

First John 2:18-3:12
 Living As the Children of Light
 1J1503

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 First John

“The Key Counsel: Abide in the Anointing”

INTRODUCTION: Repeatedly in First John, section after section, three emphases occur –

1. Bible scholars call them the *pistic*, *ethical* and *agapic*.
 - a. *Pistic*: Believing in God, Christ, the Word. (from *pisteuo*)
 - b. *Ethical*: How to live a holy life of obedience to God.
 - c. *Agapic*: Loving God and one another (from *agape*)
2. These three emphases occur repeatedly in each section but are individually “featured” (emphasized) in different sections.
 - a. e.g., Section 1: God is Light (ethical) (1:1-2:6)
 - b. Section 2: Love One Another (agapic) (2:7-17)
 - c. Section 3 (tonight) is Pistic: *Abiding In The Anointing* (2:18-3:12)
3. The apostle John borrows all his themes, all his phrases, and all his *motifs* (images) from Jesus Christ.
 - a. His central message: *God is Light* (ethical)
 - i. *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* (1 John 1:5)
 - ii. *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12)
 - iii. *“The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”* (John 12:35-36)
 - b. His primary command: *Love One Another* (agapic)
 - i. *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.* (1 John 2:7)
 - ii. *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* (John 13:34-35)
 - iii. *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.* (John 15:12-14, 17)
 - c. Now, in 1 John 2:18-3:12, John gives his key counsel: *Abide in the Anointing* (pistic)
 - i. *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to*

deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. 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. 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. (1 John 2:24-25, 26-27, 28, 3:10)

- ii. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:1-11)
- iii. Key word: “Abide”
- iv. From the Greek verb *mено* = to remain
- v. A word that occurs 24 times in First John

4. John has already mentioned “abiding” in the previous two sections –

- a. *Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.* (1 John 2:6)
- b. *Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.* (1 John 2:10)
- c. *I write to you, fathers,*
because you know him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:14)
- d. Abiding in God, in the light (love) and in the Word of God.
- e. *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:17)

- 5. But in this third section of his first epistle, John develops more fully the **Key Counsel: Abide in the Anointing.**
- 6. You and I often forget that the people of the New Testament (c. 4 B.C. to 95/100 A.D.) struggled with the same things we do! The same things with which the people of the Old Testament struggled.

- a. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (1 Cor. 10:11)
 - b. This is why the Bible is the *Living Word of God*
 - c. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)
 - d. Because God is addressing the same spiritual, social, and relational issues in mankind, age after age.
 - e. Issues like *remaining*, or *abiding*, holding steady in God, in the Word, in faith in love.
7. **The greatest disappointment** I have experienced as both a Christian and especially as a Pastor is the way people **do not remain**.
- a. Drop out of the ministry
 - b. Leave the church
 - c. Become inactive in membership
 - d. Fall away from grace and do not finish well
 - e. Walk away from Christ and cease to believe
 - f. *Americans have a very difficult time abiding in Christ, remaining in church, and being steady in faith and love.*
8. And yet, John the apostle tells us that “abiding” is the **key** to a life of Christian faith.
- a. The **Key Counsel:** *Abide in the Anointing.*
 - b. First John 2:18-3:12
 - c. Two paragraphs
 - d. But *four points* of information about “abiding”

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF ABIDING (1 John 2:18-21)

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. (1 John 2:18-21)

1. John writes to encourage his readers to *abide* in the faith because three things were happening...
2. **First** was an **eschatological** consideration – something concerning the last days or end times: *The antichrists had come!*

- a. *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.* (1 John 2:18)
- b. cf. also First John 2:22

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

- c. and First John 4:3

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. (1 John 4:2-3)

- d. and Second John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 7)

- e. In His *Olivet Discourse* about the end times, Jesus had foretold that antichrists would come.

i. Antichrist means (in Greek) “*another (anti) Christ*”

ii. Or even more accurately: *instead of Christ*

iii. What Jesus called *false Christs*

iv. *And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.* (Matthew 24:4, 23-26)

- f. It is John who gives these fake saviors and fake Christs a name: **antichrist**

- g. And there is not just one main *Antichrist* but many antichrists – plural...

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 7)

- h. **Robert W. Yarbrough:** *Letters of John: ECNT; p. 144.*

i. *He is likely a human representative or incarnation of the evil one whom Christ explicitly acknowledged in his teaching, prayers, temptation and elsewhere. Paul spoke of this same sinister being.*

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5)

- ii. *In the devil's service, he will exalt himself against God and Christ's kingdom, perhaps following a pattern foreshadowed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler who desecrated the temple and slaughtered God's people. His coming and wiles were seen as foretold in Old Testament Scripture. The book of Revelation too "knows of one empowered by Satan who will oppose Christ in the last days." John's distinctive "many antichrists" apparently refers to forerunners of this end-time figure. They would be people of influence straying from the path of faith to which John and others bore testimony leading others behind them on their ruinous course.*
 - iii. *Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.* (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3)
 - i. John saw these false teachers, false prophets, false Christs arising in the early church, and he warned the first Christians to *abide* in Jesus alone.
3. **Second:** John expresses an **ecclesiastical** concern – these false teachers had left the church and apparently taken others with them.
- a. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.* (1 John 2:19)
 - b. **I. Howard Marshall:** "This can only mean that they had once been members or adherents of the Church but had now departed from it, presumably to set up their own group." (NICNT; p. 150).
 - c. Three things unsettled these early Christians:
 - i. First: They *personally knew* these false Christs.
 - ii. Second: The *members* those false teachers took with them were the family and friends of these early Christians.
 - iii. Third: These false teachers had been *leaders* in the Church whom the people had trusted!
 - d. A Church leader named **Diotrephes** was such a person.
I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. (3 John 9-10)
 - e. All this had been greatly *unsettling* to the saints in their beloved local churches.
4. **Third:** John's third concern is **epistemological** – it involves the truth and how we all come to know this truth.
- a. *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.* (1 John 2:20-21)
 - b. John says that believers have a *charisma* – an anointing, a consecration, an unction.

- c. In other words, when Christians first believed in Jesus Christ and embraced the Gospel, God “The Holy One” anointed them with a *charisma*.
- d. Paul explains how this happened:

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14)

- e. **Colin G. Kruse:** *Letters of John: Pillar NTC*; p. 103.

*The cognate noun ‘anointing’ (*charisma*) used in this verse to describe the anointing that the readers have from the Holy One is best interpreted as a reference to the Holy Spirit with whom they had been endowed by God (when they first believed), and who confirms to them the truth of the message that they heard at that time.*

- 5. These false teachers were pulling people out of the church, attacking the apostles, denying their teaching, and introducing people to an *esoteric knowledge* (*gnosis*) which renounced the incarnation, rejected the Word, impugned the Apostolic eyewitness, and placed all emphasis on carnal, even immoral, experiences.
- 6. John says, “Not so. You know the truth of the Gospel because, God revealed it to you in the word, because Jesus Christ is God in the flesh who atoned for your sins, and because the Holy Spirit entered your soul to seal and *anoint* you in this good news of salvation. The only way to know God, be forgiven, live forever is by this Word of God, message about Christ, and anointing of the Spirit. Those who teach otherwise and who disrupt and divide the church are antichrists! The more there are of them, the closer we are to Christ’s return.
- 7. *Abide in Gospel truth, the church and in the Spirit.* Do not fall away from these basics! This is what Jesus told us...

And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. (Matthew 24:4)

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:10-14)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (John 15:4-9)

- 8. So, John proceeds to tell them **how** to abide in the faith; three facets of **abiding...**

II. ABIDE IN GOD'S TRUTH (1 John 2:22-27)

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (1 John 2:22-27)

1. First, John counsels us to *abide in the Gospel truth*.
2. These Antichrists deny the message of salvation – the Gospel:
 - a. *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* (John 17:3)
 - b. *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.* (1 John 2:22-23)
 - c. Their spiritual focus on *themselves* rather than on Christ is the telltale sign of false teaching.
 - d. **Know this:** *The more of the preacher in the sermon, the less of Jesus Christ. Christ-centered preaching is Truth!*

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:1-6)

3. **Application:** People often say to me, almost weekly, “Why don’t you talk more about yourself in the sermon; share your experiences, give us less history, background, theology, polemics, and more about you? You’re such a private person, but people want to know YOU!” Here’s my answer –
 - a. I am **not** as private a person as you think. I lead a very simple life but not a secret life. I am an open guy.
 - b. I **do** share about myself in the pulpit – my Catholic background; my Ohio State connection; Jane and my kids (and grandkids); experiences I’ve had; stories of my faith; my personal convictions; painful emails and texts; and what I know – from 66 years of experience – about a life with God.
 - c. **Example:** Look how I shared this morning from the heart, about the Lord’s Day and its shaping of my life with God. Personal stuff for me!

- d. **But** when I came to this church, our congregation was divided, down the middle, between too big, gifted and winsome personalities.
 - e. Jesus said to me, “*Michael, I want you to exalt the Father and call men and women to faith in Me. You are not and will never be a hero here, I am the Hero of it all; and THAT is the message Christ Covenant most needs to hear!*
 - f. And I love you and Jesus enough to stay in my lowly place as a servant, and point you to the Heroic Christ.
 - g. *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.* (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5)
4. **We live in the “last days,”** what John called “*the last hour*” and our world is full of antichrists – cult leaders, false prophets, egocentric preachers, celebrity pastors, and clergymen falling left and right into immorality, greed, corruption and wrecked faith. We need to focus on **Jesus Christ** and **the Gospel**.
- a. *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.* (1 John 2:24-25)
 - b. i.e., that *Jesus saves* and no one else or nothing else
 - c. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* (John 14:6)
 - d. *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* (John 17:3)
 - e. **Look!** “*And this is the promise that He made to us – eternal life.*
5. And as soon as I turn to the subject of salvation (*eternal life*) I must turn to Christ and say to you all: “*Abide in the Truth about Jesus Christ. Abide in Him!*”

III. ABIDE IN GOD'S LOVE (1 John 2:28-3:3)

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. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 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. Beloved, we are God's children now, 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 2:28-3:3)

1. Paraphrase: Cling to, abide in, remain steadfast in, and continue all through life in the assurance that God loves you, has saved you in Christ, adopted you as His children, and is transforming you to be just like Him. When Jesus comes, we will go to heaven. We are not yet certain what we will be like on that

day, but we know this: *We will be like God...like Jesus.* And this love of God, love for God and longing to be both with Christ and like Jesus keeps us motivated to seek for holiness – *to purify ourselves just as Jesus is pure.* This is the hope of salvation: the love of God for us!

2. Note: Because the world doesn't believe in Christ and go to church, it does not know God, does not sense this love, and has no hope for the future. The world simply goes from bad to worse, until hell is reached!
3. But we believers **abide** in the love of God; a power that both gives us hope and changes our very nature.
4. **The love of God makes us like Jesus Christ!**

5. This is our assurance: *Our becoming more like Christ is proof that we have been "born again," born of God, loved by God!*

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. (1 John 2:29)

6. We have no need to *shrink from God.* He loves us, is changing us, and will come again to get us and take us home to heaven!
7. This is what Jesus promised us!

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:1-7)

8. **Application:** *I will share something with you from my own personal walk with God. As a young Christian, I often doubted if God really loved me. Forgiven? Yes. Loved? I was never certain. But then I decided to do two things.*

- a. *To take God at His Word; to believe the Bible.*

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

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. (1 John 3:1)

- b. *To focus on living for God, serving Christ, and growing in holiness.*

Beloved, we are God's children now, 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

9. *Amazing fact: I now never doubt – ever! – that God loves me. What I am concerned about is how much I love God and love you? And now I rest in the sweet assurance of the love of God in Jesus.*
10. **Ours is an age of uncertainty because ours is the age of the self!** And the more we focus on God loving us, the less certain we will be of that fact. But the more we honor the Holy Spirit by believing

His Word, serving His Son Jesus, and devoting ourselves to loving God and others, the more we will grow strong in God's love for us and the hope of heaven.

11. **Trust me:** This is how it all fits together! Faith, service and holy love for others is the formula of assurance.
12. So...John develops this in his final thoughts about **abiding...**

IV. ABIDE IN PRACTICING RIGHTEOUSNESS (1 John 3:4-12)

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 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. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 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. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. (1 John 3:4-12)

1. This is **not** a popular message in this age of uncertainty, self-focus, cheap grace and our propensity toward lawlessness.
2. Follow John's train of thought: *He connects Jesus' second coming to His first coming. And both have to do with overcoming sin.*
 - a. Jesus' second coming (future)

Beloved, we are God's children now, 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

- b. Jesus' first coming (past)

You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 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. (1 John 3:5, 8)

- c. **Key:** "to destroy the works of the devil = sin!"
3. Now, **in between** these two comings (advents) of Christ, the Holy Spirit works in the Church and true Christians to *overcome sin, to destroy sinful patterns, and to live holy, pure, righteous lives.*
 - a. *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.* (1 John 3:3-4)

- b. *No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.* (1 John 3:6-7)
 - c. *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 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. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* (1 John 3:9-11)
4. For John, as for Jesus and Paul to *obey God is to love*; love is the fulfillment of the law.
- And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”* (Matthew 22:37-40)
5. Do we do this perfectly? No! Never in this life. But we **do** grow in holiness if we *practice righteousness*.
- a. Here again are two of John's stark contrasts
 - i. *Practicing sin*
 - ii. *Practicing righteousness*
 - iii. *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 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. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 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.* (1 John 3:4-10)
 - iv. “*practice*” mentioned 6 times
6. John defines this key concept: *to practice sin (righteousness) is to keep on sinning (doing righteousness)*
- No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.* (1 John 3:6, 9)
7. **In other words:** The person who professes to believe in Jesus and belong to God cannot continue in an unrepentant pattern of sinful living. You can't have both Jesus and your pet sins!
8. **Illustration:** *You must choose between Christ and your gay lover.*
- a. You may be beset with same-sex attractions and have been involved in the homosexual lifestyle.

- b. Once you come to Christ, you must forsake that lifestyle and pursue holiness in Christ – even if that means celibacy for life!
 - c. If you fall back into homosexual acts, repent of them, turn again to Christ, and actively pursue holiness, you are **not** practicing sin = *abiding in sin* = *continuing in sin*.
 - d. You are trying to love God, follow Jesus, and love others properly.
 - e. But if you refuse to turn from your homosexual way of life and continue in homosexual activities, you are *practicing sin* = *continuing in sin* = *not abiding in Christ*, and you are **not** a true Christian; **not** saved!
9. **I acknowledge** that this is truly a difficult calling, but it is difficult for *every, single person* who comes to Christ – even the great apostles!

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

(Romans 7:15-25)

10. The pursuit of holiness is abiding in Christ.

- a. *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:8-11)
 - b. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.* (John 15:16-17)
 - c. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - d. Jesus chose us to bear the fruit of a holy life.
11. This is the *pursuit of godliness* = the *practice of righteousness* that helps us abide in God, in Christ, in grace and in love.
12. It is a **lifetime** preoccupation, a **lifetime** pursuit, and a **lifetime** practice. The more we go after godliness, the more we grow in Christ.
13. We cannot give up this fight; we must *abide* in righteousness.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

14. John points to two brothers: Cain and Abel

- a. *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. (1 John 3:11-12)*
- b. Cain gave up the fight against sin.
- c. *The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” (Genesis 4:6-7)*
- d. He did not abide. He killed his brother. He is now in hell, forever!

CONCLUSION: 99% of the spiritual blessings (?success?) of the Christian life comes from **abiding...**

1. Abiding, remaining, continuing in, practicing, not giving up, enduring, persisting, being faithful, being stubborn, refusing to quit, trying again and again, pushing forward, obeying even after failure, clinging to what you know and doing what you can do.
2. Those who abide in God will abide in heaven:
 - a. Continue in believing God in His Word
 - b. Resting in the saving work of Christ
 - c. Pushing forward in the anointing of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Remaining active in the church
 - e. Living in the love of God
 - f. Looking to the hope of heaven
 - g. Pursuing an active and positive holiness
 - h. Stubbornly relying upon God's grace
3. Those who **don't quit** and **won't give up**, get to heaven and to glory when Jesus returns (or they die)!
And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:11-13)
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. (1 John 2:28)
4. **This is not a 21st century message:** No quick fixes, not 5 easy steps to heaven, no romantic picture of grace, no platitudes to make us feel safe and good about ourselves.

5. Just a promise from God: "*If you abide in Me in life, you will live with Me in heaven.*"