

“Building a Ministry which Abides in Christ” 1 John 2:28-3:3, Sermon Notes

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Introduction

These are wonderful days for our church. God’s kindness and grace have been richly poured out in so many ways

- This week I had the joy of meeting with new people who have joined the church this morning. I am thrilled how God has brought people to be a part of this ministry from so many different backgrounds, but what is evident about all of them is that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and want to serve Him.
- There is a strong desire in our ministry to do a work which exalts God. That desire warms my heart as a pastor. And in particular any work which honors the Lord Jesus Christ is a joy to be a part of.

I wish I could tell you all the ways God has been faithful to grow and transform people in our ministry without violating confidentiality and anonymity.

But what I can say is this- the evidence of God’s gracious favor on a ministry is seen in a body of believers who seek to guard the ministry by striving to be like Jesus Christ:

- God is at work in you and through you when you desire to be like Jesus Christ
- As a ministry, the songs we pick, the Bible studies we go through, and the times of corporate gathering are all designed to help us draw closer to Christ.

It should be no surprise that our objective in ministry is to be like Jesus Christ

- In one sense this truth is obvious, but in another sense this idea is so foreign to our natural and normal thinking
- We know we have to be like Christ
- But what is often lost is the day to day pursuit of Jesus Christ. What is often missed is how we do that.

As I have observed Christians and their regular struggles, I have found one of their greatest frustrations is the knowledge of how to become like Jesus Christ. We are convinced we must live for God; we just fail to know how.

- This tragedy is evident in a life which has many religious activities, but no power to resist sin
- We can go through the motions of reading our Bibles, praying, coming to church, even serving the church in great ways and still not have any power over life dominating sins because we are not properly abiding in Jesus Christ

- My hope and aim as a pastor is to not only help you to know Christ, but also to help you abide in Christ

I know when we come to a message like this, that you don't need platitudes. You need direction.

You don't need to hear:

- Just trust God
- Just obey

Or worse, you certainly don't need false theology, such as: "It is ok, God's grace will cover it"

If that was true, then why do I feel so guilty when I sin? If God does not care that I sin because His grace is there to be the magic eraser and remove it, then why do I feel guilty?

Or other similar errors, such as:

- Stop trying and let God work
- The problem is that you are trying too hard. you just need to stop trying and be content with who you are. God saved you and knew who you were going to be.

If this were true, then why does God command us to do anything? There are imperatives throughout the Scripture which God expects us to follow. So why would God command us to do something that He knew would be the cause of our stumbling in sanctification? If our problem is that we are working too hard, then why does God command us to work?

You don't need platitudes to lead to biblical change. You need answers!

We need answers which lead to real change. What I love about God's truth is that there is one answer and one way. We cannot take God's ways and mingle it with other ways, because it will fail. We cannot take God's ways and add to them or subtract from them or we will corrupt it and lose the power for transformation.

I love God's truth because It is wonderfully simple and clear, and divinely powerful to work a work of transformation. But it will only work when applied exactly as God designed.

- We cannot expect to find the power of transformation in half-truths or partial application
- We must embrace the full truth and we must apply it exactly as God said

When battling with sin we must:

- Take every thought Captive (2 Cor 10:5)
- Make no provisions for the flesh in regards to its lusts (Rom 13:14)
- Keep seeking the things above (Col 3:1)
- Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17)
- Be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Eph 4:23; Rom 12:2)

- And as we will see this morning, we need to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 2:28-3:3)

What I see most is an understanding that we have been called to be transformed into Christ's image, but the daily doing is often missed

Since we are starting a new year, and also celebrating our 4 year anniversary as a church this year, I want to focus our attention on being a ministry which abides in the Lord Jesus Christ

It is my hope as a pastor that we are a church which is known for loving and proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. A church where God's people are drawing closer to Jesus Christ and are experiencing the power of God in their lives.

So as we start this new year, let us commit to drawing closer to Jesus Christ.

Sermon Body Intro

What our text teaches us this morning is three expressions of abiding in Jesus Christ. You can properly abide in the Lord Jesus Christ when you practice these three truths.

Now, before I give you these three points, we must first answer the question: "What does it mean to abide?"

To abide means:

- To act in accord with
- To submit to; agree to: to abide by the court's decision
- To remain steadfast or faithful to; keep: If you make a promise, abide by it

When we abide in Christ we:

- Act in accord with Christ – We do what Christ would do
- We submit to Christ – We do what Christ has commanded us to do
- We agree to follow Christ – we follow what we have committed to following
- We endure in obedience to Christ – we follow through in our pursuit of Christ

The Greek word translated as abide is "Meno". It can mean simply to stay, to remain, or to dwell

- We are called to remain in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Or we are called to dwell in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Apostle John gives his own definition of Abiding in 1 John 2:6

"the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." (1 John 2:6 NAU)

We are to live a life which abides in Jesus Christ, and to do that we simply walk in the same way He walked

It is natural and normal to assume as Christians that we are to be like Jesus Christ

This is simple enough for us to consider. We who have committed our hearts and lives to Jesus Christ are to be resolved to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. So this morning we are going to see from this text three expressions of our abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This is not “pick one and see how it goes...”
- No, these are three different manifestations of one principle idea
- Or three God-given applications to the one command

1. We are abiding in Jesus Christ when we live in anticipation of an imminent return of Jesus Christ vs 28

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” (1 John 2:28 NAU)

- You have to see here that John points out to us that Christ could return at any moment. We presently abide because He could be returning at this moment. This is the idea of imminent. He will return suddenly and unexpectedly and we need to be ready.
- In light of the fact that Jesus is going to return like a thief in the night, and the teaching that He is going to come rapidly and unexpectedly, we must live in expectation of His imminent return
- This is another way (and a much friendlier way) of saying, live as if today is your last day on earth!

But John does not stop here. He goes further, and explains why it is important to live carefully in anticipation of Christ’s return:

- “we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

There are two responses when Christ returns, and notice these responses are directed to you and me. It is directed to the little children. It is directed to us who believe in Jesus Christ and who follow Him.

- A. We want to have confidence: The word here means boldness in speech. We want to be able to boldly approach God.
 - i. We should live our life abiding in Christ so that we could boldly approach Christ
 - ii. To have an open and guilt free conversation before Christ

Look, I would rather experience guilt now and work on it than suppress that guilt and have to deal with it in the presence of Christ. Wouldn’t you?

Honestly, I praise God that in the study of His word, in the hearing of the truth proclaimed, sin is revealed in me and I have an opportunity to change. God is so gracious to give us so many opportunities to change so that we can have bold access into His presence.

To be able to speak openly and confidently. This is the idea here. Live your life in such a way that you can have an open and free conversation with Christ right now and not be ashamed.

B. We do not want to shrink away from Him.

- i. The idea here is that we pull away because we know we are guilty and cannot boldly enter the presence of Christ
- ii. This is not to say that we are not forgiven and do not have an advocate in Christ. It is to say that our sin will keep us from boldly approaching Christ.

You know what this looks like as a parent. When your child is walking in obedience or when you are, your child boldly and confidently comes to you and talks with you. They have no problem engaging you.

BUT when they are sin they hide.

- One of my kids used to sneak into our pantry and take Hershey's Kisses and then run into their room and eat them
- They enjoyed the morsels so much they left chocolate on their face. Apparently this child could not get the candy in their mouth fast enough.
- When we caught them, you know their response. They shrink back and hide.
- Sin causes us to shrink and hide from accountability
- This is why one of the first and most obvious signs of spiritual decline is a separation from godly people.

So our first exhortation for the year, let us commit to live lives where we expect Christ to return at any moment. For that reason, we are committing to live in such a way that we will be able to confidently approach Jesus Christ.

The first evidence of our abiding in Jesus Christ is a willingness to run boldly to Him

But this is merely an expression of abiding in Christ. There were many multitudes that sought Christ while He was on earth, but they never abided in Him. They came and they departed. Those who truly abide also practice this second principle:

2. **We are abiding in Jesus Christ when we are walking in righteousness vs 29**

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29 NAU)

The second proof that we are abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ is an active pursuit of righteousness. We should have a love for the practice and possession of righteousness.

- We used to be filled with darkness

- We lived according to the lusts of our flesh and according to the desires of the mind (Eph 2:1-3)
- We were controlled by passions, wants, fears, various idolatries
- We cared more about ourselves than we did about God and others

But God saved us by His grace, opened our eyes to our sin and His holiness, drew us closer to Him and gave us a new life to live in Jesus Christ. A life filled with righteousness and holiness. We used to love darkness, but now in Christ we love righteousness. God's people should love righteousness and walk in it.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age," (Titus 2:11-12 NAU)

How did this pursuit of righteousness become part of our lives? Look at the end of the verse: "is born of Him"

We have been transformed when we have been born of God. The idea here is one who has been born again. This is one of the passages which speaks of regeneration.

- This is where we get the idea of being a "born again" Christian
- Or we say in salvation that we have been regenerated or born again
- It means that we have a new life, with a new purpose
- Our life is no longer our own to live for our own passions. Our life belongs to God for His glory!

The word used in verse 29 is "gegennatai" and it comes from the Greek word "gennaw" which means to be born. The word "gegennatai" is a form of the word that emphasizes an action that has already been completed and has effect today. This is the idea of the perfect tense.

Sometimes you may hear someone say this is a Historical Present. Thus translators translated the phrase "is born of God" rather than "has been born of God."

We can say it like this: The Affordable Care Act is in effect today. Because it has been signed into law in the past, it has present and continual results in our lives.

So in the case of the new birth, it is something that has taken place in the past with present day results

Also, the word is in the passive which means that the action of the verb has been performed on us since we are the subject

This is the idea of the passive; it is an action that was done to you

The new birth is an important theme in the book of 1 John. The word "gennaw" in its various forms is used 10x in this book. "To be born" again is a significant component to our assurance of salvation:

New birth in (1 John 2:29; 3:9 *2; 4:7; 5:1 *3; 5:4; 5:18 *2)

The new birth is a work of God done within us which is imperceptible. That is to say it is not sensory. IE when it occurs, our natural senses do not experience it.

- Cannot hear it
- Cannot feel it or touch it
- Cannot smell it
- Cannot see it
- Cannot taste it

It is a work which is done within by God, but which has no sensory manifestations

How do we know when we have it? The effects of the new birth are evident.

So I believe we can confidently see from these four expressions in the book of 1 John that the new birth is evident in our life when:

1. We walk in righteousness 2:29 (positive)
2. We put off sin 3:9 (negative)
3. We love the brethren 4:7
4. We have faith 5:1

If the new birth is a work of God done to us, then how do I get it?

- Believe! Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved
- All those who come to me I will not turn them away – Jesus says
- When you believe, know this: God was at work in you
- We are saved by grace through faith
- When you believe upon Jesus then you know God has changed your nature. Your belief is not the cause of your spiritual transformation, but rather the result of it.

It is also important to understand that the new birth is a single occurrence. We are not continually born again. It is a work completed in the past with present results. We do not sin and fall out of the new birth and then need a new rebirth. It is a single, one time act of God and is otherwise known as regeneration.

But again, you need to recognize the significance of the Perfect Tense here

Perfect emphasizes past action with continuous results. What John is showing here is that there was a past work done to us which has a present work in us today. It is important to see this distinction because in the book of 1 John, the apostle talks about the new birth, and on 4 occasions he emphasizes this past completed action with present results. (1 John 2:29; 3:9 *2; 4:7; 5:1 *3; 5:4; 5:18 *2).

10 times he talks about new birth, 4 times of which he speaks of it as being a past completed action with present continuous results

SO how do you know you are saved? You will know you are saved if you are walking in the new birth. If you are presently walking in righteousness, putting off sin, loving the brethren, and walking in faith, you know you have been born of God. You can have assurance of salvation.

So let me draw this point to a conclusion. We know we are abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ when we are living a righteous life; a life that is consistent with the new birth.

Abide in Jesus Christ by walking in the new birth.

Live a new life for Christ. Stop living in the old man with its old practices and live in the new man because Christ is now alive and active in you.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
(Galatians 2:20 NAU)

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17 NAU)

And on and on the NT goes

So we abide in Christ when

- We live expecting Christ to return at this very moment
- We live in the new birth seeking righteousness

Now for our third and final point:

3. We are abiding in Jesus Christ when we are living as Children of God

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3 NAU)

Now I hope you see John's amazement here: "See what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called Children of God, and such we are."

We do not deserve this love. We did not earn this love. God was under no obligation to extend this love towards us. This love was given to us because of His kindness alone.

Not only are we then made children as the word "Gennaw" describes in verse 2:29, but we are also called children as verse 1 describes.

(IT is really important you catch this distinction here in 2:29 and 3:1 because I believe a lot of confusion comes right here. There is a difference between being regenerated and being a Child of God. If you

don't see this difference or make careful observation here, you are going to be tempted to believe that regeneration and being a Child of God are one and the same thing. They are not. One speaks of what we are by nature, and the other speaks of what we are by position.

- God changes my nature, but that does not yet change my position
- God changes my rebellious and hardened nature which then enables me to turn to Him, reach out in faith, and receive the gift which He gives. When I believe upon Him in faith, then through justification I am changed in position and now I am called a Child of God.
- So you see we are regenerated, then we call out in faith, then we are justified, then we are declared or called Children of God

We do not believe in a message where WE try to change our nature or where WE try to earn a better status of salvation. We believe in a gospel which teaches that God changes our nature and God changes our position before Him through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we abide in Jesus Christ because we are living by a new nature according to a new position before God.

- It is one thing to act like the King's son, and it is another thing to be His son
- It is one thing to dress the part and play the part, and it is entirely different to be the part
- You know when you go to a sporting event, and there is always that one person who dresses up as an athlete? They have all the gear on and they sit right by you. There is a difference between dressing the part and being the part.

This is the difference between 2:29 and 3:1

In 2:29 we are changed in nature

Here in 3:1 we are called God's children and thus have a change in status or position

We have been called Children of God. The use of this word here implies a "status that is known publicly." We are called God's children. This speaks of an act of declaration. The word is often used in the New Testament to refer to what someone was named.

We are named Children of God

Therefore with the use of these two words here, we see that we have a change of nature because of the new birth and we have a change in status because of what God has called us to be: His Children. This indeed is a marvelous work of God.

This is why one commentator mentions that John's calling us to "behold what manner of love" is to be understood as:

- "take a heart-moving look at the amazing love which gave [us] membership into God's family."
- "contemplate this love and let it take time to sink down into the depths of our being." "drink it in."

Abiding in Christ is to live as a Child of God.

Why did God do this work? The text tells us, “see what manner of love the Father has given unto us.”

It is love. This love originates in God, and ever seeks the true welfare of those being loved. It is amazing indeed when we remember the personal destitution of the ones He loved.

You see this passage makes no sense if we do not understand our destitute condition, and believe that God was obligated to show us love. If we think that we were capable on our own to rescue ourselves, and that a nature change and a status change before God was easily attained, then we will never value this gift that God bestows upon us.

- Unless we admit we were enemies, rebellious, hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds...
- Finite, limited, and powerless, without understanding and unwilling to yield...
- Unless we acknowledge these realities we will never marvel at the gift of God’s love towards us. And we most certainly don’t make God responsible for our failures.

Notice the end of verse 1, on account of our being called Children of God the world does not know us because it did not know Him. The word “ginosko” speaks of an experiential knowledge. There is more than enough in this world for the world to know God, and yet they ignore it. For this reason they are condemned and they cannot understand the work of God and appreciate the work He does in the lives of others.

The world does not know Him so it cannot understand the work done in us. Those outside of Christ usually ask us things like:

- Why do you follow a God you cannot see?
- Why do you restrict yourself from seeking the pleasures of this world?
- Why do you believe in something that so many people deny?
- Why would you accept a God who does not save everyone?
- Why would you believe in a myth?

The world does not know us because it did not know Him.

Many find it strange to believe that Jesus Christ is going to return.

Listen, this is amazing truth right here: Jesus IS going to return!

Vs 28 says, “when He appears”

It also says, “at His coming”

Vs 2 says, ‘when He appears we shall see Him because we will be made like Him.’”

Mankind can mock Christianity all they want, but the Bible regularly testifies to Jesus’ Second Coming and the Lord’s disciples regularly proclaimed it. Jesus promised He would return when He ascended and the early Church waited hopefully for His return.

When Christ ascended in Acts 1:10

“And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.” (Acts 1:10 NAU)

- These are either two angels, OR
- This is the first work of the Two Witnesses who are to come in the final days. Either way, the early Church lived under hopeful expectation of Christ’s return just as we should live today.

The Church has always waited in anticipation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now catch this, this is really amazing. THE PROOF OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST IS OUR TRANSFORMED NATURE. The proof that Christ is returning is a Christian who abides in Jesus Christ. I believe this is why there is a great hatred for Christians who live according to God’s Word. The fact that we are Children of God is a demonstration that what God has said is true and will come to pass.

Jesus is real, He is not a myth or fairytale. Jesus is the Son of God who came into this world through Mary, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, was buried and raised on the third day, walked on Earth for 40 days, and then ascended into heaven to return in the future. All of this is real and true and the reason we know this is because the testimony of Christ is evident today in us and through us as we live for Jesus Christ.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”

- When He appears we will be like Him
- Our Christian life is a continual process of transformation into the image of Jesus Christ
- Slowly and regularly we are being conformed into His image

We are then to abide in Jesus Christ by being conformed into His image. We should be able to show that we are living less for ourselves and more for His glory.

We can sum up what has been said thus far in this way:

- Abiding in Christ thrives on the hope of Christ’s Second Coming
- Abiding in Christ embraces the righteousness of God and seeks to live according God’s righteous standard
- Abiding in Christ is yielding to the work of God to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ

Can there be a better ministry mandate for this next year than to commit to being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ?

Know this when we move into the new year and the challenges of ministry increase: This work is intended to help transform you and me into the image of Jesus Christ.

- We come to hear the truth so that we can draw closer to Christ
- We come together in fellowship so that we can draw closer to Christ
- We give of our time, money, and energy so that we can draw closer to Jesus Christ

Let us commit this year to abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ and let us resolve to do whatever we can to strengthen this ministry so that Christlike servants are regularly found here. Amen!

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