

CHRISTLIKENESS THE EVIDENCE OF SONSHIP

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." – 1 JOHN 2:6.

TO ABIDE in Christ implies that one has first come into Him. This gives us the thought of a Body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the Church as being this Body, with Jesus as the Head. "God gave Him to be Head over the Church, which is His Body." During the Gospel Age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this Body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the Body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ's death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus' steps, to become His followers, His disciples. We are buried with Him and rise to walk in newness of life. – Romans 6:4.

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the Holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in Him is to realize that we still love Him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God's Word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord's will. Still another is to have His peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

PROFESSION ALONE INSUFFICIENT

Many have made a profession of being members of the Body of Christ who do not give evidence of being His. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the Heavenly Father. He was fully

submissive to the Father's will. And this meant sacrifice unto death – the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord's spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the Body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in antagonism. God stands for His own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness. (1 John 3:4.) Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the Divine Word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" – "everything written in the Book." And so it is to be with us. We must abide in Him, walk **[R5447 : page 126]** in Him, and be willing to do "everything written in the Book" – not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I *will* take this course; but saying, "I *delight* to do Thy will, O my God; Thy law is written in my heart." – Psa. 40:7,8.

PROOFS OF SONSHIP

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great Kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are four hundred millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these four hundred millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be

taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by His Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

But what is the Spirit of God? Primarily it is the spirit of Truth, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of justice, the spirit of love. And as many as are God's children, begotten of His Holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. [R5447 : page 127] If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavor to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than Truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for Truth, and was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the Truth. He loves the Truth, and will manifest this fact by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the Devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the Truth, the spirit of unrighteousness – these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one's best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage from the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the *heart*. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavor, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the Truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

HOW WE CAN WALK AS HE WALKED

The Apostle's thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord's followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word *disciple* signifies one who follows – as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our Pattern, our Instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Savior. If, therefore, we say that we are in Him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as He walked.

But we are not perfect – how can this be done? The answer is that we "are not in the *flesh*, but in the *spirit*." God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle is in our text speaking of that walk that the Master had after He made consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the New Creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If, then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in His flesh as well as in His spirit. But we are to walk *as* He walked – in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which He walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by His grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

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