**ABIDE IN CHRIST**

1 John 2:28-3:3

It’s good to be here at CF this morning and I wish that you were here with us. It’s hard to believe that it’s now been 5 weeks since we last met together on a Sunday morning. Like our staff and other elders, I look forward to seeing you all again soon. To hear how you’ve been. To catch up with you on “stay-at-home”stories. Most of all, to sing, worship and hear from God’s Word together. I hope and pray that day will be here soon.

But that day is NOT today. I am here and you are out there. But we can still dig into God’s Word together and be challenged and encouraged by it. So I invite you to turn in your copy of Scripture to 1 John chapter 2. Today we are resuming our series in 1 John which Pastor Will began back in January. We left off near the end of chapter 2 and today will be looking at 1 John 2:28 – 3:3.

[***28***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-28.htm)*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***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-29.htm)*If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.* [***1***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-1.htm)*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.* [***2***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-2.htm)*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.* [***3***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-3.htm)*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

Now as I studied this passage, it became clear to me that John never had Mr. Anderson for high school English. You see, I had Mr. A for a class on how to write a term paper. We came to learn that a well written—and thus well understood—paper was one that was well organized. One that presented a premise, supported it with facts, presented ideas and concepts in a linear, logical and sequential manner. I can tell you John would NOT have done well in Mr. A’s class. His approach to writing, like other biblical writers, weaves back and forth between thoughts and concepts. He writes in a stream of conscious writing down what comes to mind.

So, today we won’t be going straight through this passage. Instead, we’ll start with John’s opening statement of the passage which is a command—the only thing we’re told to do. Then we’ll look at what that means for us today and wrap up by looking at what that will mean when we see Christ. That’s the plan . . .

So John begins *And now, little children, abide in him*

As is his norm in this letter, John approaches his readers lovingly and with care—little children. But has no problem following that with a command—to ABIDE IN HIM = CHRIST.

As you read through this short book you discover that

one of John’s themes is that of ***abiding***. John uses this verb, in some form, 18 times in this letter. Eight of those times he speaks, as he does here, of abiding in Christ—this being the 4th time. In fact, look at how John ends verse 27—Abide in Him.

Now when I was in school and a teacher would make an emphatic point, I figured I might see that on a quiz or test. But if they mentioned something numerous times, then I knew my grade was dependent on me understanding and knowing what they taught.

The same is true in this letter. John’s emphasis on this topic should make us take notice, understand what this means and figure out what this looks like in our lives. Now there are several ways we could do this. But I think the best is to turn to another book that John wrote—his Gospel. In it John recounts what’s known as the Upper Room Discourse given to His disciples the night before he died. During these instructions, Jesus covers a variety of topics—several of which we will find in the passage we are looking at today. But here’s what he says about abiding in Him:

*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.* John 15:4-6

Jesus’ example is really quite easy to understand. He says that if you want to know what it means to abide in Him just take a look a fruit or vegetable plant. Just like a branch of a plant is connected to the main vine, draws life from the vine and bears fruit, we are to be connected to Christ in the same way. To abide in Christ is to be in direct relationship with Him—to draw life from Him—to bear fruit for Him. And if you don’t abide in Him Jesus said you are like a withered branch—one separated from the vine—not bearing fruit—worthless.

It’s a very clear word picture. Abiding in Christ is being directly and continually connected to Him and remaining in Him. And what an amazing thing this is!

**The God of heaven and earth, the All Sufficient, Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipotent Creator who is holy, perfect, transcendent—doesn’t just allow or invite you to be in direct relationship with Himself—HE COMMANDS IT of us.** Think of it this way: *this is the ultimate stay in place order—to abide in Christ*.

For John’s readers, this was mind blowing. Jewish believers had grown up following the law which kept them at arms length from direct contact with God. Judges and then kings ruled on behalf of God. If you needed a sacrifice to be made for your sin you went to a priest. Hearing from God meant listening to a prophet. For the vast majority of God’s people, there was no direct connection to God—it wasn’t really an option.

And for Gentile believers things weren’t much different. The gods they had served were seen as distant deities that needed to be appeased. To be blessed or to avoid a curse you kept your gods happy. Believers who came out of a pagan religion would have never dreamed—or desired—to be in direct relationship with their gods.

But now, through the cross and the resurrection which we just celebrated we can be in direct relationship with God. What was once unheard of is now our norm as Christians. Friends, let us not take the privilege we have to abide in Christ for granted. This should be one command that we joyfully embrace and obey.

But how is this possible? John tells us that. So let’s turn our attention from the command to how this plays out in our lives here in this world in which we live.

In chapter 3 verse 1 John tells us how abiding in Christ is possible—

[***1***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-1.htm)*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*

As several commentators point out, John’s language here is that of astonishment and amazement. One paraphrase puts it like this *Come! Take a look at the kind of love that God has given to us—love that has made us His children which is exactly what we are.*

We can abide in Christ because we have been made children of God. And we have been made children of God because God loves us so much. How much? Well at the beginning of chapter 2 John said *. . . we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. . .*  Later in this letter we read *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* **And again** *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us,*

Just last week we celebrated the love that John is writing about. The love that sent Jesus to the cross to suffer and die for our sin—and then conquer death. It’s that love that makes it possible to be his children. And as John says that IS what we are.

Here’s something to consider. You will never be more a child of God than you are right now. Yes you will grow in your faith. You will continue to put off the deeds of the flesh and put on the fruit of the Spirit. You will become more like Christ. But a child of God will never, ever be more a child of God than they are now!

So abiding in Christ Reminds us **that God loves us, we are His children and can be confident in that reality**

But abiding in Christ also means that W**e will live righteously and purely**. Look at verse 29 Chptr. 2

*If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

Now some may think it strange that John starts here with the word ***If***. I mean, don’t those who abide in Christ know that God is righteous? Why an ***If***?

Well, because not everyone hearing John’s letter will know that God is righteous. John has just told his readers that not everyone who has been part of the church truly has a relationship with Christ. Some have already left the fellowship because they were never of the faith. What John is saying is that there may still be some within the church who are not true believers—and thus don’t understand God is righteous.

The Greek word for “know” that John uses can also be translated “see.” It refers to knowledge that comes from seeing or perceiving. And not everyone’s eyes are opened to see spiritual truth. In JOHN 12, we read

*Though he* [Jesus] *had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, . . .Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn . . .”*

GROW IN KNOWLEDGE
*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, Eph 1:18*

Those who abide in Christ are those with eyes opened to know that God is righteous—that He IS always right, what He SAYS is right and all He DOES is right. In these difficult, troubling and uncertain times, many will ask “How could a loving God allow a virus like this into the world?” In essence what they’re saying is either there is no God or if there is He does not act righteously—because if He did he would never allow this to happen.

It takes spiritual sight to know that God acts properly in every situation. That He works all things together for good. And we as followers of Christ have come to know this is true. AND we also have come to know: that anyone able to practice righteousness is only able to do so because they have been born of God.

This is an important point John is making. You see, one of the reasons John wrote this letter was to refute a heresy that had begun to creep into the church from outside of it. There were some who practiced a mystical, spiritual religion that we refer to as Gnosticism. They had hijacked the Christian faith to spin their web of lies. One of the tenets of their belief system was that only spiritual things mattered and the physical, material world was irrelevant. As long as you were seeking and attaining spiritual knowledge, you could do anything with your body. There was no need to live righteously.

They were wrong! Those who abide in Christ will live righteously.

Think about it—if you are connected to Christ and are drawing your life from him then you will live like He lived. And that is only possible because you’ve been born of God and have the power to do just that. John point here is similar to James teaching that ***hearers of the Word are to be doers of the Word*** or Paul admonishing us ***to work out our own salvation***. Martin Luther put it this way “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” Our faith is evidenced by our practice of

 righteousness AND as John says in verse 3

*everyone who thus hopes in him* [Christ] *purifies himself as he is pure*

Those who have the hope of being like Christ when we see Him—which we talk about shortly—know that process starts now. Practicing righteousness includes keeping ourselves pure—but not to earn salvation. John already told us earlier in the book that *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.* So this purification is not about our salvation. So what is it about? It’s about becoming more like Jesus which should be our aim. In Peter’s first epistle he writes *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 1 peter 1:15*

Paul tells the Romans that . . . *those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. . .* Those who abide in Christ—who are children of God—will want to imitate Christ who lived righteously and was pure.

So as we abide in Christ in this life W**e are reminded that God loves us, we are His children and can be confident in that reality AND** W**e will live righteously and purely—like Christ—because we are born of God**

But there’s one more thing that is true in this life for those who abide in Christ. Look at the end of 3:1

*The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

I’m not sure I can explain this better than 19th century theologian Albert Barnes who wrote *The world does not understand our principles; the reasons of our conduct; the sources of our comforts and joys. The people of the world regard us as fanatics or enthusiasts; as foolish in abandoning the pleasures and pursuits which they engage in; as cherishing false and delusive hopes in regard to the future, and as practicing needless austerities, with nothing to compensate for the pleasures which are abandoned. There is nothing which the frivolous, the ambitious, and the selfish "****less****" understand than they do the elements which go into the Christian's character, and the nature and source of the Christian's joys.*

And they don’t understand us because they don’t know Christ. For instance, if someone asked me what I am looking forward to once this craziness we’re living in is over, I would say – **CHURCH**. They would think **CRAZY**

But it goes beyond that. John’s warning here pales to Jesus’ warning in his upper room discourse. I mentioned there were parallels in Jesus’ teaching back then that are found in this passage. Well, here’s another

John 15:18-21 *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world . . . therefore the world hates you. . . If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . . all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me*

The world doesn’t just misunderstand us—they hate us. Now for us, in this country, we have sidestepped this hatred. For the last 250 years in America, Christians haven’t felt the full force of the world’s hate. In part, because our Constitution has protected religious faith and practice from oppression and persecution. But that has not been the norm throughout history—and we should not be surprised when the world does all it can to silence us, diminish our influence and persecute us. JSUS

We are seeing that now in the ways some are treating churches during the coronavirus outbreak. Now I think many of the precautions we are being asked to take are wise and we, as good neighbors called to love our world, should voluntarily submit to them. But we should also realize that the world is filled with those who would use this crisis to silence the church—to keep us from being the church—to oppress us. John knew that would be true in this world for those who abide in Christ

So as we abide in Christ in this life

1. **We are reminded that God loves us, we are His children and can be confident of that fact**
2. **We will live righteously and purely—like Christ—because we are born of God**
3. **We should be prepared that the world will misunderstand and hate us—because they don’t know Christ.**

But John knows that for those who abide in Christ, who are children of God that this life is not all there is. One day we will see Jesus face to face. John heard this first hand from Jesus during the Upper Room Discourse—another connection to this passage. Here’s what Jesus said:

*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*

John was promised that one day Jesus would come back for him. He also knew this promise was true for everyone who follows Christ. And so John writes v28:

*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.*

When Jesus comes back each of us will respond to Him in one of two ways. For those who have been drawing life from Him and bearing fruit we will have great confidence. The word for confidence literally means to speak openly and boldly all that you want to say. We will feel no need to draw back from Jesus. But for those who have not been in close, constant relationship with Christ, they will be shamed and move away from Him.

What is clear is that our response in the future when Jesus appears is dependent on whether we are abiding in Him right now. And if we wait, it will be too late. Remember the parable of the talents? The Master entrusts 3 servants with money before he leaves. Two invest what He gives them and they double what they were given. One was afraid and buried the money in the ground. When the Master returned the two that invested confidently approached the Master. The third came reluctantly and was shamed by his Master.

Like those servants, we have a choice. Our choice is to abide in Christ now or choose not to. And John is quite clear as to what our future holds depending on what we decide to do. The choice is yours—so choose wisely.

And if you do choose wisely, John gives us an insight into what we have to look forward to. 1J 3:2

*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.*

We have already said that we will never be more a child of God than we are right now. That’s where John begins: You are a child of God RIGHT NOW. But he also tells us there is more to come. Though we are children right now we really don’t know ALL that it means to be a child of God and we won’t until Christ returns. And yet there is something we do know and can be assured of: when Christ does finally appear our hope and longing to be like Him will be fulfilled because we will see Him just as He is. Again I think Albert Barnes said it well when he :

*This should be enough to satisfy the Christian in his prospects for the future world. To be like Christ is the object of a Christian’s supreme aim. For that he lives, and all his aspirations in regard to the coming world may be summed up in this - that his wishes to be like the glorified Son of God, and to share his honors and his joys will be one day be fulfilled.*

It is my hope this morning that you are abiding in Christ. That you have experienced the kind of love given to us by God which allows to be His children and which empowers to practice righteousness and purity. And that one day you will stand confidently before Jesus and be totally transformed to be like Him. That IS my hope for you. But it is possible that you aren’t abiding in Him, that you aren’t in personal relationship with him. That can change today. The truth of Easter is that Jesus died for your sin and my sin and rose again breaking the power of death and sin.