

MAY 20, 1990

FAITH AND LIFE

Does it really matter what you believe? Some people will tell you that it doesn't really matter as long as you are sincere. Many times we tend to think that what we believe has influence only on the "after life"; that is, will we go to heaven or hell. While there is truth in that belief, it is important for us to realize that what we believe affects the quality of our lives and how we conduct ourselves in the "here and now". If eternal life is truly timeless, then we should be experiencing something of that life right now if we are truly possessors of eternal life. So many times we tend to measure quality of life in terms of status, wealth, health, popularity; however, these things are not values of the Kingdom of God. The values of the Kingdom are righteousness, peace and joy. These other things are nice to have, but are not essential.

I JOHN 5:1-3 The means and the evidence: How is it that we can be born again, or be born of the Spirit of God. Jesus told Nicodemus that "you must be born again." The way to receive the new birth is through faith in what God did for us in Jesus Christ, His Son. This belief is more than just mental acceptance, but involves commitment to the fact that Jesus is God's Son. True belief is acceptance of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, as the Lord of our lives. It also involves trusting that "what Jesus did for us on the Cross satisfies the requirements of the penalty for our sins and restores us to fellowship with God." When we receive Him as Lord, then He quickens (gives life) to our spirits and we are born of His Spirit. This is the new birth. After we have experienced the new birth, part of the evidence is an confident faith that Jesus is the Christ.

The evidence that we love God is seen in our love for His children: Sometimes it is difficult to show our love for God in concrete ways. We can feel the emotion of love and express that in times of praise and worship but love needs to be demonstrated. John is suggesting that one way to do this is to show love to God's children. Sometimes that is not easy. You have probably had good friends whose children were really difficult people. Some of your best friends have brats for children and it is really difficult to care for the kids as you do their parents and yet for the sake of the relationship with the parents we show kindness and care for their children. We need to do the same for the children of God. We know we ought to love our fellow Christians without being told; however, we can add to that the command of Jesus that we are to "love one another, even as He loved us." Of course, the general way that we show our love for God is in obedience to Him.

I JOHN 5:3B-5 God wants us to keep His commandments. Jesus challenged His disciples to "take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." This is, in effect, a call to obedience and discipleship and a promise for help in carrying out what is required. To overcome the world is to gain victory over its sinful pattern of life which is just another way of describing obedience to God. For a true believer this is not a distasteful thing. Those who have been born again have the Holy Spirit living in them and He provides the ability and power and even the desire to do that which is pleasing to God.

John once again emphasized the importance of our beliefs. Who overcomes the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who is born of God? The one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who has the Holy Spirit living in him? The one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

I JOHN 5:6-12 Jesus came by "water" and "blood". The conventional interpretation of this is that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His baptism (water) and by the events surrounding the crucifixion (blood). One of the heresies that John was combating was that Jesus was just a man upon whom the "Christ consciousness" came at His baptism and left Him before He died on the cross. Therefore, the conclusion of the heresy is that He was born an ordinary human and died an ordinary human. I believe John is telling us Jesus was born the Son of God (water) and died on the cross as the Son of God (blood) and was the Son of God all the time in between. The witness of His physical birth testifies to His Sonship and the witness of His passion, including the death, burial and resurrection testifies to His Sonship because of the power of the Spirit that raised Him from death.

We have within us the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Son of God, plus we have

the evidence of His birth and death that were miraculous. John is making the point that three witnesses who all agree ought to be enough for anyone to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In the Jewish judicial system, if two or three witness could be found to agree then that information was taken as truth. I believe that the main problem of unbelief today is not that people cannot find the evidence that proves that Jesus is the Son of God--there is plenty of evidence. It is not that the evidence is not believable -- most is plain as day. The problem is that people WILL NOT believe. It is a matter of willingness and not a matter of ability to believe.

John points out the seriousness of refusing to believe Jesus is the Son of God in spite of all the evidence that He is. John said it is as if we were calling God a liar. God gave evidence and testimony that Jesus was His Son. God also gave the record for those of us who were not there at the time. We can see in the account of the life of Jesus that He was "eternal life". God has given us Jesus -- for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son -- and, therefore, He has given us eternal life. If we have Jesus abiding in us, then we have eternal life abiding in us. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." God gives this to us as a gift that we cannot earn nor buy. It is by grace that we are saved. This is God's unmerited favor -- it is not a reward for being good. It is up to us to believe and receive this gift by faith. We don't have eternal life apart from Jesus Christ, for He **is** life eternal. John does not say that God *will* give us eternal life but that He *has* given us eternal life. It is a possession that we have right now.

I JOHN 5:13 God wants us to be confident in our position in Him. We can **know** we have eternal life. We don't have to just hope it or wish it were so. We can know. If you have any doubt in your mind whether or not you have surrendered to Jesus, then the most important thing for you to do is to take care of that doubt. Surrender now and ask Jesus to live in you by His Holy Spirit and take control of your life. You can know, it is important that you do.