



Bible Study for March 11, 2020

A little over 17 years ago, on Dec. 27th 2002 a company called Clonaid claimed to have produced the first human clone. The claim, which as far as I can tell, has still not been substantiated by experts, provoked outrage from medical ethicists, religious groups and world leaders, including President Bush. At first Clonaid, the company responsible for this fiasco, announced that DNA test results should be ready in eight or nine days proving the baby is a clone of the 31-year-old American woman, who was also the mother. Seventeen years later they still haven't kept their promise to provide DNA evidence. Many experts are skeptical of the claims concerning this human cloning. However, everyone is agreed that DNA testing would either prove or disprove the validity of Clonaid's claim to have produced the first cloned human being. DNA testing can prove beyond reasonable doubt whether that baby was a clone.

In the book of 1 John there are several tests given to prove the validity of one's spiritual birth. Whether one passes or fails these tests proves beyond reasonable doubt whether or not one has experienced the new birth. Three tests are most prominent in the book of 1 John. They are the tests of faith, love and obedience. These are the tests that we find again in 1 John 4:20-5:5.

Since they have been given before earlier in this book, their presence here should not take us by surprise. However, there is something surprising about their placement here. It is the way in which all three of these tests are united together as one test. In the end, John shows us, that these are not three separate tests, they are three components of one test. Faith in Christ, love for God and fellow-believer and obedience to God's commands are so closely woven together that they are one fabric of which it is impossible to pick apart and disentangle the threads (Stott, 174).

In this study, I want us to see the threefold distinguishing mark of the new birth. We'll do this by seeing each of the three tests, then by seeing how they relate to each other which is the surprising thing about this passage of Scripture.

The Three Tests Described

A. Faith 5:1 (1 John 4:2-3)

Verse 1 plainly states the relationship between faith and the new birth. Those who are born of God believe Jesus is the Christ. Verse 5 farther states that those who overcome the world are believers in Jesus.

Note that there is a specific content to this faith that evidences the new birth. This is not the contentless faith of popular American culture. I just believe. The vast majority of Americans think that things are true if they believe them. That's not the biblical view of faith. Biblical faith is belief in truth because it is true. The specific content of saving faith is that Jesus is the Christ (v. 1) and that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 5). We have the eyewitness testimony of Holy Spirit inspired men. So, the first test to prove your experience of the new birth is whether or not you believe on Jesus as revealed in Scripture. If you do, it's because you've been born again. If not, you haven't experienced the new birth. **Faith is our new relationship with Christ.**

B. Love 4:20-5:1 (1 John 3:14)

First, John argues that love for God requires love for fellow-believers (4:20-21). He is not saying here that it is easier to love someone you see whether than someone you don't see. Our own experience tells us the more we see someone the harder it is to love them. The point then is not that it is easier to love someone you can see but it is easier to see that you love someone you can see. It's real easy to say that you love God, but let me see how you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ. If you don't love them then you are a liar. John probably has in mind here the schismatics who had left the church (2:29).

**Weekly Bible Study
meets on Wednesday at
two times (11:30-12 and
12-12:30). Both in
Capitol Annex 436 or, if
occupied, the 4th floor
lounge (404).**

How is love a mark of the new birth? Those born of God love others born of God (5:1). If you are a child of God, you'll love his other children. If you don't love God's children, you're not a child of God! **Love is our new relationship with Christians (or God's Children).**

C. Obedience 5:2-4 (1 John 2:3-5)

We'll say more about these verses when we talk about the relationship between love and faith with obedience. But note at the end of v. 4 "his commandments are not burdensome" because of the beginning of v. 5 "whatever is born of God overcomes the world." If God's commandments are burdensome to you and you're not an overcomer of the world, then you've not been born again. But if you, like David, "delight in your law" (Ps. 119:70) you have experienced the new birth. **Obedience is our new relationship with Commandments.**

The Relation Between the Three Tests

They are all results of regeneration. That's why John can speak of any of the three as tests of the genuineness of the new birth as we saw earlier. These three always follow as a result of the spiritual birth.

A. The Relationship between Faith and Love 5:1

Love for God = Love for Brethren Do you love God?

Because, Love for Brethren = Faith and Faith = Love for God

Because Biblical faith is not just believing cold heartedly facts about Jesus it is embracing Christ. There is a difference in my belief in Saddam Hussein, and my belief in my dad. If you just have the kind of faith about Jesus that you have of George Washington or Abraham Lincoln then you don't have saving faith. You can't have less faith than that, but must have more. **If you believe in Christ, then you love ...**

B. The Relationship between Love and Obedience 5:2-3

Love for God = Obedience to God

You serve what you love. Obedience to God is evidence that you love God. *Agape* love is not an emotion, it's an action. It is God's kind of love and must always show itself in action. If we love God this way it must show itself in obedience. God has commanded us to love one another, therefore love for God will result in obedience which will be love for other believers.

C. The Relationship between Faith and Obedience 5:4-5

Obedience to God = Faith in God

God's commandments are not burdensome to the one who believes because he loves God. It is not burdensome to obey someone you love. We overcome the world 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life' (2:15-17) by faith. The world overcomes us by falsely promising greater pleasure than can be found in God The role of faith in obedience is to allow us to believe God's true and faithful promises to provide something greater than sin. This is what Moses did in Hebrews 11:24-27.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

1 John 3:23 ties all three together:

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

The "three tests of faith, love and obedience belong together and cannot be separated. The true Christian, born from above, believes in the Son of God, loves God and the children of God, and keeps the commands of God. Each involves the others. Faith, love and obedience are marks of the new birth" (Stott, 178). Therefore, if the faith that you have isn't accompanied by love for God and for other Christians and obedience to God's commands, you don't have saving faith!