

# TUESDAY 25 October 2022 "Personal Identity"

## 1 John 3:9-11

Hello, my 'Walking with Jesus' friends,

*I wonder if you've ever had to provide some proof of your personal identity.* Perhaps you were traveling and as you approached the border of your country the border guards asked you for identification papers? Perhaps you were applying for a bank loan, or filling for a marriage license, or some other legal document, and you were required to provide proof of your identification?

May I ask this question... *of all your identities, which is most important to you?* Your citizenship of a particular country, or your alumni status of a particular university, or your family identity as a husband, wife, parent, son or daughter, or your employment by a particular company? These days we're with the apostle John in the first century as he is writing to Christians and he's calling them to celebrate their identity as people living in a relationship with Almighty God through Jesus Christ... they are **Christians**.

John has rolled out his parchments, picked up his stylus and is continuing his writing in 1 John 3:9 **"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. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love their brother."** (1 John 3:9,10)

Did you know there are several nations of our world which require every adult citizen to have a government issued personal identification card? That card is equivalent to a passport, but it has more information than a passport, including their religious affiliation. *If you were required to have such a document today, what would you put on your ID card as your 'religious affiliation'?* And what if you lived in a country where "Christian" was not a permitted religion and you could be jailed if you insisted on having "Christian" on your identification papers?

John wants us to understand the identity "**Christian**" is not gained through any financial transaction, nor is "Christian" gained by being birthed to "Christian" parents, nor is 'Christian' earned by any amount of religious activity or devoutness.

*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to our planet to offer a relationship with Holy God that was attainable ONLY through our full trust in Jesus and His atonement death, to be accepted by Holy God as payment in full for our sin.* The word "**Christian**" really means **'a person purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2) and 'born again' (John 3:3-7) by the Holy Spirit of God.'**

So, I ask you my friends, are you an authentic Christian by that definition? If so, how valuable is that identity "Christian" to you, as compared to your national citizenship or your family name or your employment?

*Now please look closely at those two sentences John wrote and let's identify the key criteria John wanted first century Christians to celebrate:*

**First:** John twice uses the phrase "**born of God**" in 1 John 3:9.

It's what Jesus was explaining to the Pharisee Nicodemus as John recorded in John 3:3-7. Jesus called it '**born again**' and it means a second birth which is just as real, just as God accomplished as our first, human birth, only this second birth is a spiritual birth accomplished by the Holy Spirit of God. This new birth results in what the apostle Paul declared: "**If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation, the old is gone and the new has come. All this is from God...**" (2 Cor. 5:17,18)

**Second:** Please notice John again makes this strong declaration: "**No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in them...**"

We looked closely at this the other day as John wrote about it in 1 John 3:4-6. The phrase '**God's seed**' is a reference to the Holy Spirit of God who has caused this new spiritual birth *and has taken up residence inside a genuine Christian helping them refuse temptation to sin.*

**Third:** John draws a clear distinction between authentic Christians and those who have not experienced this "born again" work of God when he writes: "**This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God...**"

Children of God is a wonderful phrase identifying those who have experienced this new birth by the Holy Spirit and adoption into the family of God by God the Father. "**Doing what is right**" *means living a God-honoring life as led by the indwelling Holy Spirit.*

And **fourth:** John adds one additional important criterion indicating those who are NOT children of God: "**...nor is anyone who does not love their brother.**"

The phrase '**their brother**' is speaking about Christians and John is clearly stating those who do NOT love their brothers [in Christ] should not consider themselves true Christians. To further explain this, John continued in his writing with: "**This is the message you heard from the beginning: we should love one another...**" (1 John 3:11) Jesus had said to His disciples "**A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples...**" (John 13:34,35)

Of course, we know that Jesus took LOVE to a whole new level by giving His life as a sacrifice to earn the salvation of anyone who would trust in Him and believe God's promise of new life in Christ. In fact, John pointed to this fact by writing **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us."** (1 John 3:16) Have you ever noticed this is the mirror verse address to the most famous verse in the Bible, the Gospel of John 3:16? **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but shall have eternal life."** Now look closely at those two verses which have almost the exact same address and say almost word for word the same strong love message of God!

This is so important that in his little letter 1 John, one chapter later, John wrote it again: **"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."** (1 John 4:9-11)

So, my friends, we need to ask ourselves and each other... *what does our love for those who are authentic Christians really look like? Is our love for others a true reflection of God's love for each of us? How are we living our lives as a daily expression of thank you to God for sending Jesus and a great thank you to Jesus for giving His life so we could be given new life in Christ?*

I think we should pause right here and sit with John, reflecting on the power of what He has written. How well do you and I understand the unconditional, self-sacrificing, love of God? How does the Holy Spirit empower and enable us to love in the same way, starting in our marriages? Remember Paul wrote: **"Husbands, love your wives as Jesus Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for us..."** (Eph. 5:25) What does that look like in the Christian marriages you know?

I think it's time to talk with Jesus and here's a song to help us reflect on His outrageous love extended to you and me, my friends. Join me in thanking Jesus!

**Today's Scripture is 1 John 3:9-11.**