

"Look to Yourselves..."

- 2 John, Part 2

by Pastor Tim Dodson
of Jesus Fellowship of Believers
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7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may

receive a full reward. 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

As John moves to close out this letter, he takes a last moment to give a warning, a warning that many of us today need to hear. In this warning, he makes an interesting statement that could so easily be passed right by. **"Look to yourselves...that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward."**

"...look to yourselves..."

That's an interesting thing to say. Especially coming from a pastor/teacher who would be so quick to paint a picture that without Christ we have nothing...we *are* nothing...we are finished, and he would be right in doing so! In John's Gospel...chapter 15...Jesus says, **"Without me you can do nothing..."** Hmm. That's pretty emphatic and all encompassing. Or at least it *seems* to be! And yet here John seems here to actually be calling us to lean into ourselves to *...at least on some level*, remain standing through the spiritual battles! When one begins to look at the cross references of this verse...*this directive*, we start to find more of this language...

Mr 13:9 "But watch out for yourselves..."

Mr 13:23 "But (you) take heed..."

Lu 21:8 And He said: "(you) Take heed..."

Heb 12:15 "(you) look carefully..."

Re 3:11 "(you) Hold fast ..."

In fact, scripture seems to be ripe with passages urging us to self-analyze...to "step up to the plate."

"Let us examine our ways and test them..." 2 Corinthians 13:5

"Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves..." – 2 Corinthians 13:5

"Each one should test their own actions..." – Galatians 6:4

"...(you) be careful that you don't fall!" – 1 Corinthians 10:12

How do we reconcile what appears to be two opposing directives?

We know that the very foundation of our redemption is the absolute principle that we are saved by grace through faith. We are redeemed by Christ and Him alone...it is a free gift...and we cannot add to it in any way. Ours is but to receive. This truth is embraced by millions of Christians throughout the ages and it represents an anchor that cannot be moved.

However, somewhere along the way...the singularity of Christ's "absolute" salvation efficacy, began to *conveniently* slide into other realms and aspects of Christian living...*post redemption*...until for many professing Christians there is now virtually no part for *them* to play in the literal relationship Christ wants to have us. Certainly this is a serious aspect and serious error of the reformed/Calvinist movement.

Indeed, the phrase "personal relationship with Jesus" is not found in the Bible, ...*and that is so very very important to grasp when pouring the concrete foundation of your faith doctrines!* You must know that He *wants* and *does* commune and communicate with each of us individually. However, we must again not let that concept slide us off the trail and into the weeds. There is no special guidebook just for you, nor a special dispensation or "free pass" just for you. Scripture is not for any "private interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20) What God is calling us to DO and to BE as kingdom citizens is for all of us and for everyone.

Christianity is actually all about a *communal* relationship rather than an *individual* one. The concept of being in an individual relationship with Jesus is present, but it is understood to play out within the context of being part of a community of believers. You simply cannot be a Christian outside of a community of Believers due to so much direction and directives requiring our lateral participation with other believers in order to fulfill the Christian mandate. Therefore, sitting in a pew does not make you a genuine part of a community of believers...I hope you understand that.

Yes...when it came ...and when it comes today ... our salvation... *Jesus did it all*. He paid the whole bill, and we add nothing. However, this is not to say that I have no part to play. I do indeed have an allotted task to perform. My performance of this task is not meritorious (Eph. 2:8,9), meaning I do not earn it nor can I ever do enough to deserve salvation (Luke 17:10). Yet the fact remains that scripture is clear: without doing the will of the Father in heaven, I can never enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Not now...and not in the hereafter. I do not nullify God's part (Grace) by doing my part (Obedient Faith). Nor do I *add* to God's part, or *undo it* by *not* doing mine.

The problem lies in the fact that we tend to take the magic out of all this. When a man or a woman is authentically reborn, they factually surrender their lives to the king...their *whole* lives...all of it...and the Spirit of God comes and possesses them and there is a whole new creature with a whole new passion and motivation out on the field of play. That does not mean life will never be tough, or one will not have to make sacrifices. Actually, it means the opposite of "easy street." Moreover, we will never achieve any kind of perfection, but there is a new mandate for such an individual. He or she lives for *Christ first*. He or she serves at the pleasure of the king. There is no more "I don't have time...I don't have the motivation...I really don't want to...that is really hard...I have other stuff I have to do." No... *you don't*. Not if you are a Christian. If you are in the middle of that mess, you have not surrendered your life, and you are not reborn. That is what John has been driving home...without that actual love in play, you are still on the outside.

Throughout these letters, John has been attempting to clarify that love...real Christ agape love, is not something we *feel* toward Him or towards one another! It's what we *do for* and *concerning* one another. Christ didn't just

say He loved us and then found a beach somewhere. He *acted* His love out toward us, by first giving us His life and then giving us even His death. He went so far as to actually and physically DIE for us. This is the love that Christ wants from us and John is demanding of us.

Hebrews 5:9 should forevermore settle the controversy as to whether God and man both have a part to play in the salvation process. The record says that Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. It's not that we add to salvation by obeying, but rather if we have truly experienced salvation, then we will obey...thus our obedience serves as the litmus...the test of our redemption.

“...seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:31-32)

God did not save you just to survive this life, but to bring the Kingdom into action in every area. Jesus never said to “hope things get better.” He said that God has given you the Kingdom. That’s authority, and that means responsibility. You are called to bring the Kingdom everywhere you go. God’s Kingdom is not a place you go to; it’s an atmosphere and power we are called to carry. The Kingdom is a way of living, thinking, walking, loving, and eventually dying.

And know this: Jesus never asks us to “seek a breakthrough,” but rather to “seek the Kingdom.” When you live according to the Kingdom of God, breakthroughs happen naturally as a result of being aligned with God’s purposes. If you can fix your life, then Jesus died for nothing.

But God’s will isn’t automatic. If all you had to do was pray a prayer and suddenly the Kingdom would start working in your life, then Jesus wouldn’t tell us to “seek” it. The Kingdom needs to be learned, studied, and pursued. You can love God and still be losing in life if you’re not operating in the Kingdom. So pursue it, seek it out, and learn it.

Numerous examples of this principle are found in Scriptures. God made gracious provisions for Noah and his family to be saved from the flood. Did Noah contribute anything to his salvation from the flood? *“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he”* (Gen. 6:22). By faith he prepared an ark to the saving of his house (Hebrews 11:7). Noah couldn’t add anything to God’s power to protect him and God wouldn’t build the ark for Noah. Thus, God had his part and Noah had his. Noah didn’t earn anything. God deserves all the glory. However, if Noah hadn’t built the ark and followed God’s instructions, all of the grace that God had promised Noah would have been pointless.

It was the power of God that caused the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down. Yet, man had a part to play in bringing about the transaction. Men walking around the walls didn’t contribute any power that God needed to make the walls fall down. But God had made it clear that he would not do his part until man had done his (Heb. 11:30).

Verse 9 says *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”*

The Bible uses the word “sin” which means a “missing of the mark...a falling short.” This will always be a struggle and we will always fall short. But the Bible also uses the word “transgression.” Transgression is a

“knowing” sin. It includes elements of rebellion, rejection, and refusal of God and His directives. God told us to do something and we found a way...some excuse, to not do it. One cannot remain in such a state and be an authentic Christian. Because such an act says we are still in charge of our lives. Our state of Spirit-filled living must both reject transgression and embrace a continual abiding in what Jesus has instructed us.

The word translated “transgress,” in its original, means “to run ahead too far, to pass beyond the assigned limits.” In other words, it is false progress! It is *perceived* progress. We do this in many ways. One way is to somehow believe that because I am mentally *learning* more of this Christian stuff, that I am growing, maturing and have become a committed Christian. But is there a *manifest* of what you are learning? Are you living it out? Is it in diligent practice in your life?

There is a great danger of confusing knowledge with action...knowing the answer, with *living* the answer. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 8:1 “...*we know that we all have knowledge... Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*” Paul’s remarks run right in line with John’s! *Knowing* this stuff only increases our pride...our belief that we are spiritual giants. But love! Loving is the action that is to come forth from knowing this stuff. Loving Christ supremely and before anything else. And then loving one another with genuine agape love infused with truth!

So John is calling us out. He spoke throughout chapter 15 of his gospel...spelling out what it means to “be connected” to God. To endure. To remain. If we fail to do so...*no matter how long one did previously*, he or she is lost and frankly always was. He says again that an individual who “does not *abide* in the doctrine of Christ...*does not have God.*” It's been said that who you truly are, is the person who departs this world at the end of the movie. In between is anyone’s guess! I have known a lot of folks throughout the years...people that carried on for a long time... who danced amongst us... only to blow up in later years. They didn’t lose their salvation. John... *and Jesus*, say they never had it.

John goes on to warn us concerning who we are listening to. He warns the reader to watch out for false teachers who inevitably will come knocking. Both on your literal door as well as the door to your heart and certainly your emotions. We need to be warned here that these false teachers don’t always come from behind a pulpit, or author a book, or host a blog. That’s almost too easy. Often they will come to you via a phone call, a text, or a back-alley whisper. People you think you can trust. Paul warns in Acts 20:29-30 (NLT), “*I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.*” The idea that false teachers are always “outsiders” is false. Many arise from within the church...from within a church community.

Jesus didn’t merely drop vague hints about error. He was specific and scathing. In Matthew 7:15-20 (NLT), Jesus says: “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.” Jesus doesn’t tell us to ignore them or tolerate them—He tells us to beware. He also said in Matthew 24:11 (NLT): “And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people.” This is not a minor side issue. Jesus treated it as a defining danger of the last days.

John goes so far as to instruct us in how we are to interact with such folks: “...*do not receive him into your house nor greet him...for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*” I know. That sounds harsh. But this is messing with fire and John is trying to warn us to beware!

John has passionately tried to wave us off from the cliffs that lie ahead. But he cannot...just as I cannot, save you. We both can only spell it out: what salvation authentically is and what it is not. In the end, each of us must “look to ourselves” in honest review, because our failure in this matter...as we stand in judgment before Christ, will only be on us...