

Steps to Christ

Bible Study Series



The Test of Discipleship

8 - 16

(1) TO WHAT DOES THIS VERSE COMPARE THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

John 3:8

Related Texts: Ecclesiastes 11:5; Acts 2:2; 4:31; John 3:5

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact.

(2) HOW IS THE LIFE CHANGED AND HEART MADE NEW?

2 Corinthians 5:17

Related Texts: Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26; 18:27-31; Ephesians 2:10; 4:23, 24; Romans 6:4-6; 8:10

While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.

It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?

Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.

(3) WHAT CHARACTER TRAITS WILL BECOME EVIDENT IN OUR LIFE IF WE ARE TRULY BORN AGAIN?

Galatians 5:22, 23

Related Texts: Galatians 5:16, 17; Psalm 92:12-14; Matthew 12:33; Luke 8:14, 15

Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Christians will seek not the "outward adorning," but "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." 1 Peter 3: 3, 4.

(4) WHAT WILL WE DESIRE TO DO FOR THOSE WHOM WE HAVE WRONGED AFTER WE ARE BORN AGAIN?

Luke 19:8

Related Texts: Exodus 22:1; Matthew 5:23, 24; Luke 3:8; 1 Samuel 12:3; 2 Samuel 12:6

There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, confess

his sins, and love God and his fellow men, the sinner may be sure that he has passed from death unto life.

When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness.

(5) WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF LOVE THAT CHANGES, FILLS, AND FLOWS FROM THE HEART MADE NEW BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST?

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Related Texts: 1 John 4:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; James 1:17; Galatians 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:7

The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. "We love, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, R.V. In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennoble the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.

(6) WHAT WILL WE DESIRE TO DO TO SHOW OUR LOVE TO GOD?

John 14:15

Related Texts: John 14:21; 15:10-14; 21:15-17; Matthew 25:34-40; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:19-21

(7) WHY IS OBEDIENCE, BY THE POWER OF CHRIST, ESSENTIAL IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?

1 John 2:4

Related Texts: 1 John 1:6-10; 4:20, 21; James 2:14-16; Titus 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:5

There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

(8) WHAT HAS CHRIST PROMISED TO DO IN US WHEN WE ARE BORN AGAIN?

Hebrews 10:16

Related Texts: Hebrews 8:8-10; Jeremiah 31:33, 34; 32:40; Romans 8:2-4; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 37:31; 40:8; Isaiah 51:7; Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after

the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”... And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.

(9) WHAT IS AN INDICATOR OF THE MASTER WE SERVE?

Matthew 7:16, 20

Related Texts: Luke 6:43-45; John 15:4-7; James 3:12

We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. “Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” 1 John 3:5, 6. Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law. “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.” 1 John 3:7. Righteousness is defined by the standard of God’s holy law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai.

(10) WHAT TWO ELEMENTS SHOULD BE EQUALLY PRESENT IN OUR LIFE AFTER GIVING OUR HEART TO THE LORD?

James 2:17

Related Texts: James 2:14, 19, 20, 26; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Galatians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Ephesians 2:8-10

That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption. “By grace are

ye saved through faith.” But “faith, if it hath not works, is dead.” Jesus said of Himself before He came to earth, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8. And just before He ascended again to heaven He declared, “I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” John 15:10. The Scripture says, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” 1 John 2:3-6.

(11) AFTER WHOSE EXAMPLE SHOULD WE MODEL OUR FAITH AND LIFE OF SERVICE?

1 Peter 2:21

Related Texts: Matthew 10:38, 39; Psalm 85:13; Ephesians 5:1, 2; Philippians 2:4, 5; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:16-18; Luke 9:23-25; Hebrews 12:1, 2

(12) WHAT CHARACTERISTIC SHOULD WE SEEK AND IS PROMISED BY CHRIST TO THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR IT?

Matthew 5:6

Related Texts: Philippians 1:6; 3:9, 12-14; Proverbs 15:9; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22

The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

(13) WHAT PRIVILEGE DOES GOD OFFER EACH OF US?

2 Peter 1:4

Related Texts: Ezekiel 36:25-27; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 6:17, 18; Ephesians 4:23, 24; Hebrews 8:10-12; 12:10; John 1:12, 13; Colossians 3:10

(14) WHAT TWO-PART GIFT IS PROVIDED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD THAT, BY HIS GRACE, GIVES US RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Ephesians 1:7

Related Texts: Colossians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:12-15; 10:16-19; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Revelation 5:9; Psalm 130:7

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

(15) AFTER OUR REBIRTH EXPERIENCE IN CHRIST, HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO ABIDE AND GROW IN HIM?

Galatians 2:20

Related Texts: Romans 1:17; 5:2; 1 Peter 1:5-9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 5:7; Hebrews 12:2; 11:6

Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." So Jesus said to His disciples, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works of righteousness, obedience.

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.

(16) WHAT STATEMENT IN THIS VERSE REVEALS THAT FAITH IS DIFFERENT FROM BELIEF?

James 2:19

Related Texts: James 2:20; Matthew 8:29; Luke 4:34; Acts 19:15; 1 Peter 1:5

When we speak of faith, there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny but this is not faith. Where there is not only a belief in God's word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. And the heart that in its unrenewed state is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, now delights in its holy precepts, exclaiming with the psalmist, "O how love I Thy law!..." Psalm 119:97. And the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

(17) HOW LONG WILL CHRIST CONTINUE TO PATIENTLY REFINE OUR CHARACTERS?

Philippians 1:6

Related Texts: Hebrews 12:2; 13:20, 21; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 138:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:8

There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mis-

takes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God.

(18) IF WE FALL INTO SIN DURING THIS LIFE-LONG CHARACTER BUILDING PROCESS, WHAT WONDERFUL PROMISE CAN WE CLAIM?

1 John 2:1

Related Texts: Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:24, 25; 9:24

Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. And do not forget the words of Christ, “The Father Himself loveth you.” John 16:27. He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you. And if you will but yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ. Pray more fervently; believe more fully. As we come to distrust our own power, let us trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise Him who is the health of our countenance.

(19) AFTER WE ARE BORN AGAIN AND ARE IN THE GROWTH PROCESS, WHAT WILL WE REALIZE?

Isaiah 64:6

Related Texts: Isaiah 53:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Job 15:16; Ephesians 2:1-3; Psalm 51:5; 130:3; Romans 7:18, 24; 3:23; 1 John 1:8; John 15:5

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ.

The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.

I choose, by His grace, to walk in Christ's footsteps and follow Him as my Master. My prayer is that the fruits of His Spirit will be seen in me so that I may reflect His righteous and holy character.

Please Circle: **Yes** **Undecided**

Study Notes - Prayer Requests - Answered Prayers

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