

Context: The book of first John is a letter written in response to the fact that many within the church had come and went. They had professed to be true followers of Jesus but had subsequently denied that profession with their false teaching and fruitless lives. They were now espousing lies, as well as living one.

So, the apostle John, pens this letter to those who were still a part of the true church. And he says, let me remind you what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

John pulls no punches. He leaves no confusion in what he is saying. It's black and white. Quite plainly, John is saying; a decision for Jesus that doesn't produce clear and ongoing evidence of that decision within a life, was never a true decision for Jesus. You can't read any part of this letter and think anything else.

John is very clear in articulating that a believer is known by the evidence that is produced from being born of God. And he says in chapter 2:5, 6. "...By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." Jesus' pattern of life should be the believer's pattern of life.

But John is also clear that we are not the source of living God's way. Just like with your salvation, the fruit of salvation can only come from God himself. It can only come from the glorious gift of *abiding* in God.

That's why John says in the first part of verse 28 to...

***Remain with Jesus* (28a) ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him,** Abide is John's word. He really likes it, because Jesus used it. John records Jesus using the word abide 10X's in John 15.

And in this letter, John uses some form of the word abide, no less than 18 times. It's really the thread that runs through this entire letter.

The point being; it's not just coming to Jesus but staying with him. Being a believer means not just one encounter with Jesus but rather a constant and ongoing relationship with him.

And based on what Jesus says about abiding (**John 15:5 whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing**), it's the key to producing the fruit, the evidence of a true believer.

Tree PIC --Abiding is like this picture. I am (you are) the little tree. Only alive, only thriving because of what it is attached to. No source of life for itself except what it draws from the other.

So, his command to us, is to abide in him. To stay or remain. Why is this a command? Because we don't naturally remain. Our default is to wander.

The old hymn "*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*" says it so well:
Bind my wandering heart to Thee, Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;

We far too easily are led away, whether by the world, or more commonly by ourselves. And many times, we don't even realize it's happened.

John is using the word abide to describe the believer's effort to keep the faith in the strength that God provides.

But, practically speaking, how do you abide?

To abide in Jesus, is to know and believe in Jesus. *Keep doing what you did when you first believed.* And do so continuously. Ongoingly.

By faith, know and believe in the love of Jesus; the love he has for you in all things, at all times.

By faith, know and believe the words of Jesus; who he says he is. what he has done. what he will do in the future. what he says about you.

What you did when you first came to Jesus...keep doing that.

Know him more. Submit to him more. Believe him more.

Remain. Minute by minute, hr. by hr., day by day.

So, moving much quicker, since we have only covered 7 words so far. Let's look at the blessings of abiding--confidence and consistency in the life of true believers.

Remain with Jesus...

- ***To produce confidence***

If you were to die today and stand before Jesus and he asked you why he should let you in to heaven, how would you respond?

This is a question that we ask in a couple of different contexts within our church. Because how you answer that question is very telling. It reveals if you understand the gospel. How you answer reveals where your confidence is placed--you or Jesus.

Is your confidence in you? Being a good person? Your church attendance? Your good works?

Or in Jesus? His sinless nature? His place in heaven? His finished work?

John desires the church to be confident. To have the assurance of salvation. And that assurance of salvation comes from the one who gave you salvation.

From this passage, remaining with Jesus, produces confidence in three key areas.

1. In when Jesus returns

(2:28-29) ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

➤ If you are like most people, especially these days, you are probably not too keen on uninvited guests just showing up at your door.

The appearance of your house is typically the reason for this. A little heads up goes a long way.

Growing up, we had one room in our house that we were never allowed to go into. It was the living room just inside the front door. One key reason for this room; it was the one room that was always presentable. So, just in case, someone came knocking

unannounced, they could be quickly ushered into to that room and perhaps convinced the rest of the house looked the same.

Even though my Mom kept a very clean home, with 7 kids in the home, there were areas of the house that no one outside of the family was going to see. It was a way of managing what people didn't see, in order to prevent my Mom specifically from experiencing any embarrassment in front of our guests.

We won't be able to do that at the unannounced return of Jesus. Jesus will expose everything about our life. At his coming, our life will be laid bare before him. We will see our life in the light of his holy presence.

We will be like Isaiah in Isaiah 6, when he was given a vision of the Lord...
“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”
IOW, Isaiah saw his life perfectly in light of the perfect person of God.

When Jesus returns we will see our life in the light of his holiness. And being in his presence, according to John, apparently, some will experience a level of shame at his return.

*The greatest shame will be experienced by those who don't believe. There will be no comfort to be found by them.

But specifically, for those, who are born of him but not practicing righteousness, John says they will experience a level of shame and want to *turn* from him rather than *run* to him. Saved, yes, but embarrassed none the less as their sin is clearly seen.

Let me ask this morning, is there anything in your life that would cause a level of embarrassment if Jesus was an unexpected guest at the door? He knows already, he just wants you to see it too.

Let me encourage you to allow his holy light to shine fully on your life today. As a believer, evaluate your life right now.

3:3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Repent. Now. Choose righteousness. And in doing so, you will be confidently ready for his return. You will run into his arms instead of shrinking back.

Confident in when Jesus returns, but also remaining with Jesus produces confidence

2. In *who* you are now

(3:1-2a) See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (God is not their Father, because they are not his) ² Beloved, we are God's children now,

How would you answer the question; who are you?

Traditional answer: You are your responsibilities —as a man, woman, employee, employer, student...

Modern answer: You are your desires. What you feel is who you are.

But as a believer we have a much better answer. The gospel provides a much greater reality.

Gospel answer: You are God's adopted child

Not just regenerated (born again-29). Not only justified (declared righteous through Jesus' righteousness). Not only sanctified (made holy and becoming holy).

The perfect heavenly Father loved us so much, he did more than all that, he did more than send Jesus to die for us and take away our sin.

God the Father adopted us. He made his chosen people, his adopted children.

Just like any earthly adoptive parents do, by his love he wanted us. He chose us. He pursued us. He made us brothers and sisters with his very Son. He made us heirs with him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are. Which is why we can confidently cry Abba Father!
REMARKABLE!

No matter what happens to you in this life. No matter what people do or don't do to you or for you---the adoption ruling from your heavenly Father never changes. God's gavel has fallen and your seat with the family at the table is forever secure.

Permanently family. Irrevocable, untouchable, and protected through suffering, doubt and even in death.

The question that begs to be answered in light of that is; Why do we far too often live like an orphan rather than rest as a child of the King of kings? Why then are we so insecure?!
Beloved, we are God's children now,

Remain and rest assured in who you are now. Relax in the loving protection of your heavenly Father.

Remaining with Jesus produces confidence

3. In *what* you will be (3: 2b) and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

I long to be free from the constant presence of sin in me. I can't wait until I can't sin anymore. So does my wife.

Imagine that. I do quite often actually. I imagine being sinless. Imagine for a second you without sin.

Imagine our relationships without sin. What a glorious day that will be.

This is what we have to look forward to. Not just Jesus returning and seeing him face to face but being glorified in the presence of Jesus. Not just being with Jesus but being like Jesus.

What is Jesus like? Fully human but glorified. Transformed. He is sinless (which he has always been) And he is physically perfect--void of any effects of sin.

And when we see him, we too will be glorified. Our sanctification will be complete. We will become sinless beings with immortal and perfect bodies.

Sin is not just gone but never to return. Our bodies won't just stop deteriorating, they will be made perfect never to know the ravishes of time, disease or injury again.

Don't lose heart. Remain with Jesus. Live in the hope of what will be for all of eternity.

And then rest in the confidence that God is actively working on you in this life.

He will perfectly finish the work he has started in you. He will make you to be like his Son Jesus.

Remain with Jesus to produce confidence but also...

- ***To develop consistency (3:3)***

I am not sure of anyone who doesn't desire to be more consistent in their life.

More consistent growth.

I want consistency as a husband. Father. Friend. Employee. Pastor.

Consistency is such a good thing when it comes to our thinking rightly. Biblical principles. Spirit-led convictions. Serving and caring for one another. Exercise. Finances.

What about consistency in the most important aspect of your life—your holiness? Your purity in all things.

If we think about holiness we usually think about it wrongly. We have a poor understanding of it. It seems prudish. A list of do's and don'ts. Legalism.

Holiness is simply becoming who Jesus saved you to be. Set apart. Different. Like Jesus. Holiness is God's will for your life.

And abiding enables you the consistency to do just that.

Remaining with Jesus, develops consistency in two ways.

- 1. In not doing what is wrong (3:4-6;8-10)***

These verses are a bit redundant and explicit to get the point across. Making it a bit shocking. Add some commentary as we read.

4. Everyone who makes a practice (willful and habitual act) of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness (sin is the deliberate rejection and active disobedience to God's will—whether in attitude, thought or action).

5. You know that he (Jesus) appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

6. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. (habitually and willfully sinning is 100% inconsistent and contradictory of what Jesus did for you and who he is in you.) ***8. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.***

9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed (his very life; nature) abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

(John is not saying we won't sin; On this side of heaven we can't become sinless, but we should be sinning less because of the new life within us)

10. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. Only two families to belong to: we are not all God's children; people are either God's or the Devil's. Your first birth makes Satan your father; your second birth, makes God your Father. Black and white.

John's point: sinning has no place in the life of a believer. We have no right to sin habitually and willfully.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Paul asks rhetorically in **Romans 6: 2** We can't.

And more than just *not* wanting to sin, we need to hate it. I can say I hate sin. I hate how sin destroys people, families, relationships, societies, and even churches. I hate the sin in the world today. Sin is literally the root cause of everything wrong in the world.

But if I'm truly honest, it's easier for me to be annoyed, disgusted and angry about other people's sin more than my own. It's easier for me to hate your sin more than mine.

I think that's a natural tendency for all of us.

Hatred for sin has to start with a great hatred of our own sin.

Why don't we hate our sin more? We have plenty of reason to.

1. It ruined God's creation; 2. It brought death into the world; 3. It sent Jesus to the cross; 4. Satan loves it; 5. It damned us to hell; 6. It can bring about the discipline of our Father; 7. It grieves the HS; 8. It quenches the HS; 9. It hurts us and those we love; 10. It robs God of his glory.

Jesus came to take away sins, so we need to be at war with our sin and not practicing it. And hatred is a good place to start in order to develop consistency in not doing what is wrong.

And the best way to grow in hatred for our sin is to remain near the One who gave his life for us to be free from sin.

Remain with Jesus for consistency in not doing what is wrong but also...

- 2. In doing what is right (2:29; 3:3, 7)***

29a If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices (willful and habitual) righteousness has been born of him. 3:3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 7 Little children let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

God's grace covers our failures and sins. But our holiness matters greatly to our Father. The standard of holiness for the believer is high, because the behavior of God's children matters to him.

Just like the behavior of my own children mattered to me because my kids reflect me.

The likeness of God's sons and daughters to the SON is of great importance to him.

Believers are to reflect their Holy Father.

If not sinning comes from a place of hatred --practicing righteousness must come from a place of love.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

To abide in Jesus is to first and foremost *love* Jesus.

And when we love him then we will love what he wants for us. To be like him and to love what he is—righteousness. When we do, we for sure will look like a child of God.

If we love Jesus then we will practice righteousness.

Here's the great thing about remaining with Jesus. He keeps us remaining. He makes demands on our life, and then makes sure we know that he has us even when we may not have him.

Nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus. Rom. 8 -Not even our wandering

Jesus prays that our faith may not fail-- even if we fail to remain. Luke 22:31-32

No one will snatch us out of God's hand—John 10:27-29—we are his children

So, little children, church, remain, practice and then rest assured that the best place to be is near Jesus