

## Character Traits of the Believer # 4

1 John 2: 7-11

Luke 6:43-45 – For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. <sup>[44]</sup> For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. <sup>[45]</sup> A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. In these verses Jesus reveals the true nature of our hearts is known by the lives we live, the words we speak, and the actions we perform. What we possess on the inside will eventually, and inevitably, make its way to the surface.

If we were to survey the community around us, I am certain many of those surveyed would claim association with Christ and consider themselves to be a Christian. But, what do their lives reveal? Is there any fruit that bears witness to such a claim? Are their lives lived in light of God's Word? Simply, Christians will be known by the life they live. That is not to say we are perfect, or that we never sin, but there will be evidence of our conversion.

In our text John speaks of such evidence, the fruit born by believers. He reveals two characteristics that ought to be present in the life of a Christian. I want to consider these [characteristics](#) as we think on: [Character Traits of the Believer](#). First we must consider:

**I. Our Acceptance of the Scripture** (7-8) – A genuine believer, one truly born again in Christ will embrace the Scripture as the Word of God. That isn't to say we will understand it all, but that we accept it as the very word of God. John speaks of:

**A. The Authority of Scripture** (7a) – [Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.](#) The words John has written and the thoughts he hopes to convey are nothing new. He is simply rehearsing to them commandments given of old from the Lord Himself. He was not asking the reader to embrace these words because he had written them, but because they were founded in Scripture.

- A genuine believer, whose heart is right with God, will accept the Word recorded within the Bible as the very word of God. It is given directly of Him, literally God breathed. It was penned of old by mortal men who were supervised by the Holy Spirit. [2 Tim.3:16 – All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:](#) We must accept the Word, as it is written, to guide our lives whether it comforts, confronts, or convicts! God's Word is the final authority for our lives.

**B. The Application of Scripture** (7b) – *The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.* As we considered, John was not offering something foreign to them. He was giving them instruction consistent with the Scriptures, the very words they had heard since childhood. He knew a genuine believer would be reluctant to discredit or ignore God’s Word and he urges them to apply these truths to their lives as well.

- I will admit certain portions of Scripture are easier to embrace than others. We love the thought of being able to do all things in Christ ([Phil.4:13](#)), but we don’t relish the thought of being unable to do anything without Him ([John 15:5](#)). We boldly proclaim those portions we assume apply to others, but rarely mention the verses that bring conviction to our lives. God has given His Word for our benefit. We have no problem embracing it as the Word, but often we have difficulty making application. A mature, victorious Christian will embrace and seek to apply the Word.

**C. The Affirmation of the Scripture** (8) – *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.* If there was any doubt or reservation, John sought to put those to rest here. Notice:

**1. The Presentation** (8a) – *Again, a new commandment I write unto you...* Some view this statement as contradictory to the previous verse, but there is no contradiction here. *Again* has the idea of “*on the other hand, or from a different point of view.*” As we will see in a moment, John is referring to Christ, the living Word. His life confirmed the Word. He came not to discredit the law and writings of old, but to fulfill them.

- Since God’s Word was given to humanity, men have sought to discredit and disprove it. Skeptics and scoffers remain today. They claim the Bible is filled with inaccuracies and contradictions. In fact, it possesses neither. God’s Word is pure. It will remain when all else has been destroyed. If you feel you have found a contradiction, you have erred in your interpretation. Scripture must be considered within its context. Measure your thoughts of Scripture against the Scripture. It will always reveal truth and accuracy!

**2. The Person** (8a) – *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you:* John speaks of the person of Jesus Christ. Keep in mind that John walked with Jesus. He experienced His miracles, His life, and the authority with which He spoke. John stood at the foot of the cross; he witnessed the empty tomb; and he spoke with the resurrected Lord. Jesus is the affirmation of the Scripture. The written Word became the living Word in a body of flesh.

- You may wonder what the significance of this verse is. It is very significant in fact. God gave the law to humanity to reveal the holiness of God and the utter depravity of mankind. Through the Old Testament writings we discover that God demands absolute righteousness and that we are incapable of obtaining that within ourselves. Had there been no gospel record, we would all remain in sin, condemned of God. Christ came to earth, lived a perfect life, offered Himself the atonement for sin, bore the judgment of God as He died on the cross, and rose in victory. That was done for our benefit. The gospel of grace is extended to us. Christ came to fulfill redemption's plan! Had there been no Jesus and no sacrifice, we would have no hope!

**3. The Perfection (8b)** – *because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. John reveals that Jesus secured our redemption. The darkness of humanity, the sin that created separation and condemnation, has been dispelled by the Light of the world. The Old Testament prophesied of His coming and Jesus completely fulfilled that prophecy. His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection provided the means for our salvation and eternal life! We have hope and the assurance of salvation in Christ our Savior.

- **Matt.22:37-40** – *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* <sup>[38]</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>[39]</sup> *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* <sup>[40]</sup> *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* Jesus reveals these two commandments literally sum up the Scriptures. We cannot love and serve God if we do not accept His Word and embrace it. Now John addresses the second characteristic, consistent with the great commandment.

**II. Our Affection for the Brethren (9-11)** – If we are truly born again in Christ, we will love the brethren. John deals with that love here. Consider:

**A. The Deception (9)** – *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*. John speaks of those who deceive themselves and seek to deceive others as well. This is a simple verse, easily understood. We cannot walk in the light of Christ, being born again in Him, and hate our brother. Light and darkness cannot inhabit the same space, just as love and hate cannot inhabit the same heart.

- A believer can be angry with someone, disappointed in their actions, and even grow bitter if they aren't careful, but they cannot hate another! If we harbor genuine hatred in our hearts for another, we remain in darkness even until now.

**B. The Devotion** (10) – [He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.](#) Here we discover the contrast to those who abide in darkness. The believer will love his brother because he abides in the light. The light of Christ has filled our soul and we now possess His love, and show that love to others. In reality, we cannot truly know love apart from God, for God is love.

- This also reveals a true measure of our faith. It affirms our relationship with Christ. [1 John 3:14a – We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.](#) Love for the brethren is a distinctive characteristic of those who are born again in Christ.
- Our love for others also serves as an effective witness. Our actions speak much louder than the words we speak. Many today are skeptical of the faith because of some who profess faith in Christ, but do not live in a way that represents Him. The world can deny many things, but it cannot deny or ignore genuine love. If you are interested in reaching someone for Christ, love them as He does. We are assured by Scripture that love will not create any occasion for stumbling or offence.

**C. The Despair** (11) – [But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.](#) Again John emphasizes a sobering truth regarding hatred for a brother. A life of despair will always be present with a heart of hate. Consider the aspects of such despair.

**1. The Condition** (11a) – [But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness.](#) We may not want to deal with the truth revealed, but this stands as a genuine measure of faith. It cannot be denied. If there is hatred, there is darkness. Those who possess and portray hatred walk in darkness. If you honestly harbor hatred in your heart, you have major spiritual issues. We cannot walk in the light of Christ and hate others. Hatred opposes the very nature of Christ. If hate exists, conversion is needed.

**2. The Confusion** (11b) – [and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.](#) Does this not picture those in sin, apart from Christ? Prior to salvation we all walked in darkness. We were blind to the truth. We wandered about, not sure where we were headed.

- Take a moment to reflect on our modern society. Is this truth not prevalent today? Our world is headed in the wrong direction. We are getting farther from God and His truth. But, what else can we expect? Those blinded by sin are pointing the way for others blinded as well. There is no sense of truth or right. Coming to Christ and walking in the light is man's only hope!

**Conclusion:** We have considered two characteristics that believers possess. If you have been saved, you have accepted the Word, but do you embrace it as you should? Does it serve as the authority and guide for your life? Are you committed to living according to the Word?

The saved love the brethren, but is our love all it should be? Do we love as Christ would have us to? Are we genuinely burdened for the needs of others? We cannot say we love others as we should and ignore the desperate needs of our day. I believe we all could love others more.

If you are not saved, you remain in darkness. You may say you believe the Scriptures are the very words of God, but you have neglected them. The Bible teaches that we must receive Christ as Savior and Lord if we are to inherit eternal life. If you have rejected the gracious offer of salvation, you remain defiant to the Word.

Whatever the case may be, whether saved or lost, Christ is the answer. I pray that each of us will respond to the leading of the Spirit in accordance to the Word.