

18. The Epistle of 1 John—3:21-4:1

(9/18/19)

1 John 3:18-22 (NKJV)

¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ²¹ **Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.** ²² **And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.**

When John says, “**If our heart does not condemn us...**”, he isn’t saying that some Christians are living a perfect life—but only that they’re living in such a way that their conscience is ‘clear.’ (Explain)

It reminds us of what Paul said when he was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Counsel, in Acts 23:1—“*Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*”

One author said with regard to Paul’s declaration—

“Paul had persecuted the church and had even caused innocent people to die, so how could he claim to have a good conscience? He had lived up to the light that he had, and that is all that a good conscience requires. After he became a Christian and the bright light of God’s glory shone into his heart (2 Cor. 4:6), Paul then saw things differently and realized that he was “the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).”

Another said,

“Here is the attitude of one who has a clear conscience before God. It is not that this person has been living sinlessly, but rather that he has been quick to confess and forsake his sins. By doing this, he has confidence before God and boldness in prayer.”

Now, with regard to boldness in prayer—we have been commanded to come into God’s presence with boldness as His children: “*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Hebrews 4:16)

Later in chapter 5, John goes on to address answered prayer in more detail—

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (Comment)

1 John 3:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ **Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.** ²² **And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.** ²³ **And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.**

“...we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (v.22)—expresses the heart and passion of the Lord Jesus—

John 8:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

“**And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ**” (v.23)

The idea that God ‘*commands*’ people to be saved seems to go against the idea (supported in Scripture) that God ‘*invites*’ people to be saved—and yet aren’t those two things mutually exclusive? So how do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

If you study the context, John is dealing with false teachers and their heretical teachings with regard to the Person of Jesus Christ (check out verses 2 and 3 of chapter 4) and the gospel of Christ which they perverted.

When John says that it’s “**God’s commandment that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ**”—He isn’t commanding people to be saved. He only invites and lets people decide for themselves if they will accept or reject His invitation.

What He is commanding is, that if people *want* to be saved—they must do it His way!

They must believe in the true Jesus Christ and the true gospel—not some false Christ and mystical, works oriented so-called ‘gospel.’

This is the very command of Jesus when He said—

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ "Enter [a command in the Greek] by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

You see, this was directed at those who had already decided they wanted to get to heaven—but were trying to get there on their terms and according to their way (religion).

God commands that the only way that will lead to heaven is thru the narrow gate (Christ and the cross) and therefore those who want to come to Him must (command) come thru His Son and thru the gospel of grace. (Comment)

Acts 17:29-31 (NKJV)

²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...

Yes, God commands those who want to know Him that they must repent of their idolatry and embrace the true gospel if they really want to get to heaven.

“...and love one another, as He gave us commandment” is no doubt a reference to John 13:34-35. (Comment)

But listen, loving other Christians doesn't ‘earn’ us the right to answered prayer—it simply demonstrates that we are living in the will of God and therefore in a place in our relationship with God where His blessings (including answered prayer) *can* be poured out upon our lives.

In this regard, God treats His children in much the same way any good parent will treat their children.

A good parent will withhold blessings from a disobedient child while blessing those children living in obedience—God won't bless rebellion anymore that we parents will—which is all that John is saying here in verse 22.

Love is the fulfilling of God's Law—all of His commandments:

Romans 13:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "*You shall not commit adultery,*" "*You shall not murder,*" "*You shall not steal,*" "*You shall not bear false witness,*" "*You shall not covet,*" and if *there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

Love is the fulfilling of God's Law and therefore—when you love the brethren, you are obeying His commandments and He is able to answer your requests.

A believer's relationship to the Body of Christ cannot be divorced from his prayer life—which is especially true in marriage (1Peter 3:7).

John, in verse 22, seems to be drawing on something Jesus said in John 15:7—"*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*"

1 John 3:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is truly living in our hearts and that we are the children of God (born-again)?—

1 John 2:3 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments—

1John 3:23

²³ **And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.**

Verse 24 of chapter 3 becomes the transition into a warning that John gives to open up our chapter 4 (John’s original epistle had no chapter divisions).

Chapter 4

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

“...test the spirits”—where do you get a ‘spirit tester’?

Can you buy one at Ace Hardware?

I still remember the days when you could walk into Ace Hardware and use their ‘tube tester’ machine to test the tubes from your T.V. to see if they still working or had burned out.

When John admonishes us to “test the spirits”—he was referring to testing the *teachings* of those professing to be speaking on behalf of God. (Beware of doctrines of demons—1Tim.4:1)

The Bible calls those who speak on behalf of God ‘prophets’—but then warns us that not everyone *claiming* to speak for God is really doing so.

In other words, not all ‘prophets’ are *true* prophets of God—

Jeremiah 14:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them..."

Jeremiah 23:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ "...Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:21 (NKJV)

²¹ "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

Jeremiah 23:25-27 (NKJV)

²⁵ "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long will *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart, ²⁷ who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.

Just as Israel was rife with false prophets back then—so too is the Church rife with false prophets today—as Peter warned us:

2 Peter 2:1 (NKJV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

And so again—where do we get a ‘spirit-tester’ (‘a false teachers revealer’)?—you have it in your hands—the Word of God.

Acts 17:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

Proverbs 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the commandment *is* a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life,

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good [‘of God’].

John’s admonition becomes all the more relevant to Christians living in the last days because—
“many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

If you have been following the presidential race, then you know that one of the candidates running for president is New Age guru and prophet Marianne Williamson.

Marianne Williamson was a relatively obscure person, known only by those in her New Age orbit—that is until she came on Oprah Winfrey’s show in 1992.

Oprah introduced her as the author of a new book—“*My favorite book*”—“*A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles.*”

In fact, Oprah loved Williamson’s book promoting “A Course in Miracles” so much that she devoted an hour a day on her XM Satellite radio show, “Oprah and Friends” to airing 365 lessons (an entire year’s worth) from the *Course in Miracles* "Workbook."

Of course, Oprah’s endorsement of Williamson “put her on the map” and created a huge interest in what New Ager’s refer to as their “spiritual bible”—“*A Course in Miracles*”.

A Course in Miracles is allegedly "new revelation" from "Jesus" to help humanity work through these troubled times by giving us the knowledge to speed up our evolution in our journey to oneness with all creation and with God who is really *us* (pantheism).

Christian apologist, Warren Smith says concerning this,
"This "Jesus" -- who bears no doctrinal resemblance to the Bible's Jesus Christ -- began delivering his channeled teachings in 1965 to a Columbia University Professor of Medical Psychology by the name of Helen Schucman. One day Schucman heard an "inner voice" stating, "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes." For seven years she diligently took spiritual dictation from this inner voice that described himself as "Jesus." The 1200-page Course in Miracles was quietly published in 1975 by the Foundation for Inner Peace. For many years "the Course" was an underground cult classic for New Age seekers who studied "the Course" individually, with friends, or in small study groups."

So, Marianne Williamson wasn't publicly famous and influential—until she came on the Oprah Winfrey show in 1992 and Oprah introduced her to the world—

And this is what Oprah said,

"Marianne is a leader in a philosophy that I personally know could change the world. I believe that in my heart. I have read many books over the years but I have never been moved by a book like I have by Marianne Williamson's 'A Return to Love'. So moved in fact that I went out and bought a thousand copies and will be giving each of you one before you leave here today. I really believe that the message in 'A Return to Love' is the message that we all need in our lives. If it sounds like I'm trying to hype the book I really am! It's the first time you can open a book and actually see some answers."—Hello! What about the Bible?!!

Oprah's endorsement skyrocketed Williamson's book about *A Course in Miracles* to the top of the New York Times bestseller list.

So just what did this "Jesus" in *A Course in Miracles* say to Helen Schucman that has captivated so many people including Williamson and Winfrey?

"There is no sin. . . "9

A "slain Christ has no meaning." 10

"The journey to the cross should be the last 'useless journey.'"11

"Do not make the pathetic error of 'clinging to the old rugged cross.'"12

"The Name of Jesus Christ as such is but a symbol. . . . It is a symbol that is safely used as a replacement for the many names of all the gods to which you pray." 13

"God is in everything I see."14

"The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself."15

"The oneness of the Creator and the creation is your wholeness, your sanity and your limitless power." 16

"The Atonement is the final lesson he [man] need learn, for it teaches him that, never having sinned, he has no need of salvation."17

"For the undoing of the crucifixion of God's Son is the work of the redemption, in which everyone has a part of equal value." (Text, p. 209)

"The song of Easter is the glad refrain the Son of God was never crucified." (Text, p. 428)

"You are not persecuted, nor was I." (Text, p. 94)

"There is no sin; it has no consequence." (Workbook, p. 183)

"Innocence is wisdom because it is unaware of evil, and evil does not exist." (Text, p. 38)

"Those who oppose the 'Christ' in the Course in Miracles are Antichrist."

Warren Smith gives some examples of the lessons in A Course in Miracles workbook—

*"For example, Lesson #29 asks you to go through your day affirming that **"God is in everything I see."** Lesson #61 tells each person to repeat the affirmation **"I am the light of the world."***

*Lesson #70 teaches the student to say and believe **"My salvation comes from me."***

*By the end of the year, "Oprah & Friends" listeners will have completed all of the lessons laid out in the Course in Miracles Workbook. Those who finish the Course will have a wholly redefined spiritual mindset -- a New Age worldview that includes the belief that there is no sin, no evil, no devil, and that God is "in" everyone and everything. A Course in Miracles teaches its students to rethink everything they believe about God and life. The Course Workbook bluntly states: **"This is a course in mind training"**5 and is dedicated to **"thought reversal."**6*

Over the past 25 years, Marianne Williamson has continued to champion *A Course in Miracles* in the media and in her public appearances around the country.

A more recent book, *Healing the Soul of America*, has enabled Williamson and the Course to make a subtle transition into the **political** arena, hoping to inspire a "new gospel" approach to national and world problems—and thus her run for president. (God help us!!)

I only bring up Marianne Williamson because she *is* running for president—and even though she has no chance of winning—her campaign and all the national attention she is receiving is going to revive interest in her New Age/occult doctrines and renew her role as a New Age prophet.

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.