



## Whom Are You Fooling? by [John T Polk II](#)

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

A Christian is not to:

Think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think soberly (**Romans 12:3**).

It is a completely worldly characteristic to seek self-elevation, that is, to stroke one's own ego. Following Christ changes this outlook entirely.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion (**Romans 12:16**).

This last forbidden expression, "wise in your own opinion," is aimed at the worldly, false sense of "self-esteem" so eagerly taught to children. When people say concerning what they have said or done, "I'm happy with it," and think that settles judgment with everyone else, they are friends of the world, but at enmity with God (**James 4:4**). The desire to be known as the "first," "best," "smartest," "most popular," has caused ruin within and without the churches of Christ, for it is "sectarian" in its very core.

This grasping for self-importance is a most destructive attitude. The Corinthians' obedience to the Apostle Paul's preaching in Corinth (**Acts 18:1-18**) seemed to begin the church of Christ there, but he didn't feel the need to remind them, years later, that he was their *first located preacher*:

We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us--a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. But 'he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.' For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends (**2 Corinthians 10:13-18**).

God is not impressed when we commend our own achievements, but only when we accept His judgment as our standard of acceptance. Any Christian, Gospel Preacher, Eldership or local church that must constantly list their achievements to impress others must repent and get back to the mind of Christ, for:

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked (**1 John 2:6**).

### **Saint or Sinner?**

The line between saint and sinner has been blurred in many people's minds so they think they are followers of Christ without repenting of their sins!

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (**1 John 1:6**).

God's line has not changed, though:

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them (**Ephesians 5:5-7**).

[Jesus said:] "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (**John 8:12**).

No one who remains in their sins is in "fellowship" with, nor "has any inheritance" from, God.

### **Live Good Enough Without Christ?**

Many seem to think that if they live by Christian principles, they do not need to repent of sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (**1 John 1:8**).

It's true that ungodly people may do good, but it is **not** true that ungodly people who do good do not need to be converted to Jesus Christ.

[God's] grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (**John 1:17**),

But He taught that all must:

Repent, and believe in the gospel (**Mark 1:15**).

[Jesus said:] "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (**Mark 16:16**),

which allows God to work "in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ" (**Hebrews 13:21**). Jesus also said,

"Without Me you can do nothing" (**John 15:5**).

## Once Saved, Not Always Saved

There are many who think they have been saved and sealed so that they cannot sin and be lost.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (**1 John 1:10**).

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (**1 John 2:1**).

If God's written Word is obeyed, people would not willingly choose to remain in sin, for it is inconsistent with a Christian life. But Christians may sin. Paul wrote "the church of God in Corinth" to:

Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (**1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:12**).

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall (**Hebrews 4:11**).

Those who can enter "that rest" can "fall," hence the warning. It is impossible for a Christian to also choose to "continue in sin" (**Romans 6:1-2**), a completely contradictory life-style!

### Look Closely

If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also (**1 John 4:20-21**).

In Christ, who is our "brother?" All those who were:

... Baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:3-4**).

Since "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (**Acts 2:47**), no one, in or out of the church of Christ, can hate Christians and claim to "love God."

### Say And Do Not

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (**1 John 2:3-4**).

Saying but not obeying only deceives one's own self. Commands "in Jesus' name" are "His commandments." Jesus' Apostle Peter commanded,

'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (**Acts 2:38**).

To claim "remission of sins" before repenting **and** being baptized, means a person has not kept "His commandments."

[Jesus said of Pharisees,] "They say, and do not do" (**Matthew 23:3**).

[Jesus also said,] "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (**John 14:21**).

Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you, truly, "know him?"

What we "say" about our spiritual condition may not be accurate according to God's Written Word. Therefore religious "claims" must constantly be tempered and checked by the Scriptures, not personal witnessing. Our stroked egos will not determine our eternity, for Jesus said:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

We are only fooling ourselves to "claim," but not practice, what God's Word says!

-----**John T. Polk II**

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