

LESSON AIM - I want my students to:

Know: That God expects Christians to have right actions.

Feel: That they should submit to God's Word in everything.

Do: To examine the objects which they love.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON:

As John continues the epistle, he sets forth further tests whereby a Christian can assure himself of his salvation. These tests reveal one's attitude toward the Word of God. Only a right response toward the Father's Word will manifest that they share a common life with Him. John writes concerning obedience (vv. 3-6), the brethren (vv. 7-11), the world (vv. 15-17), and the Lord (vv. 18-29). To receive the Bible teaching concerning these subjects and to live accordingly is to pass the test of sharing the

life of God. To reject these words is to lose the assurance of salvation.

LESSON OUTLINE AND COMMENTS:

I. Obeying God's commandments (I John 2:3-6)

As children are expected to obey their parents, the believer is required to obey God. By sharing the life of God and by recognizing God's authority, it should never be difficult to recognize the need to submit to God's commands. Submission to God's teaching becomes a test from which the believer may receive the assurance of salvation.

A. Obedience commanded (2:3)

John sets forth in simple words a great truth and standard for Christians. "If we keep His commandments" is the test to be passed. By commandments, John refers to the teaching from God recorded in the N. T. John indicates that a Christian is to habitually keep (guard and hold sacred) God's Word. This is the standard for every believer. For those who share the life of God, this will be recognized as a wise and helpful truth. The obedient believer will gain a progressive knowledge, gained through the experience of keeping God's commands, that at a time in the past he came to know God personally.

B. Obedience rejected (2:4-5a)

For those who habitually break God's commands, John's words are not encouraging. When a person claims, "I have come to know God in the past," but he is not habitually keeping His commands, the situation is far different. Such a person is a liar and "the truth is not in this one." He is unsaved. John is not establishing perfection as God's expectations because this is impossible (1:10). Rather, John writes in order to remind these Christians that sharing the life of God always brings a changed pattern of conduct (v. 4).

Those, who habitually keep God's Word, express love for God with completeness. To John, it is hypocrisy to claim a love for God unless habitual obedience to His Word follows (v. 5a).

C. Obedience practiced (2:5b-6)

Obedience is seen in one's habitual walk, not one's talk. Only when walk matches God's commands can assurance of salvation be present and growing. John relates that a true believer is in union with Christ ("abideth in him"). All believers share the same life. The believer has an obligation ("ought") to live ("walk") habitually according to the example of Christ. Thus, to obey God's Word is not a Christian opportunity but a responsibility. By fulfilling this responsibility, the believer has the assurance of his salvation.

II. Loving the brethren (I John 2:7-11)

John now begins an exposition of Christian love that is reminiscent of John 13-17. Like 2:3-6, it is a test for those sharing the life

of God. To pass the test is to have greater assurance of one's salvation. To fail the test is not expected of a true child of God.

A. The command to love (2:7-8)

The nature of this commandment is not a new or novel command coming from the Apostle John. Rather, it is an old commandment that has always been a part of the gospel message. From the day these believers heard the gospel, they also heard this truth (v. 7).

However, it is a new command in one sense. It is a new ("fresh") command because its practice is unique to the N. T. teaching. This truth is found in Christ because He has given it real meaning. (See the parable of the Good Samaritan.) Love for the brethren is a quality found in every genuine believer ("in you"). The former way of treating others is past and the true light concerning love for the brethren is now present ("shineth"). To love a fellow Christian is not work, it is instinct based on the common sharing of the life of God (8).

B. The command to apply (2:9-11)

The professing Christian, who claims "I am in the light" (sharing the life of God), must live up to his claim. If he is hating his brother, he is not sharing the life of God and never has (v. 9). By way of clarification, "his brother" refers to any other Christian. Since all Christians have a common Father, they are spiritual brothers. To "hate" means "to have an absence of love" (John 12:25; Rom. 12:9; I John 4:20). It speaks of one "who does not sacrifice himself for the spiritual good of another."

By contrast, one who loves his brother is the one abiding in the light (sharing the life of God). One who loves his brother shows his relationship to God and he gives no offense by his conduct because this would cause other Christians to stumble. The love about which John speaks is "mental." This love comes from reason and intelligence and it can be commanded. God demands that believers be "kindly disposed toward" all other Christians in attitude and actions (v. 10).

The professing believer who habitually hates his brother can have no assurance of his claim to salvation. John relates that this one is in a state of darkness (apart from God - 1:6). In his conduct, he is walking in darkness (contrary to God). He cannot discern where he is going spiritually because the darkness (his unconverted state) has blinded his eyes (v. 11). This is the first of several discourses on love for the brethren in the epistle. Christians must remember that the new birth brings a new family and a new way of life.

Before John proceeds to the next test of assurance, he writes to encourage all genuine believers ("children"), whether they be older Christians ("fathers") or young in the faith ("young men"). He writes that their sins are forgiven (v. 12) and they have known the Father (v. 13). After hearing the preceding sections,

it is probable that many listeners confused assurance of salvation with possession of salvation because they did not always measure up to God's ideal. John reminds them that he is writing so that those who are saved can be certain of their salvation.

### III. Loving the world (I John 2:15-17)

Because all Christians live in the world, it is possible to develop a wrong relationship to the world. John writes, as Jesus taught before him, that those sharing the life of God are not permitted to love the world.

#### A. Attitude toward the world (2:15)

It is not always easy to view the world as an enemy of the Christian, but it is. Every believer is commanded to make up his mind to not be kindly disposed to this world. John gives the readers an eternal prohibition. They were to change their love, now that they were saved. By "world," John meant "the present world system," which is under the control of Satan (II Cor. 4:4). He included all the things that are peculiar to this world's system. John was not seeking a change of actions and fashions but a change of attitude. The "believer," who has an habitual affection for this world's system, does not have a love for God. Since the two loves are mutually exclusive, the one who habitually loves the world has never been saved (Matt. 6:24). The genuine Christian, who goes into the world, will become spiritually sick and will return to God. God demands that the believer examine the object of his love.

#### B. Identification of the world (2:16)

Lest there be a problem understanding this message, John sets forth what it meant. A love for this world's system includes the "lust of the flesh." The appetites of the believer's pre-conversion life can respond to things in the world. These appetites must be changed to spiritual things. The "lust of the eyes" refers to that in the world's system which, because the eye sees, the eye wants (covetousness). The "pride of life" alludes to that in the world which is selected and displayed as the reason for one's living. Because these are worldly and of Satan, they must be rejected. To accept the world brings no assurance of salvation. Such a life must be avoided.

#### C. Destiny of the world (2:17)

For those who believe that the world is a wise object to love, John describes its future. The best that can be said is that the world is passing away. It is temporary. To consider this world's system for security rather than the life of God is exceedingly unwise. Only the one who does the will of God abides forever with God. For this reason, it is foolish to get caught up in this temporary world system. To love this world and its things has only one certainty for the Christian. The Christian will be certain that he is unsure of his salvation. As has been taught before, to share the life of God necessitates

changes from the old way of living to God's standards of living. The sooner this is done the happier Christians will become.

#### IV. Abiding in Christ (I John 2:18-29)

Having communicated several tests for believers to apply and thereby gain assurance of salvation, John sets forth the test of where genuine believers will abide. Although it is a new test, it takes the concepts found in the previous tests in order to indicate that those sharing the life of God will consistently abide in Christ. Genuine Christians desire Christ and that which pertains to Him. Those who are not saved depart both from Christ and those who are saved.

##### A. With believers (2:18-21)

Since each believer shares the life of God with God, it is obvious that they have the same common life and ought to abide with one another. Because John wrote during the last period of time prior to the rapture (a time which we are still in today), he reminded the believers of the coming antichrist. There were many in John's day acting with the same spirit as the future antichrist (v. 19). Because of this "against-Christ spirit," John knew that they lived during the last times. (This time culminates with the wicked rule of the antichrist - Rev. 12-17.)

These, who were against Christ, formerly lived with the believers professing to share the life of God. That they have departed from the believers made it evident that their profession was not genuine. Because their departure from the believers showed that their profession was never genuine, abiding with believers became part of the evidence of genuine conversion (v. 19).

Genuine believers have an unction ("an anointing") from God by which they can know spiritual truth (v. 20). This unction is a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit who enables every believer to recognize untruth. John wrote to them, not to teach truth for the first time but to realize that a lie never comes from truth. No doubt those, who left the believers, were teaching many lies. This showed they were not saved.

##### B. With the Word (2:22-25)

Believers are not only to abide with other genuine believers but also with the Word. John singled out the lie of those who departed, as "denying Jesus is the Christ." The lesson for these Christians was "to remain in the teaching about Christ." Genuine believers always will. False professors will have an unbiblical view of Christ and God (v. 22). To have doctrinal deviation is an indication of no life from the Father (v. 23). Abiding in the apostolic teaching brought assurance of eternal life (vv. 24, 25). Because of this truth, it is important for every believer to read and learn the Word of God. Commonness of faith brings common submission to the Word of God.

##### C. With the Lord (2:26-29)

The ultimate test of one's faith is a quality relationship with

the Lord. Because of the attempts of false teachers to lead astray his readers (v. 26), John reminds them that the Holy Spirit (the anointing) abides within them. The Holy Spirit teaches each believer concerning all these things written about in vv. 18-29. His teaching is truth. For this reason, true believers will remain with Christ (v. 27). They cannot forsake Him.

As John concludes the chapter, he challenged these Christians to habitually abide in Christ lest they would be ashamed when He came for them. In order to be ready for His coming, each one is to live righteously because this is the nature of their spiritual birth (vv. 28-29).

#### CONCLUSION:

After reading these tests, each believer ought to recognize both the seriousness of his spiritual life and the certainty of this life. One's correct relationship to God's commands, his Christian brothers, this world system and abiding with Christ provides the assurance of salvation. To have an habitual wrong relationship to these truths brings no assurance. On the contrary, it should cause "professing Christians" to search the Scriptures concerning eternal life. Too often church members try to live a Christian life without being born spiritually. Examine your habitual manner of life.

