



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Assurance: Anchored in Relationships (1 John 3:11-24)

JUNE 29, 2010

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Last week we considered one's assurance of salvation as anchored in Knowing, with special focus on the issue of Ethics. John was reminding his audience of the presence of the last hour of the last time as evidenced by the actions of the antichrists. Just as Paul had written in 2 Timothy 3:1-9, there would be an awful ethical deterioration.

John labors first to establish the foundation of ethics, that being Law, *nomos* in the Greek. John says **The Sin ἡ ἀμαρτία** is **The lawlessness ἡ ἀνομία**. (*Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness*). John's audience is naturally familiar with the Genesis account of Adam's transgression which is labeled **The Sin** by Paul the apostle in Romans 5:12-22. The point being, Ethics is grounded in God's Law and God's Law is an absolute just as Truth, by definition must be an absolute.

Ethics can be defined as "...the voluntary conduct of individual man insofar as it is judged to be good or bad in reference to a single, inclusive and determinative principle of moral value grounded in and validated by ultimate reality..."

True assurance of one's salvation will have a biblical ethical foundation.

Because man is a social creature designed to have relationship with God and fellow creatures, John is quick to point out the correct ethical conduct toward his fellowman.

RELATIONSHIPS

"For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

John learned this lesson from the lips of the Lord and in terms of his personal experience. *John 13:34 a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* *Mark 16:7"But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'* Surely, John made a priority in teaching this to this group of believers. In this time of significant testing, the reminder is a timely one.

"not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. Another illustration

John has grounded these believers in the Old Testament record. Cain murdered his brother Abel seemingly out of envy. We have no record of either brother being taught specifics as to what offering to bring before God. We speculate an offering resulting from the shedding of blood harkening back to the coat of skins God provided Adam and Eve...but the text is silent. From God's response to Cain it is as easy to speculate God intended to teach him following the initial rejection (Genesis 4:5-7), but Cain would have none of it. Why would John select this example? It is obvious Cain's actions are not loving! Surely it is because Cain's actions are hateful and this is what they are to expect from the world around them.

"Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. Apt observation. The *world*? Probably a two-fold application: the non-Christian system and that of Judaism. Why does either system hate? For one main reason applicable to both systems: *John 3:19" This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. Ephesians 5:13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light...* Judaism had harbored a hatred even from the very beginning, which probably intensified with the conversion of Paul as well as the great company of the priests (Acts 6:7). In two thousand years, nothing has changed. Let a believer truly walk in the light (1 John 1:7) and sooner or later, all Gehenna will break out.

14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. John declares that one's spiritual life, for this is the meaning of the Greek 'ἡ ζωή' is demonstrated by one's love toward the brethren in this verse and an individual brother in the following verse. There is a sense in which believers are to love all men; but there is an order of priority (Galatians 6:10). My suspicion being John isolates the focus of love within the believing community because of the difficulty we experience in loving those who profess the faith. Reminds me of the quatrain:

To dwell above with saints we love
That will be grace and glory;
To dwell below with saints we know --
Well, that's another story!

BIBLE STUDIES

TUESDAYS @ 08:30, ROOM 151 EAST WING

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Lest we overlook a possible problem: how can John say *no murderer has eternal life abiding in him?* Moses? David? Paul? Well, we ought not to have a question relative to Moses since he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Are there former murders in heaven? Thieves, idolaters, perverts, etc? Certainly! Millions upon millions of them and every one of them redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ on Calvary. So John must mean no one who is continuing in the sin of murder as a way of life has eternal life abiding in them!

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Here is another way in which John expresses what he wrote in his gospel, chapter 3 verse 16. Jesus establishes the standard of Love, laying down our lives. Here John uses a different word translated *life*. It is the word *psyche*, meaning our very selves. I suspect it is a significant difference for laying down my physical life is a one for all action; whereas, laying down my very self for the benefit of another has more of a continuing and demanding aspect. We can all imagine the demands of loving a non-believing spouse, rebellious adult child, even a believing colleague who is trifling with the faith. Biblical love is both demanding and discriminating.

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. John now addresses the issue of hypocrisy. Playing at the faith with words. Again, Paul made mention of this being an aspect of the last times in his second epistle to Timothy where he spoke of those who had a form of piety but denied its power. The power of The faith is evidenced in biblically ethical action termed LOVE.

19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; John continues the thought of developing ones assurance. How do you know you are saved and numbered among God's children? One of the ways is by virtue of loving others. Notice John uses the future tense-we will know. Our assurance grows as we love others. But, I suspect we all know the turmoil of a questioning, condemning conscience which suggests to our mind: aren't you really doing such and such so as to promote yourself, or some such? Or those times when we rationalized away the probing of our conscience by saying such and such really isn't lying, stealing, etc. I can think of a host of believing legislators across the breath of the land who undoubtedly

lost this battle. In my own case I can recall wrestling with my nicotine addiction during the first year following my restoration to the faith and using this passage whenever challenged. My response would be, "my heart doesn't condemn me". That went on til one day while engaged in a reconnaissance mission against Cuba, my RIO brought me up starkly. I had been sharing the gospel with him for some time when on this mission he responded with the comment, "Captain Lewis, you say that Jesus satisfies, but I don't believe you believe it!" Naturally, I responded with, "Oh, yes I do"! To which he quietly responded, "Well, if He does, then why are you relying on those cigarettes"? Ouch!

22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. John slips in a comment relative to prayer. One of the grounds for confidence in prayer is obedience to what God has commanded and conducting ourselves in a manner which would please the Lord. Paul speaks of this type of spirit in terms of the believer's conduct when he writes: *1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Later in the letter John will point out the requirement of praying in the will of God. Finally, James will teach that in areas where we do not know the will of God, we are to humbly acknowledge same by saying, "If the Lord wills" (James 4:15).

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. John has his own way of phrasing Jesus' answer to the Lawyer who asked what was the greatest command. *Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, " YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'*

What is it to "believe on the name"? Surely it is a bit more than mental assent to the name, Jesus. Even the demons knew the name. (James 2:19). In this context it must include salvific propositions since John has argued the incarnation, the purpose of Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him; We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. John concludes this section by declaring the role of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, in the development of one's assurance.