

WALKING IN THE LIGHT: Abiding and Obeying - 1 John 3:18-24

May 7, 2018

Midway - BCC

19. *By this we shall **know** that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before Him;*
20. *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He **knows** everything.*
21. *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;*
22. *and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.*
23. *And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us.*
24. *Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in Him. And by this we **know** that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (ESV).*

When we love others, we know that we belong to the truth, and we feel at ease in the presence of God. But even if we don't feel at ease, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if we feel at ease in the presence of God, we will have the courage to come near him. He will give us whatever we ask, because we obey him and do what pleases him. God wants us to have faith in his Son Jesus Christ and to love each other. This is also what Jesus taught us to do. If we obey God's commandments, we will stay one in our hearts with him, and he will stay one with us. The Spirit that he has given us is proof that we are one with him. 1 John 3:18-24 –(CEV)

18. *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.*
19. *Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.*
20. *Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.*
21. *Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence.*
22. *And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.*
23. *And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us.*
24. *Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us. 1 John 3:18-24 (NLT). Is this the first mention of the Spirit in this book?*

Key Words:

Guilty – 2

Abide - 2

Obey – 2

Confidence - 2

Commandment – 3

Introduction:

I want to begin by looking at the last verse first.

A. Abiding in Him and He in us: (24)

1 John 3:24: Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in Him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (ESV).

The Spirit of Truth and Abiding in Christ

In this letter John speaks of “abiding in Him” approx. 15 times.

This last verse of the 3rd chapter is the first time He mentions the Holy Spirit.

John is most concerned about our relationship with God and our obedience to Him.

When we obey Him that demonstrates our love for Him. The 2 greatest commands are Love God – love neighbour.

But these are only possible because of a) the Spirit of truth and b) our abiding in Him and He in us.

Before Jesus went to the cross He taught His disciples things that are mentioned only in the book of John.

John was obviously present when Jesus taught His disciples.

I believe that some of the verses we are looking at today were influenced by Jesus’ discourse in the Upper Room

John 14 – The Spirit of truth: If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth (14:15-17a).

John 15 – Abiding in Christ: 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 (15:5).

John 16 – The Spirit of truth: But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. . . He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you (16:13, 15).

The Spirit of Truth and Abiding in Christ - that is exactly what the last verse of our passage says:

It is the Spirit of Truth who draws us into a relationship with the triune God.

That relationship happens when we are born again – born from above – born of the Spirit.

. . . Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will but born of God (John 1:13).

When we are born again by the Spirit that is the beginning of abiding in Him. He in us and we in Him – all made possible by the Spirit.

No Spirit no new life.

Illustration: (A branch from our grape vine)

Just as the branch is alive and bears fruit when it abides in the vine, so we know that we are alive because we are abiding in the True Vine, Jesus, and His life is flowing in us because of the Spirit of truth.

Context:

3:11-18: love each other in action and truth

B. Our Actions demonstrate our Obedience which lead to Confidence before God: (18-19)

18. Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the **truth** by our actions.

19. Our actions will show that we belong to the **truth**, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

None of us is impressed with people who do lots of talking but don't practice what they preach.

We don't have very high estimations of those folks and we even try to avoid them.

We call such people hypocrites – I have been a hypocrite at times.

As followers of Jesus we are very concerned about truth and honesty.

Living out what we speak is also a matter of being truthful- being honest.

If I say one thing and do another I am telling a lie – an untruth.

What is more attractive to your neighbour – talking a lot about the Good News of Jesus but don't demonstrate your love to him or others?

Or saying very little and demonstrating your love to him and others?

Notice John didn't say, "your words will demonstrate that you belong to the truth."

Quote: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

People don't care how much you know about the Bible or Jesus until they know how much you care about them.

So John tells his readers not merely to say that we love each other, he goes on to say, "let us show the truth by our actions." We can speak the truth but we need to also show the truth by our actions.

He reinforces that in verse 19 by saying, "Our actions will show that we belong to the truth."

Our "being" is revealed by our "doing."

Who we are is confirmed by our doing.

Note the repetition: Let us show the truth by our actions (18)– our actions will show that we belong to the truth (19).

John has already been stressing that in the letter so far, especially the last several verses.

When we belong to the truth then we will be obedient. **We are commanded to love each other and it is in the actual action of loving that we are obedient to the truth.**

It is actions, obedience that puts our hearts at rest in His presence.

Obedience is the key to confidence in the presence of God.

When we obey we sense that we have done what pleases Him and so our hearts are not convicted of sin; instead they are at rest. If our conscience is not pricked then we do not feel any condemnation.

And that gives us confidence when we stand before God.

This can refer to the end of time when we see God, but it also refers to the present because he goes on to talk about the confidence we can have that God hears and answers prayer.

Our hearts are reassured when we do what is right – when we obey Him – when we love with action and truth.

We can sense God's "well-done."

Living in a way that pleases Him is a great indicator that I belong to Him.

SONG: Living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please Him in all that I do. Yielding allegiance glad-hearted and free – this is the pathway of blessing for me.

Application:

When we are growing up we want to please our parents and we want to hear their, "way to go."

When we don't get that we feel condemned and unworthy – we feel guilty. We don't feel at ease in their presence. It affects us deeply.

Illustration: my father was a perfectionist – he had the attitude - if you could get 90% well why didn't you get a better mark. That was discouraging.

Many people try in vain to gain the approval of a parent and they are still trying when they are 40 and 50.

Illustration:

Think of a parent child relationship. When there is a strain in the relationship there is far more reluctance on the part of the child to ask for something from the parent. Whereas when everything is right between the parent and child it is so natural to want to spend time together and there is no hesitation to ask for something. The child is very confident – my dad loves me and he wants the best for me.

What John is saying here is that we can feel God's pleasure when we show by our actions that we love each other. When we sense His pleasure it gives us confidence in His presence. We can come to Him unashamed and without guilt.

But it does not take much to make us feel guilty.

C. Guilty or not Guilty (20-21)

20. Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and He knows everything.

21. Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence.

Do things always look rosy? Do doubts arise? Do we sometimes feel guilty? Yes, but we don't need to live there. God really has provided all we need for life and for godliness.

All of us have been given a conscience by God. It is that nudge in our spirits; that still small voice that warns us about something.

When we don't obey that which we know is right, then we are smitten with guilt.

Ever feel guilty?

Guilt pushes us away from people and from God; we would rather run and hide because we are ashamed.

The enemy of our souls knows that as well and that is why he likes to condemn and keep people feeling guilty.

We cannot hide from God when we feel guilty or condemned. That is not the answer. Are you going to base your life on guilty feelings? Our feelings can be fickle but our actions must be based on truth and on obedience, not on feelings. We need to build our lives on truth regardless of how we feel. The reality is that guilt will happen. Even when we are feeling guilty, God is there and He knows everything and is willing to forgive.

God's knowledge of our thoughts and motives should relieve us not terrify us. This is meant to console the believer whose heart accuses him or her of sin because God in His greatness, assures the believer of His love.

This does not mean that we can gloss over or excuse our sin as insignificant, but we know that we can come confidently to God when we recognize that His grace and mercy are greater than our guilt (Comfort and Hawley, 356).

The truth that is amazing and encouraging is that God is greater than our hearts – He is greater than our feelings of guilt and condemnation.

God loves you and has provided a way to deal with that guilt and condemnation.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

21. Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence.

Guilt keeps us from coming to God; we are unsure of how God will accept us; we look down and away instead of up with bold confidence.

How much better when we don't feel guilty, when we do not feel condemned.

When we can come to God with bold confidence.

John comes back to the theme of confidence that he stated in verse 19: *our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.*

Illustration: When I as husband have a good relationship with my wife we are far more confident together – we enjoy being together. When there is no guilt or condemnation there is confidence instead of shame or fear of rejection.

The same goes for relationships in the body of Christ.

When there is nothing between us we can be relaxed and confident in our relationship with each other.

When there is no guilt or condemnation we can come to God with bold confidence.

SONG: Nothing between my soul and the Saviour, so that His blessed face may be seen; nothing preventing the least of His favour – keep the way clean, let nothing between.

Hebrews 4:14-16: *Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

D. The Key to Answered Prayer: (22)

22. *And we will receive from Him whatever we ask because we obey Him and do the things that please Him.*

This Scripture and others like it that seem to say that we can ask God for anything we want and He will give us what we want.

It is like we read only the first part of the verse: *And we will receive from Him whatever we ask* .

OK God, you have handed me a blank cheque. Here is what I want.

God has conditions – obedience to Him is the key.

Whatever our situation we don't see the whole picture and we don't know the future.

God does.

God loves us and desires what is best for us and He alone truly knows what is best for us.

God promises to answer prayer, however because He knows our hearts and He knows all things, there are conditions that God expects.

22. And we will receive from Him whatever we ask **BECAUSE** we obey Him and do the things that please Him.

What pleases God? Obedience to His commands.

This is similar to what John records Jesus saying in **John 15:7: If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (NRSV)**

When we are obedient to God and do the things that please Him, He looks with favour upon us and loves to bless us.

When we are obedient to God we are wanting to please Him – we have committed the control of our lives over to Him. We come to know Him more through His Word and pray more and more in line with His will. This is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray:

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Then His desires become our desires:

Psalm 37:4: Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart.

SONG: but we never can prove, the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay. For the favour He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey.

Our confidence before God grows as our actions are in line with the truth and with the commands of God.

And here is what we are to obey-here is what pleases Him:

E. This is what we are to Obey (23)

23. And this is His commandment: We must believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved – you will be born again. You will be abiding in Him.

I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The result of believing in Jesus is that we love others who believe in Jesus.

A. Abiding in Him and He in us

24. Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (ESV).

We are more than half-way through this book and this is the first time that John actually refers to the Holy Spirit. He will refer to the Spirit 7 times in this letter.

This is now about the 12th time that John speaks of abiding in Him.

However this is the first time that John mentions the mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer – abiding in God and God abiding in him.

In His last discourse with His disciples He told them that He would give them the Spirit of truth to live in them. But at the same time He told them that He would come to them (John 14:16-20). The coming of the Spirit to indwelling believers is none other than the coming of Christ in His invisible, spiritual presence to live in the believers (Comfort and Hawley, 356).

The Holy Spirit empowers us to obey God's commandment, which is to love our brother and our sister.

Walking in the Light: Abiding and Obeying

PRAYER:

SONG:

Trust and Obey

1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way.
While we do His good will He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey.

CHORUS:

Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey

2. Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

3. But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows, and the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.