

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 12TH, 2019 // 1 JOHN

ABIDE IN HIM (2:28-3:3)

The Christian life begins whenever someone believes and trusts in Jesus- but then what?

- We are to "continue" (or, "abide") in Him so that when we see Jesus face to face, we may be confident and unashamed.
- Verse 28 has actually been the topic of much debate- is this a reference to unsaved people being ashamed, the possibility of losing salvation, or Christians being ashamed?

At the judgment seat of Christ, believers' works will be evaluated and eternal rewards will be given- and at that time the possibility of shame exists.

- 1 Cor. 3:10-15 tells us that a person's works will be revealed as either perishable or imperishable.
- But how can we produce things that are eternal and not be ashamed? We are to ABIDE in Him- and in so doing we will produce fruit!

In vs. 29, John reminds his readers that the new birth HAS to be accompanied by righteousness.

- Those who profess salvation but don't actually demonstrate any real fruit of righteous living are actually unforgiven and don't have any real confidence of salvation.

John then breaks out in spontaneous worship and wonder at the love of God in making us His children (3:1).

- It's the fruit of our lives that reveals who we are- not just an outward profession and a title.
- The reason we're not accepted by the world is that the world doesn't know our Father.
- If we're truly living like Jesus, doing what He did, and displaying righteousness in our lives, we'll never be fully accepted by the world.

Even though we're God's children, we won't really grasp the full significance of this reality until He appears (vs. 2-3).

- This process of our transformation on the earth- which is slow, frustrating, and uneven- will be rapid and complete when we see Jesus.
- Once we begin to understand the unimaginable wonder of this fact, we will WANT to live pure and holy lives (vs. 3).

DO NOT LIVE IN SIN (3:4-10)

The following passage is one that has been the topic of debate from various Bible scholars across the theological spectrums.

- The tension in this passage is meant to rattle us and shake us out of any notion that God is O.K. with us tolerating sin in our lives.
- The opening statement is obvious- "sin is lawlessness" (a trait of "Antichrist", 2 Thess. 2:3-4)- when we sin, we break God's law.

The reason Christ came was to take away not only the curse and death that sin brings but to take away sin itself (vs. 5).

- Therefore, it's unthinkable that any person truly abiding in Him would keep on sinning.
- Here's where this gets confusing- the letter already acknowledged that we have sinned and that we DO still sin (1:8-2:1).

Vs. 8 provides us some clarity- "whoever makes a practice of sinning" isn't truly born of God.

- The verbs in these sentences are present tense, which means, "keeps on sinning".
- We will sin, we may even sin badly- Peter cursed and denied Jesus, the Corinthians tolerated adultery and violated the Lord's supper, and the churches in Asia (Rev. 2-3) sinned.

But anyone who has truly been born of God can't stay in a lifestyle of willful, unrepentant sin.

- A true believer can NEVER settle down into a lifestyle characterized by sin and they can never adopt a lifestyle that the false teachers of the day were encouraging them to live.
- But when people live in open, unrepentant, and habitual sin- and yet still claim to have been born of God- they're lying.

Remember the context- false teachers were claiming that Christians don't sin, they're free to sin, and if they do sin, it doesn't matter anyway because we're spiritual, not physical.

- John ultimately DESTROYS this absurd idea- it's evident those who are children of God and those who are children of the devil (vs. 10).
- People prove to be "children of the devil" when they refuse to do what's right and refuse to love.

Scripture takes seriously believers as born-again, Spirit-filled, new creatures in Christ.

- It doesn't tolerate any casual attitude towards sin- sin and salvation are opposites!
- Wanting to sin is not part of being led by the Spirit or having Christ in us.
- Refusal to take this passage & warning seriously should call us to reexamine our commitment to Christ.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER (3:11-18)

Again we hear the message of love from the beginning of Jesus' ministry (2:7).

- But before we learn what love is, we read what love is not.
- We shouldn't be like Cain, who murdered his brother Abel.
- Why did Cain murder Abel? Abel's righteousness apparently caused Cain resentment and anger that was intense enough to incite murder.

As a result, just as Cain hated Abel, so the world will despise Christians.

- Some people will see righteous living and Godly fruit in your life and it will cause them so much resentment and guilt they'll hate you.
- Anyone who has "passed from death to life" (vs 14) will love the "brothers", not hate them.
- In fact, hatred is described as murder, and anyone who hates isn't of God.

The Christian, as long as they are abiding in Christ & living in conscious fellowship with Christ, will not continue to harbor habitual hate towards another individual.

- If a person is willing to harbor habitual, unrepentant hate or they have no remorse at murder, that person is not a Christian.

- No-one whose life is characterized by hate or murder can be a Christian.
- The nature of God is true love, and true love was revealed by Christ being willing to lay down His life for us.
- Therefore, we're to lay down our lives for others.
 - While the necessity of dying for someone else may be rare, what isn't rare is the necessity of helping meet someone else's needs.
 - The true test of a Christian's love is not their words- it's their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their brother and to love with actions and in truth.

CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD (3:19-24)

The false gnostic teachers in Ephesus were teaching that they knew the truth by special, inner, hidden knowledge- even though their lifestyles were marked by blatant sin, greed, and hatred.

- John counters this idea by claiming the mark of truth is a lifestyle of high moral character and good deeds that grow out of our commitment to Christ.

We all know that in our desire to live lives of high moral character and good deeds towards others, we're going to fail.

- When this happens, our hearts may condemn us (vs. 20), but we can rest in His presence because God knows everything.
- God knows that we believe in Christ, that we strive to love others, and that we regret it when we fall short.

God is "greater than our heart" (vs. 20) – our fickle, unreliable human emotions are not the final standard for whether or not we've been born of God.

- God's power and steadfastness- not our own- gives us the security that we're His.
- When our heart condemns us because of our sin and imperfection, we can silence it by confessing our sin (1:9), and by resting in the fact that God knows all things and sees the true state of our heart.

Once our hearts no longer condemn us, we can have confidence before God (vs. 21).

- This confidence then leads us to fruitfulness in prayer- we receive what it is we're asking when we keep His commandments and we do what pleases Him.
- John also tells us we must ask in God's will (5:14), in Jesus's name (Jn. 14:13), while we're abiding in Jesus (Jn. 15:7,16).

What are the commands we must obey if we're to be fruitful in prayer?

- We must believe in Jesus and love one another (vs. 23).
- Those who keep these commands live in Him or abide in Him, and we know from their obedience to these commands that the Spirit is in them.
- The Biblical test for the presence of the Spirit of God is found in someone's lifestyle.

THE TESTS OF AUTHENTICITY

- The absence of habitual, willful, and unrepentant sin (vs. 4-10).
- The absence of hatred towards others (vs. 15).
- The willingness to love in deed and in truth, not just talk (vs. 17-18).