relationship with God keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin... knows God..." (1 John 3:5,6)***

The reason the Son of God came to us was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them, they cannot go on sinning because they have been born of God." (1 John 3:8,9)

We understand that no human being is perfect, without sin.

We all sin, and John here makes it very clear that forgiveness and cleansing from sin for any repentant person is God's promised work in us. That work of God is possible because God accepts the sin price paid by Jesus' death. God then promises that He will place His Holy Spirit to live INSIDE a repentant person who is trusting in Jesus as their Savior. But John here makes it clear that a person who continues to sin, without repenting, is evidencing that the Holy Spirit of God is NOT residing in them, is not convicting them of their sin, and is not guiding them to reject temptation and refuse sin!

The resident work of the Holy Spirit in dealing with sin in a person's life is one of many tangible proofs of the legitimacy of the 'God work' of salvation in their life. *Therefore, the absence of that Holy Spirit work is evidence they are probably not yet legitimately 'born again' by the Spirit of God.* Again, we see BELIEF and BEHAVIOR cannot be out of sync, in opposition to each other for long. That's why a person repeatedly sinning and consistently unrepentant is evidencing they have not yet been authentically redeemed by Jesus; nor adopted by God the Father into His family; nor regenerated (born again) by the Holy Spirit; nor does the Holy Spirit live within them. **BEHAVIOR validates the truth of the condition of their HEART!** Now ponder that my friends.

Now these teachings over the past few days may have raised some questions for you. If so, write to me and I'll do my best to respond quickly. We want "*Walking with Jesus*" to be interactive, so join the conversation friends as we journey together.

May I ask, when you and I hold up the writings of James and John, and all I've written in the past few days, as a mirror and we look at our lives... our words and our behavior, what does Jesus show us is the truth about us and the relationship with God which we claim? Oh, this is really important my friends, and so I urge you to spend some time pondering all this and talking with God about it. Here's a song which celebrates the clear reality of what Jesus accomplishes in His powerful redemption of a repentant sinner. Is it your experience my friends?

Today's Scripture is James 2:26; 1 John 3:6-9.