

# The Christian and Non-Christian Contrasted

*You Call Yourself a Christian*

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What we have in front of us this morning is really verse 13 that we're going to look at, 1 John 4:13.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

And really what we're going to consider today from the overall book of 1 John, is the contrast between a non-Christian, an unsaved person and a true Christian, someone who has truly been brought into the family of God. And what we need to start with and what we need to understand as our starting point here this morning is that the distinction between a true Christian and a false Christian, a true Christian and someone who does not know the Lord at all, the distinction is vast and profound; that this isn't a matter of a slight adjustment in morality, this certainly isn't the matter simply of praying a one time prayer and then going on with life as though you had simply stopped at a stop sign and then just proceeded through the intersection, not changing the direction of your travel at all. The very nature of repentance is that it is a total reversal of life to head another direction instead of pursuing sin with the totality of your being, you turn and go the opposite direction and pursue the Savior with all of your being. It is a total reversal of a man, a total reversal of the person who comes to Christ with immediate, long-term, lasting, evident, visible and tangible change in the nature of the one who God truly saves and we can say that dogmatically, we can say it without fear of biblical contradiction. Oh, we realize that men would contradict but Scripture would not contradict us on this point at all. When someone becomes a Christian, God changes the very core of their lives and the Scripture describes that change in many, many different ways.

Listen as I read just some different passages of Scripture without even alluding to the references. Scripture teaches that for the Christian you were a child of the devil but now you are a child of God. Scripture teaches that the Christian is someone who has passed from death into life. Scripture says that a Christian walked in darkness but now has the light of life. The Bible says that you once were aliens but now you are fellow citizens with the saints. The Bible says that you were a slave of sin but now you are a slave of righteousness as a Christian. The Bible says you are a new creation, the old things have passed away, behold, new things have come. The Bible says you were dead in sin but

now you are alive in Christ. The Bible says that you had a heart of stone but now you have a heart of flesh. There is a true and a deep and a profound conversion that takes place in salvation and the Scripture describes these things in stark antithetical contrasts that can't be missed.

This entire book shows us how those different metaphors work out in change to our character, our attitudes, and our affections. It shows us how impossible it is to be a child of light while walking in darkness and the book of 1 John recognizes repeatedly that many people will say, "Oh, I know him. I know Christ." But the testimony of their lips is contradicted by the testimony of their lives and Scripture says when that happens, when you see that contradiction either in your own heart or in the lives of people around you, that you have to listen to the testimony of a life rather than what someone protests with their lips. This is woven throughout Scripture. In James, the Bible says, how can you say that you have faith and I have works, well, show me your faith without your works and I'll show you my faith by my works.

The idea of having faith that is not manifested in the life is totally foreign to Scripture and the consequences of that are very far-reaching and profound. For me, there was an extended period of time where I claimed to be a Christian. If you asked me, I would say, "Oh yes." In fact there were people that asked me, "Are you a Christian?" I said, "Yes, I've accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior." What a lying hypocrite I was at that time in my life and it just illustrates the profound capacity for self-deception that is present and evident in the human heart. It's just profoundly difficult to pierce this and let me say this as well over the course of ministry with many beloved people in California and this is a worldwide phenomenon in the church, it's not just limited to the people that I knew in California, the most difficult place perhaps for a true Christian to deal with this issue is when they have loved ones in their lives that perfectly fit the description of John, those who claim to know Christ but actually are walking in sin and darkness and that profound tendency in those situations is to say, "Oh, they know the Lord but they're just not walking with him right now." And beloved, let me say this as a pastor and as one who loves you and loves the souls of those that you love, we really have to be able to step back from that and be faithful to what the Scripture says. Someone who claims to love the Lord but walks in darkness, stated perhaps more precisely, someone who says that they know the Lord but are walking in open, unrepentant sin, have no right to claim to know the Lord at all and we as those who love them and know them, should not affirm them in their self-deception and say, "Yes, they know the Lord but they're just not walking with him." I realize that when we talk this way, that we're talking about things that go to the very deepest part of your affections, they go to the deepest part of my affections, but if we are going to be faithful to the one who called us to his eternal glory in Christ, we must come to grips with what the Scripture says about this. In the passage that I read in Mark 8 earlier, you know, Jesus said, "You can't come to me without denying yourself, taking up your cross and following me."

Oh beloved, don't you see that someone who is not actively following Christ in this life has no claim to know him? Don't you see that Jesus was serious when he asked the piercing question in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I

say? Why this trampling upon my holy name?" Beloved, we have to see that the Scriptures teach this plainly and then when we see that, then it has to filter out in the way that we think about life and relationships around us and we need not fear that, as we're faithful to that, the Lord will bless our testimony and as we're faithful to that, we won't be participants in the self-deception and we won't enable the self-deception that so many people around us are walking in. We just need to let the Scripture speak. We need to let the Scriptures have the authority and let the Scriptures direct our understanding and then respond accordingly. And what I want to do here today is to help you understand the contrast that Scripture makes between the portrait of a non-Christian and the portrait of a Christian so that you can see these things and be able by the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to sort them out and for us to grow in faithfulness to our Lord.

From the book of 1 John, let's look, first of all, at the portrait of a non-Christian. We are going to make a very clear contrast between the portrait of a non-Christian and the portrait of a Christian and if you're here today and you've been struggling, "I don't know if I'm a Christian or not," look at these Scriptures and see yourself in them. You know, the Lord brought you here today. The Lord brought you here today to be gracious to you. The Lord brought you here today to open your mind and to pour out his Spirit upon your understanding and as I preach here and as I show you these Scriptures here this morning, if you're one of those, "Oh, I don't know where I stand with the Lord," just ask the Lord time and time again through the course of this message, "O God, have mercy on me, the sinner." Christ Jesus came in order to save sinners and so as you plead with him to have mercy on your soul under the sound of his word, you're asking him to do and fulfill the very purpose for which he came. Take hope. Take courage as you hear these things taught this morning.

Well, let's consider the portrait of a non-Christian. The book of 1 John teaches us how horribly lost the man without Christ truly is; how horribly lost the non-Christian is. And first of all it teaches us that the non-Christian has the wrong life and so the main point here right now is the portrait of a non-Christian, I'm going to give you three sub points to follow along and the first sub point of the non-Christian is that he has the wrong life. He has the wrong life because the non-Christian is marked by sin. His whole life is all wrong. It's totally disoriented. It's a total catastrophe. It is a mess because the life has been arraigned against the law of God and obedience to him.

Look, for example, at chapter 2, verse 4, let's say and here you see the self-deception that's just woven, this is such a prominent issue that Scripture speaks plainly to it. Understand, beloved, we're not talking about an isolated incident that maybe applies to one person in a thousand to those who name the name of Christ, Jesus said in Matthew 7 there will be many at the day of judgment who say, "Lord, Lord, did we not do all this stuff?" And I'll say, "Depart from me. I never knew you." We just have to take this issue seriously and realize that, yes, this could be true in the realm of my family. This could be true in the realm of my own heart. So we must let the word of God illustrate and point us in the right direction and not trust in our deceptive self judgments about this.

1 John 4, what does a non-Christian say? Well, chapter 2, verse 4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Look over at chapter 3, verse 7, and I love hearing those Bible pages turn. That's the most important sound in Truth Community Fellowship. 1 John 3:7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you." Why would you say that? "Well, the reason I say that," the Apostle John would tell us if he was here today, "is because you are subject to self-deception. You are vulnerable." Beloved, every one of us, we're vulnerable to self-deception and so we must pay attention. We must pay heed to what the Scriptures say.

Verse 7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you." Beware. Watch out. Pay attention. This is such an important issue, John says. "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous," verse 8, "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning." One who practices sin is a non-Christian; his life is all wrong; he is in the realm of Satan.

Look at verse 10 of chapter 3, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." Look at that word there in verse 10 where he says, "by this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious." This isn't something that God has hidden under a container and put under a bushel basket and hid under the shelf. This is open and obvious for all to see who would read the Bible and take it seriously and not prejudice themselves against their own self-interest, their own desire to not have to submit to Christ. It's open and obvious to those of us who will not put affections for loved ones here on earth over the clear testimony of the word of God. This is open and obvious.

The non-Christian is marked by a life of sin, by a life of rebellion, a life of indifference. Yes, let's talk about that for just a moment. Realize that the forms of rebellion can come in much different ways. A non-Christian's life has a myriad of options to live out its rebellion against God. We tend to think of it, and rightly so, in terms of open sin, open obvious immorality and different things like that that are marked by the drunkenness and different things like that, and that's clear and open and obvious. But, beloved, understand that rebellion takes other forms as well and particularly for those of you that are young people in Christian homes, understand that rebellion can take the form of just a simple indifference to the claims of Christ and being indifferent to the realities of his claim on your obedience and your love and affection. Rebellion can take the form of elaborate sinful philosophies that seek to explain away the origin of the world from things other than the clear testimony of direct and immediate creation by God. There's all kinds of ways that this manifests itself out but what we see is from the Scripture, is that the non-Christian is marked by a wrong life. His life is not oriented toward love and affection and obedience toward the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not the controlling guide star that moves the impulses of his heart and determines the directions of the decisions that he makes. He's marked by the wrong life.

Secondly, kind of building on the same point, the non-Christian is marked by the wrong love. The wrong love. Look at chapter 2, verse 15, with me where it says, "Do not love

the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." So this raises the question of as you look about at the world environment shaped by the news and the media and the entertainment values of this world, do you find yourself in opposition to that, running against that, swimming against that tide or does it never even occur to you that you ought to be outside of that system looking in from a mental heart perspective? That's part of it. That's part of being a Christian is that you realize that the whole culture and environment in which we swim is alien to the affections of your heart. The Christian is somewhat like a fish that has rejected the environment of water. We live and move and have our being in a sinful world environment and the Christian is conscious of the fact, "I have stepped outside of that environment. I have been delivered from that environment. And though I am in it, I resist it. I don't like it. I wish it was completely different. It grieves me that I'm even tempted to participate in it." But you're conscious of being outside the world system that animates everyone else in your circle of acquaintances. You have different affections. You have a different love because the non-Christian loves these things, loves the environment, embraces it, drinks it in, literally and metaphorically, and is marked by desires and affections that are tied to the things of this life. The true Christian isn't like that. We'll see that in a moment.

So the non-Christian has the wrong life, the wrong love, and thirdly, we can say that they have the wrong Lord as well. The non-Christian has a wrong view of Christ or a wrong response to Christ. Look at chapter 2, verse 22, where it says, "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." Look over at chapter 4, verse 3, we looked at this about four weeks ago, chapter 4, verse 3, "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." So the non-Christian is marked by, in one way or another, a rejection of the biblical portrait of Christ. In 1 John, the rejection, the error that he was addressing was that they had a totally false view of the humanity of Christ; a view that said that the Spirit of God came on Jesus at his baptism but left him just prior to the crucifixion and so he was born and he died as an ordinary man. That was the error that John was addressing at this particular time and he says, "No, the true view of Christ is that he is God incarnate. He came from heaven. He was God in human flesh from the moment of his conception all the way through his resurrection and ascension into heaven and therefore as God in human flesh, he had the power and the ability in order to truly deliver us from our sins. If you reduce him to a mere man at any point in his earthly existence, you rob salvation of its saving power." So a non-Christian drinks in all manner of false teaching about Christ.

Let's go a little bit further and realize that even that there's this potential to have a wrong view of Christ even if you're affirming the right theology of Christ. You say, "Oh, I believe that he's God in human flesh. I believe that he died a redemptive death on the cross and I accept the scriptural teaching on it." Well, listen, that theological confession is utterly worthless if you have not totally surrendered your will to this Lord and you

embrace him as the sovereign Master of your life as you trust him for the redemption of your soul. You cannot separate yourself from the Lordship of Christ in any area and still have a legitimate claim to truly know him. A person who has a settled ongoing resistance to the Lordship of Christ is not a Christian no matter what theology they affirm and no matter what church they attend. A professing Christian who clings to sin with a clenched fist and says, "I will not let go of this. I will not let go of this sinful relationship. I will not let go of this pet sin of mine. I know its sinful and I won't let go." Look, that's the wrong Lord. That's the mark of one in rebellion and don't insult Christ, don't insult Christ by calling him Lord while you cling to the very thing that he himself died for. That's the mark of a non-Christian, that refusal to submit to him.

A non-Christian has the wrong life, he has the wrong loves, he has the wrong Lord. Beloved, do you see it? Do you see that a non-Christian is marked by a total, systemic, spiritual failure in every aspect of his being? Do you see it? Do you see how colossal the loss is? How colossal the failure is that someone living in the midst of God's creation and his providential care of their lives and sometimes living under the authority of the teaching of the word of God, would go about life like that? That is a total, systemic, colossal, inestimable, immeasurable, spiritual failure of the greatest eternal magnitude that anyone could ever surmise and I beg of you to examine your heart in light of these things. The Bible says test yourselves to see whether you're in the faith. Examine yourselves. And as you look into the mirror of the portrait of a non-Christian, young people, senior adults, all points in between, you have to ask yourself, "Do I see myself in this reflection? Do I see myself dominated by worldly affections? Do I see myself dominated by an indifference to Christ and a preference for the things of this world rather than loving Christ and pursuing him with all of my heart?" Do you see yourself in that mirror? Oh, don't be like the one who James describes, who looks in the mirror and sees himself and then walks away. If the word of God in this section of today's message is showing you your own portrait, don't look at it and say, "Oh," and just walk away unchanged. No, no, no, you can't do that. Don't you understand that God has brought the mirror to you in order that you would see yourself and change and call out to him for mercy and say, "O God, I am the systemic failure in this room. I am the rebel against Christ and I am exposed under the light of your word and I am helpless before you. Oh, Lord Jesus, save me because I can't save myself and it's obvious that my hypocrisy is the utter travesty of the universe." Beloved, when you understand that these things are true and when the Spirit of God applies them to your heart, you can't be indifferent to them. This is not a matter of academic interest, we're talking about the eternal well-being of your soul and it's not unloving to say it. It's not unloving to call out self-deceived people and say, "Oh, pray to God that he would open your eyes and help you understand because I can't stand as the pastor to see you in eternal torment, to see you head and plunge into eternal destruction all the while under the sound of the word of God."

You see, beloved, and I do mean the word beloved, you see, we can't open the word of God and play games with it. God isn't playing games with the truth of his word. Christ wasn't playing games when he left the glories of heaven and went to the cross and experienced some manner of supernatural separation from his Father and somehow bore our sins on the cross in his own body, took the guilt and the punishment that should have

been on your head and mine. He wasn't playing games and we can't play games with his word in response. Oh, there's got to be an earnestness about the condition of your soul. Somehow the Spirit of God has got to waken the echoes in your mind so that you would realize that this isn't trivial. What we're talking about here this morning are the most important things in the universe.

Well, let's take a look at another portrait, the portrait of a true Christian, kind of see the negative aspect in the portrait of a non-Christian, let's see what the Bible says about the portrait of a true Christian and what we're going to see as we look at these things, is that there is going to be a direct contrast at every point with the non-Christian that we just saw. What's the portrait of a true Christian? Well, first of all, he has the right life. He has the right life, not in a means when we say the right life, not something that merits salvation from God; not in something that merits boasting as though I'm better than somebody else. No, no, no, no, we don't even go there. We don't even go there. We're not even interested in anything that would...listen, beloved, we're not at all interested in anything that would possibly suggest to a hint in our mind that somehow by the way we live we merit salvation from God. We can't merit salvation. We are irretrievably sinful apart from Christ and we can't save ourselves and there is no merit that avails before the holy throne of God except the perfect righteousness and merit of Jesus Christ. So we're not talking about anything that we deserve. We're not talking about anything that we boast in. We're simply talking about what is the outworking of the work of the Spirit of God in the redeemed life. So the portrait of the true Christian is he is marked by the right life.

Look at 1 John 2:3. Don't you love the word of God? Don't you love how clear it is? Don't you love the fact that God gave us a written revelation to live and guide our lives by rather than subjecting ourselves to the changing whims of our human feelings? No, in the Scriptures we have a sure and certain word by which we can entrust our eternal well-being to what they teach us and it's the only word that we have. 1 John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." If your life is marked by an orientation toward obedience to the word of God, if your life is oriented to the fact that, "Oh, I must pay heed to the Scriptures. My life must conform itself to obedience to what God has revealed in his word." That's the mark of a true Christian and, beloved, we say that is the only right way to live. It's the only right way to live. If God has created us, if God has redeemed us, if God has revealed his law and his word, then it is only right that our response would be to submit ourselves to the authority of his word, not only mentally but in what we actually do and the way that we order our lives. That's the only right life. The Bible says a Christian is marked by that. We understand it's not a perfection of life but it is the direction. I can freely tell you my life is not perfect. I can freely tell you also that the direction in my life, if I could live out perfect obedience, I would and every one of you that's a true Christian has those same affections in your heart as well. It's not unique to the pastor. This room is filled with people that are like that. "Oh, I fall short but, oh, if I could just live out perfect obedience and be relieved from every external temptation and every internal temptation, that is the life that I would choose." That's the mark of a true Christian. That's the right life that delights in obedience to God, beloved, that delights in obedience to God whether anyone notices or not. That

delights in obedience in private as much as you do in public because it's not about the observations of men or the applause of men, it's about being rightly related to the God of your salvation, the Lord of your salvation.

The right life. That exposes the hypocrites and yet it brings encouragement, beloved. It brings encouragement and strength to those of you who are simple, humble believers wanting to live rightly before Christ that says this is the mark of true salvation. This is the mark of a true believer. You belong to the family of God. Christ has redeemed you from all of your sin. Christ has put you on a path that leads certainly and without fail into glory. That's the mark of a true Christian and when you see the evidence of that bubbling out of your life, you say, "Oh, that's the right life that the Scripture describes. That points me to the reality of my salvation. That means that I am secure in Christ." And all of a sudden the whole disposition of the way that you live life is changed and you move from fear and anxiety to confidence and trust, right, because you see the marks, you see the portrait of a true Christian marked out in your own life.

Now, let me just say this as a practical matter of life in the body: when you see that, when you see that in the lives of people around you, be quick to affirm it, especially if they're going through discouraging times. Be quick to say, "Oh, you know, I've seen the pattern of your life. I've seen your hunger for God's word. Most certainly God hasn't abandoned you here. Your pursuit of Christ is an encouragement to me." Be effusive in saying that to people because you and I, we all need that kind of encouragement because we know what it's like to try to live out this life in the midst of a hostile environment and sometimes in the midst, for some of you in the midst of hostile families. Well, we just have to look beyond our own situation and realize that the people around us need that kind of encouragement. If you see a faithful Christian, affirm them and encourage them in that way. This is part of the way that we build each other up.

A Christian is marked by a right life. There is actual living obedience to Christ shown in his life. Look at chapter 3, verse 7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous." The practice of his practice is practical righteousness. It's not theoretical. It's not academic. There's an academic element to it, there is an intellectual understanding to it, sure, but the heart of the Christian says it's more than knowledge to me. This is my life.

Secondly, a true Christian is marked by the right love. A true Christian is marked by the right love. Look at chapter 2, verse 10. When we say the Christian is marked by the right love, we're saying that the Christian delights in loving other Christians. He delights in the fellowship of believers. He finds himself at home with those who love Christ. Chapter 2, verse 10, "The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him." Look over at chapter 3, verse 14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." A true Christian finds his warmest companionship, the most sympathetic desires, shared desires with other people in the company of the family of God. Being around Christians is a delight. There is an echo of heart affections that produces a natural affinity in human

relationships that is the mark of a true Christian. This is the right love. If you're a child of God, you will love the other children in his family. That's the mark of a true Christian.

Thirdly, portrait of a true Christian is that he has the right Lord. He has the right Lord. The true Christian confesses the true Christ and follows him. Look at 1 John 2:23 again. A true Christian is marked by the right life, the right love, the right Lord. Verse 23 of chapter 2, "the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." Chapter 4, verse 2, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." So, you know, and this is in some ways the real starting point of it all. You ask yourself, "Am I a Christian?" Well, start with what do you believe about Christ? What do you believe about the Gospel? Don't start by looking for the external manifestations of obedience in your life. That could be nothing more than just trusting in your own works. Start with the question, "Do I believe in Christ? Do I believe the Gospel? Do I believe that Jesus Christ alone is the Savior of humanity, that there is no other Savior besides him? Do I believe that without Christ I would be eternally lost? That there is nothing that the works of my hands could do by which I might be saved?" Do you believe that? Do you believe that Christ suffered the penalty for your sin on the cross? Do you believe that? Do you embrace that? Do you lean on that? Do you trust in that exclusively as your hope of righteousness before God? That's where it starts. That's the true Lord. That's the true Christ, that he wasn't, listen, it's not that he was just a good teacher, it wasn't that he was some kind of prophet only, it wasn't that he was a moral example and we are supposed to follow in his footsteps. All of that is a wrong view of Christ. The right view of Christ is to say, "He is the Son of God come from heaven to save me from my sins and he did it on the cross. The work was accomplished. He said it is finished and as I rest my confidence in him alone, the work is finished on my behalf as well. Glory, hallelujah! I have a Savior who is perfect in his person, perfect in his work, and my salvation is secure in him because he is the object of my sole trust for the well-being of my soul and the forgiveness of my sin." That's the right Lord. That's the right faith in Christ.

So there you have it, two mirrors. Look in one mirror and you see the non-Christian: wrong life, wrong love, wrong Lord. You look in the mirror and you see the true Christian: right life marked by a pattern, a direction of obedience to Christ and to his word; the right love, finding home in the people of God; the right Lord, understanding the redemptive work of Christ and trusting in that alone. As you look, which mirror is reflecting your spiritual face? Do you know what? Nothing else matters than the answer to that question. It doesn't matter what's happening and in an eternal sense, it doesn't matter what's happening with our health, with our wealth, with our problems of this life. Beloved, don't you see that we're not going to care about any of that stuff when we're face-to-face with God; that none of that stuff is going to matter when the sole question that matters is as you stand in the presence of your Judge, is whether your sins have been forgiven and you have a righteousness to your account that satisfies the demands of his law. Nothing else matters, beloved. Nothing else matters. If I die in a car accident going home tonight, it doesn't matter provided that my soul is right with Christ because the worst thing that could happen to you in a human loss of life is in one sense the best thing that could happen to you because it's the vehicle that ushers you into the immediate

presence of your Savior never to be abandoned again, not that he ever abandoned us to begin with, but I just say that to impress upon you the urgency of this.

Now, here's a question, you Christians in the audience. Welcome to the family of God, as it were, isn't it good to be in the family of God? Well, that wasn't really my question, I'm just being rhetorical at that point. Here's the real question as we start to bring this plane in for a landing this morning: if you are a Christian and you see yourself in the mirror of the portrait of a true Christian and you're rejoicing in that and your heart is flooded with joy and assurance today knowing that you belong to Christ and that he belongs to you, here's the question, if you are a Christian, how is it that you have come to obtain this new life? How is it that you stand in such an inestimably wonderful position as to be secure in Christ with your sins forgiven, with a perfect righteousness credited to your account and that you can know that your war with God is over and that he has declared peace with your soul? How did you ever get to that wonderful position? Beloved, follow me here as we walk through this really closely. Understand and humble your heart under the scriptural testimony that it was not because you decided to do good. We were all equally lost with those who are still outside of Christ. Scripture makes that plain. You were dead in your trespasses and sins. You were alienated from God. You and I were the rebels. How is it then that we went from being a rebel, an enemy of God, how is it that we came from that realm and now find ourselves a friend of God, a brother with Christ with a brother in heaven who is interceding for us before the eternal throne of God in an unbroken way that secures our redemption until that final day? How did that ever happen?

Well, it wasn't because you decided to do good, beloved. Jeremiah 13:23. You don't have to turn there but you can jot the reference down. Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil." We were walking in sin, walking in evil and rebellion, and just like a leopard can't change his spots, just like an Ethiopian can't change the color of his skin, you couldn't change your spiritual nature to please a holy God. You couldn't. How did it happen then? How is it that you became a Christian? Well, this is gloriously wonderful for those of us in Christ that will simply humble ourselves before the word of God, that will gladly surrender any claim of credit or merit to our account. This is great. It just means you can't boast in it. How is it that you became a Christian? Point 3 this morning: it was because of the work of the Spirit of God on your heart. It was the work of the Spirit.

Come back to the text that I opened with reading here today, 1 John 4:13. How is it that you came to know Christ? How is it that you know now that you are in him? Blessed word from the Spirit of God in 1 John 4:13, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." When God drew you to himself, he changed you. The Holy Spirit addresses the need of the unsaved man at every point and this letter of 1 John makes that clear. We are the recipient, we are the beneficiaries of a sovereign work of the Spirit of God on our heart that we could not have compelled by anything that we did, that we could not have deserved, that we could not have asked for because we had forfeited our standing before a holy God to ask for anything from him.

You and I are the beneficiaries of undeserved sovereign free grace and you can see that in the book of 1 John.

What did the Spirit of God do? The Spirit of God brought you the right life. The Spirit of God by his omnipotent power when he came to work on your heart, he brought the right life orientation to you. Look at 1 John 2:29. Trace it back. Oh, beloved, trace it back beyond the external things that you see in your outward life, trace it back beyond the internal desires of your heart, trace it back to the source and give glory to the source and understand that it is glory to God, not glory to you. 1 John 2:29. If you are in Christ and you're living the right life as we have defined it here this morning, where did that come from? Oh, look at chapter 2, verse 29, "If you know that He is righteous," if you know that Christ is righteous, "you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." The point of origin, beloved, of your new life was not your decision to trust in Christ, the point of origin, the originating source came from the work of the Spirit of God. It was the Spirit of God who brought his power to bear upon your sinful heart, not you bringing your sinful heart to bear upon the Holy Spirit. You are born of God. Your parents gave physical birth to you, the Spirit of God gave spiritual birth to you, and one of the marks of that is the right life of obedience that reflects the character of the one who gave birth to you. The Holy Spirit brought the right life to you. Everyone who practices righteousness is born of God.

Secondly, what can we say about the Spirit of God? He brought you the right love. He brought you the right love. Look at chapter 4, verse 7, in this most familiar verse and sometimes the verses that are most familiar is where you're on your shakiest ground in terms of understanding the import of what they really mean because you assume you know simply because you've known it for so very long. Well, Spirit of God, give us fresh eyes to see this verse here this morning in the context in which we are discussing it. Chapter 4, verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God," there's the source, "and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." The originating source of the love that you have for other Christians in your life, the originating source of your love for God is not from the dead and tattered shreds of your unregenerate heart. It comes from the Spirit of God in an invisible but very demonstrable way. He came to bear upon your life somehow through the testimony of the word of God and awakened your heart to new life, awakened your heart to the things of the Spirit, and put in you the seeds of those desires to love the people that he did a similar work in as well.

Look at it again with me at the end of verse 7, "everyone who loves is born of God." If you and I are loving each other, trace it back to the source. The source was a work of God, a work of the Spirit on your heart. This work that we in months gone by discussed at length, the work of regeneration. God gave you a new heart. God made you a new man in Christ and the outworking of that in the time that followed is simply an outworking, an overflow, the fruit of him giving birth to you in a spiritual sense.

Finally, the Holy Spirit brought to you the right Lord. The right Lord. He brought the person of Christ to you in power. Look at chapter 5, verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father, loves the child born of

Him." It's the same construction in each verse. You didn't start to obey and then God gave you the new birth. That would be works salvation. We don't believe that because the Bible doesn't teach that. You didn't acquire salvation by starting to love other Christians and you loved Christians and then that gave the Spirit cause to bring the new birth to you. Well, understand it's the exact same construction that we see here in chapter 5, verse 1. What this verse is teaching us is that if you find yourself in life and you believe in the true Christ in the way that we have talked about throughout this message here this morning, that the originating source of that motivating power in your heart, the motivating power of that belief came from the Holy Spirit at his first initiative. Chapter 4, verse 19, "We love because He first loved us." And in that way, God gets all the glory. In that way, the work belongs to him, the certainty, the perfection, the ultimate accomplishment of the work rests in the person of God, not in what we do.

So you ask yourself as you look in that mirror and say, "I see my portrait. I see my face in the mirror of the true Christian. Oh, it is smudged and it is smeared a little bit and, yeah, it needs to be cleaned up even more, but I see myself in that mirror. I see myself in that spiritual mirror." And you find yourself, beloved, in that blessed position with the affirmation of the Spirit of God on the excitement of your human heart saying, "That's me!" And the Spirit says, "Yes, that's you!" Understand that you and I enjoy that glorious position because the Spirit of God brought it to us in his matchless grace and applied it to our hearts and made it real in a way that we could never have done in ourselves. You could have lived 10,000 lives of 80 years each and you never could have purged the controlling power of sin from your heart. Oh, beloved, don't you see it? We have this vast gift of eternal life that God has bestowed upon us, this vast, vast, immeasurably wonderful gift that God has given to us, and he did it by his power, by his choice, by his love and by his grace and we are the humble recipients of that. The Spirit of God came and saved you, indwelt you, transferred you to a different realm, and imparted a new nature to you that changed your affections.

Beloved, think about it this way: if you're a Christian here today, this statement is utterly true: God, God claimed you for himself. Blessed truth. Glorious opportunity to respond in love and praise. What does that do to our hearts? Well, it brings humility for such undeserved mercy. It brings joy in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sin. And beloved, mark this last point, beloved: that undeserved mercy provokes in our hearts a total, unconditional, unqualified allegiance to the one who brought that salvation to us; brings us to a point of unconditional allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ; that there is no call that he would make on our life that was too high to follow; that there was no price of suffering for him that was too great to pay; that there is no call of obedience that we would say, "O Lord, that's just a little bit too much." Don't you understand, beloved, that when you understand the greatness of salvation and understand the free grace that brought it to you, that it brings you to a place of blessed, utter, total submission to Christ that says in every area repeatedly throughout life, constantly without reservation, "O God, not my will but thine be done." That is our blessed privilege of responding to this incalculable gift of the Spirit that God has bestowed on those of us who know Christ.

Would you bow with me in prayer?

May I just say if you're not a Christian, please, please, please do not stay in the darkness. God does not trifle with your sin. He will judge it in his wrath if you refuse to turn to Christ now in this life, but, my friend, Christ can rescue you from your miserable state. Oh, why would you stay in the wrong life with the wrong loves and naming the wrong Lord, even thinking yourself as the master of your destiny and the captain of your soul? Oh please, you're not the captain of anything but your own sinful state. Christ is calling you today. He says, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Have you been agitated over your spiritual condition? Do you know that you're lost in sin? Hear the word of Christ. Christ is calling you right now urgently through his own word, saying, "Come to me. Come to me. I will give you rest." Oh, my friend, come to Christ. He has never turned away a sinner who truly comes to him and he never will. My friend, don't assume that you have tomorrow. Receive Christ today and enter into the kingdom of God as a gift of his grace.

*Father, we thank you and we honor you for the blessed privilege. Saying thanks is just so inadequate, O God, but we do thank you for the privilege of being a Christian. We thank you for the privilege of your word, the privilege of your Spirit, the privilege of Christ, the privilege of heaven that still awaits us, the full consummation of our salvation. We thank you for the sanctifying presence of the Spirit in our hearts. We thank you for each other. We thank you for your goodness and kindness, all just unbounded, free and measureless and strong. Father, sweep away our hearts in allegiance and love and obedience to you as the supreme object of our affections. If you have claimed us as your own, O God, then help us that we might live as your own as well. We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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