

BaptistWay Bible Series for October 31: Facing the future with confidence

October 19, 2010

How can we know we'll stand confident and unashamed before Christ at his coming? John tells us to "continue in him" (1 John 2:28).

But what does this mean exactly? If we already attend church, pray and read our Bibles on a regular basis, aren't we doing what's necessary to continue in him? As we consider the answers to these questions, let's first review John's thoughts in this week's passage.

Do what is right

In 1 John 2:29, John says, "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him." It's a simple statement of truth. If you've been transformed through relationship with Jesus, you'll do what is right.

Then John inserts a passage of praise. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). He draws our attention to the miracle of salvation, that sinful man is allowed to have relationship with a God who can't tolerate the presence of sin.

Purify yourself

What follows is a call to accept the responsibility we bear as children of God. "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be

like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Because God's love for us is so pure, we should strive for purity as well. But notice John acknowledges we haven't yet achieved perfect likeness to Jesus.

This is an important point to remember as we continue reading since, in verse 6, John seems to call us to nothing less than perfection: "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him."

The truth is, we sin. Paul teaches we're all sinners. So what does John mean?

The secret of "continuing"

To understand where John is coming from, let's go back to our earlier question: What does it mean to "continue in him"?

In the original Greek, continue means to stay, especially with regard to a particular relationship or state of expectancy. In the King James version of the Bible, the word is translated abide, or as we'd say today, live. So when John tells us to continue, he isn't talking about being perfect, but about belonging to the one who is perfect. He isn't talking about the appearance of our actions, but about the focus of our hearts.

Jesus uses this same thought process when he tells us to remain in him in John 15:5. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In this passage, it's clear that all "doing" results from "remaining." In other words, when we "do what is right," it isn't we who act, but Christ through us. We are branches that grow out of the vine Jesus. If we remain in him, we are sustained and strengthened by him. It isn't we who grow fruit. Any

fruit we create results from the nourishment provided by Jesus.

Now look at verses 7 and 8. “He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.” Only the vines that remain in the branch can do what is right. Without the power of Christ within us, we have no righteousness, so we sin.

Our calling, then, is not to do, but to remain. As long as our hearts are 100 percent focused on Jesus and his purpose for our lives, we will do what is right. But if we unplug ourselves for even a moment, we’ll find ourselves doing the things we know we shouldn’t do.

Facing the future with confidence

With that in mind, let’s consider the question raised by today’s lesson: How can we know we’ll stand confident and unashamed before Christ at his coming? A quick reading of the lesson would lead us to believe it’s in performing good deeds and achieving a state of perfection.

In reality, it is in exchanging our sin for Jesus’ righteousness. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). But in order to achieve this exchange, we must remain in him.

Performing the action of a dedicated Christian isn’t enough. Going to church helps us learn the heart of God, but it doesn’t give us a heart like his. Reading the Bible and praying help us know him better, but they don’t automatically plug us into him. If, when we put down our Bible, we also unplug from his power, we can’t continue in him, as John commands.

Let’s ask God to give us the grace to remain in him all day, every day. Let’s ask him to give us his heart and the will to respond to the circumstances of life as he would want.

Food for thought

Read Matthew 5:43-48, focusing particularly on verses 44, 45 and 48. How does today's lesson relate to these verses?

Is there a particular situation in your own life where you feel you aren't responding as God would want you to respond? Have you prayed about the situation? What is one thing you could immediately do to bring a more Christ-like spirit into the situation?