

# 1 John 3:13-24 - Abiding in Faith

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First John chapter 3, verse 13, begins like this: *“<sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.” (ESV)*

And of course, verse 13 here comes on the heels of what we read in verse 12 of this chapter when John was talking about the hatred that Cain had for his brother, Abel.

You remember, look back in verse 12 with me. It says, *“<sup>12</sup> 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.” (ESV)*

And John is explaining here now in verse 13, a fundamental truth in human life. And it's something that every Christian has to come to terms with, and that is that wickedness will always hate righteousness. It's just the way it is and it always will be. And that is why the world will always have feelings of hatred toward believers.

Now, here's what's interesting about us as believers. We talk about ourselves as the righteous of God, but we know the world doesn't, but we know that our righteousness is in Christ, right? We are not righteous. We're not the righteous of God because we are righteous in and of ourselves. We're righteous in him. In other words, we have an imputed righteousness, a righteousness given to us by faith in Jesus Christ, right? So, that's where our righteousness comes from. So, when people look at Christians or say about Christians, well, you guys are a bunch of self-righteous (mumbles). It is not true.

Self-righteousness has nothing to do with it, and we will gladly tell people if they'll stop and listen for a moment. We are not self-righteous. There is no such thing as self-righteousness. The Bible says that all of our supposed righteousness, compared to God, is like filthy rags. So you see there really isn't anything like self-righteousness.

If anybody thinks they're righteous before God, righteous of self, they've got another thing coming. They've got a very disappointing reality facing them. So, our righteousness is in Christ, but still, we're still righteous in Christ. We have

that righteousness with the Father. In other words, righteousness means, in this case, right standing.

We have right standing with the Father. That's why we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, right? And that's a wonderful thing. Now, the world somehow understands that you have something that they don't have, and that is what John is saying to you and me in verse 13 when he says, *“Don't be surprised. Don't be surprised that the world hates you.” (1 John 13)*. And he's saying that this sort of reaction from the world should never give us any reason to wonder what is going on.

Let me show you what Jesus said. This is in John chapter 15. I'll show you this on the screen. It says,

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**John 15:18-19 (ESV)**

*<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*

Now, this is similar language to what John has been using in this first letter when he talks about of the world, of Christ, of the devil he has even said. And these are terms that refer to who we belong to. The people who don't know the Lord belong to the world. They are of the world. We belong to Jesus. So, the Bible says we are of the Lord. And because we are not of the world, but in fact have been chosen out of the world, the world hates us. And, so, John says, don't be surprised when that happens.

Now, there is a type of hatred that we are supposed to be very surprised when we see, and that is the existence of hatred between brothers and sisters in Christ. We should be very surprised when we see that kind of hatred. In fact, John goes on to say in verse 14, *“<sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed out of death into life,”* And that's simply a way of saying we've gotten saved, and we know that *“we are saved because we love the brothers.”* And that word brothers is not specific to the male gender. It speaks of the body of Christ. And then John goes on to say, *“Whoever does not love abides in death.”* which is hatred. Right? Because that hatred of the world is there, but in Christ that's been dealt with in our lives.

And John is saying that a love for one's brothers and sisters in Christ is a basic proof that we've been born again. Okay? And that's what he's saying. Now, having said that, let me clarify what this doesn't mean because this is one of

those verses that people with a particularly overactive conscience and/or fear can get ahold of and run away with and have some troubles with.

What John is not saying is that you're always going to get along with everyone. Okay? John is not saying that you'll never have some challenging emotions toward other people or deal with personality differences with other people in the body of Christ. He's not saying that. And he is certainly not saying that our life lived within the body of Christ is always going to be perfect. It's not always going to be perfect.

It means that despite the occasional seasons of drama, and difficulty, and feelings of hurt and offense, that you either give or receive, that you're going to keep coming back, you're going to keep desiring fellowship with those who are in Christ.

But let me repeat, life in the body of Christ is fraught with challenges. And there is a lot of people who, not because of hatred but just because of hurt, have backed away from the body of Christ because they've been hurt and been offended, and so forth. And that's a different sort of a situation. But there ought to be in us a desire to come together, even in the midst of challenges. Because guys, let me just say this again, challenges are normal. They're normal.

If I haven't stepped on your toes yet, stick around, and I will, and you will probably step on mine. But, you know, there's a point where we just have to say, that's normal. It's going to happen. We're not going to do it because we're mean-spirited or vindictive. We're going to do it because we're human and we make mistakes, and we do and say things or fail to do and say things, you know, and it just causes issues.

You know, you'll recall if you've read through the Book of Acts and made your way to Acts chapter 15 (we're not going to go there tonight), but you'll recall that there was a situation between Paul and Barnabas, where they had such a sharp disagreement between the two of them that they had to depart ways. They basically kind of came to a place where, and it wasn't hatred. It wasn't hatred. Hatred is a very different sort of a thing. Hatred is when you have such strong feelings about someone that you want to see them hurt, like you've been hurt. You want to hurt them back. You want to see them suffer. That's hatred.

Paul and Barnabas, however, came to the realization that working closely together just wasn't going to bear the kind of fruit that they wanted to see in Christ. But remember something about Paul and Barnabas, they got called by God to be together.

You remember, I think it was Acts chapter 13, Set apart, Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them (Acts 13:2). So these men had a calling together to go and to take the gospel, and yet they came to a place where they said,

“You know what? We're better off parted. I don't hate you. I love you, but this just isn't working.”

And there's always going to be that. Sometimes things don't work out between certain personalities. It doesn't mean that we hate each other, and it doesn't mean you're not saved, right? You can be a born-again Christian who loves the body of Christ who just has some interpersonal issues. It doesn't mean you hate that person. It might mean you have to find somebody else to walk with in terms of ministry.

And that's what Paul and Barnabas had to do. They had to find somebody different to walk with. Paul grabbed Silas and Barnabas grabbed John Mark and they went their separate ways. But they continued to love the body of Christ. And, so, there's some important things that we need to remember about that. But still, I want to remind you, this is not hatred. It's a long, long way from hatred.

Let's talk a little bit more about hatred, because Jesus talked about it. Let me show you this on the screen. It's in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, where Jesus said,

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**Matthew 5:21-22 (ESV)**

*<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable (or if you will, in danger of) to the hell of fire.”*

Now, Jesus is talking here about the danger that is associated with anger that eventually turns into hatred, and he says that kind of hatred is tantamount to murder. He says you've heard that it was said you shall not murder, but I tell you that it can happen in the heart before it happens physically.

And you might be able to say today, well, I've never murdered anybody. Praise God. That's a good thing. I'm proud of you. But the fact of the matter is you may have done it in your heart and then had to go repent.

So, he's warning us here. And John echoes this thought. If you look with me in verse 15, here in 1 John 3, he says, *“<sup>15</sup> Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*

So once again, we're not talking about being frustrated with one another or being hurt or offended or something like that because unfortunately those things can happen. John is speaking here of a deep, dark, simmering, kind of a hatred that wants to see someone eliminated, and it's the same thing Jesus warned us of.

And He says that sort of thing is a proof that the person who holds on to those kinds of feelings has not truly been transformed by the Spirit. And that's why we no longer hang on to hatred because we've been transformed by the Spirit. And one of the things the Spirit does to us to help us get rid of hatred and anger in our lives is He reminds us that we're all the same. He reminds us that we're all sinners alike and that we have all fallen short of the glory of God. He reminds us of that.

And, so, we're reminded. And, so, when somebody hurts me or offends me or does something, you know, against me, I'm reminded that I'm no different. I'm no different, and I've done the same to others.

And, so, I have no right, you see, in Christ to hang on to my anger. I have no right and I am commanded to forgive. And I did use that word on purpose. We are commanded to forgive. And Jesus told some pretty challenging parables to remind us of the command that we have to forgive others.

So, you can kind of see here that what John is talking about here, is that one of the distinguishing marks of an individual who has not been saved is that they continue to bear hatred, right? But now he's going to begin to talk about some distinguishing characteristics that are seen and should be seen in the life of a believer.

All right, verse 16. He says, *“<sup>16</sup> By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”* And again, the brothers means specifically the body of Christ. Okay? So, John is talking about how we react and relate to other people in the body of Christ.

He begins by saying, *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.”* This is the height of love. Greater love has no one than this, right? That he laid down his life for us. How do I know love? Well, the greatest expression of love is what Jesus showed you and showed me when He gave his life on the cross.

So, we all have this picture of love and we know what love is. This sacrificial kind of love that Jesus showed us.

Then, John goes on to say, if you're in Christ and if this transformation of the Spirit has taken hold in your life, then you ought to be laying down your life for the brethren. All right, does he mean you literally are going to go to your death for them? Well, no. But he is talking about self-sacrifice, and that's what we need to see. John is saying Jesus sacrificed himself completely on your behalf. And in the same way that Jesus showed you that example, you should be giving of yourself, sacrificing of yourself for others.

I got to tell you something. People have asked me in the past, what do you look for when you're looking at a potential elder at Calvary Chapel? And this is one of the things I look for right here. And, of course, there's other qualifications that are given to us in the pastoral epistles, and those are wonderful. And I obviously look at those too, but I look for this because this is the sign of a mature believer, an individual who understands that I am to exemplify. No, I am to follow the example of Jesus Christ. He laid down his life for the flock, and I need to lay down my life for the flock.

And that means I put their needs above my own. And I always want to do best for them. I always want to do what's best for them. And that means if I have to close my mouth and not defend myself in order to spare the flock, that's what I'll do. That's what I'll do. Right?

I've told you guys in the past, you know, that I have a pretty close relationship with some of the other Calvary Chapels in the Treasure Valley, and I've walked through some very, very challenging times with some of those guys, with their elders. And in the last couple of years, one of the brothers really went through a very, very difficult time where his elders really turned on him and really, really damaged the flock. Really damaged the flock badly.

And I looked that brother in the eye and I said, do you understand, don't you, that those men they proved to you by their actions that they were not called, they shouldn't have been elders, because an elder understands he's got to lay down his life. He'll do whatever. And that means if he gets into an issue with the pastor and there's just a difference of opinion that they can't resolve, he'll leave quietly. He will not hurt the flock. He will lay down his life for the flock, even if it means his relationship with them is going to be over. He's still not going to hurt them.

That's an element that I look for. It's an element that I want to see, but that's an element that comes in broken people, and I'm talking about broken in a good way. The world is full of broken people.

I don't know if I've told you guys yet, but every Thursday of this month I've been on grand jury in Vail. It's been very interesting. I've never been on grand jury before. I've been on jury duty and I've sat on juries for trials, but I've never been on grand jury. And grand jury is where the DA comes into a room. And it's very different from being on jury because you sit around a conference table and they even give us candy and drinks, and we can sit and hang out and talk. And you can question the witnesses. You can even question the district attorney. You can speak up anytime you want, and we're in just this small room. But we have witnesses paraded in front of us or come before the grand jury, and we decide whether or not the charges that are being brought against someone are enough to indict them to go to trial. So, this is the step before going to trial.

And I've only been on grand jury twice this month, and I've got to go three more times. I got to go tomorrow again. I'll be there all day. But you want to know what I see while I'm there on grand jury, people are broken. They get paraded in front of us. Broken people get paraded in front of us, and it's heartbreaking.

But there's a good kind of brokenness that happens in believers' lives, and it's a brokenness that probably relates more to like a horse. I know people don't like to use that word broken when they talk about breaking an animal. I hear they call it gentling a horse now because it's a little more politically correct.

But, you know, when you're "breaking" a horse or gentling a horse, you're leading that horse to a place where they stop kicking and bucking and nipping and biting. And do you know that human beings have to go through that process too? Because, when the Lord begins to work in our lives and begins that transformational process, you know, that the Holy Spirit is doing, many times we kick and buck and nip, don't we? Right? We do.

We resist the Holy Spirit. He's working in our life to bring about the image of Jesus, and we're fighting it all the way, you know, I don't want this. Well, there's a point in a believer's life where they stop kicking and biting and bucking, and it's called brokenness.

And when they're broken, they got nothing more to prove. And the pride has been dealt with, not that it goes away completely, but it's been dealt with in such a way that that person is now willing to put others first. And that's what John is

talking about here when he says, we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

This is a word to the mature, no doubt about it. But it's a word, nonetheless, that should be the goal for all believers. It's called caring for others more than I care for myself, you know.

So, John moves on to another distinguishing characteristic of believers, and he says in verse 17, *“<sup>17</sup> But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?”*

So, again, this is specifically speaking of how you're responding to the needs that are expressed by fellow believers. Okay? This is people in the fellowship, people in the fellowship of believers. And he is saying here that if you see an individual and you know that they are in need and you close your heart against them.

That doesn't mean that, you know, you may not be able to help everybody. It doesn't mean you've necessarily closed your heart to the person. You may just not have the resources. You might just have to pray for them, but by praying for them, you're opening your heart for this person or to that person.

But he says, who yet closes his heart. In other words, I refuse to help. There's no way that I'm going to help that person. And yet that person is a brother or a sister in Jesus. He says, how can God's love abide in that person's heart? How can that even happen? When you are willing to harden your heart toward a family member, how can the love of God be abiding in you? It's not possible.

So, he says here as he goes on in verse 18, how this love is supposed to be seen. Look what he says here, verse 18, *“<sup>18</sup> Little children, (again, that's a reference to believers) let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”* In other words, let your love be more than just empty words. Let it be (and this is another distinguishing characteristic of a believer) let it be in your actions. Even if your actions, like I say, are just prayer.

It's like, Lord, I don't have anything I can do for this person, but I can pray for them. I can pray, Lord, take care of this need. Somebody expresses a need, and you know that's not something that you can meet by yourself, just grab them by the hand and say, hey man, let me pray with you right now. Let me pray with you. I don't know how this is going to get met, but I can do that. Let's pray. And that's what John is saying here. Let it be action.



In fact, these distinguishing characteristics that John's talking about here are so important that they actually become a source of reassurance in our walk with the Lord.

Look at verse 19. He says, “<sup>19</sup> *By this we shall know* (circle that word, know) *that we are of the truth* (and again, the word, the phrase of the truth is another reference to simply being a believer. Okay? So, you can say it that way. By this, we shall know that we are in Christ) *and reassure our hearts before him;* <sup>20</sup> *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything.*”

And what John is saying is that when you see these distinguishing marks that he's been talking about here, that are being played out in your life, what you do is you see that God's doing a good work in your life. Because you see that, wow, I used to hate people when they offended me, or when they messed me over, or if I felt like they messed me over, or they snubbed me, or whatever. I used to just get so, and I don't get that way anymore.

And my, brothers and sisters in Christ, I love them and I'm going to keep loving them. And I can see this happening in my life. And you understand that this is a distinguishing mark of what it is to be in Christ, and you are comforted by that. And that's what John is talking about.

But you'll notice he says, verse 20, “*whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.*” Do you know that your heart can condemn you? And it has nothing to do with coming from the Lord. When people say to me or if they say to you, I just feel so condemned. If you're talking to a believer, you can tell them in no uncertain terms, well, that's not coming from God because the Bible says very clearly, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Okay? Condemnation doesn't come from God to a believer. What does come? Conviction, right?

Conviction, that's very different from condemnation. Condemnation leaves you feeling hopeless. Conviction leaves you feeling hopeful. Where does condemnation come from? Well, it can come from the enemy. He is the accuser of the brethren. But it can come from your own heart. Our own hearts will condemn us, and it feels like the Lord. And when you are feeling that condemnation, you have to know enough of the word of God to know that it's not the Lord condemning you.

And if you have to go back to that scripture that says there is, therefore, now no condemnation, (Romans 8:1) then go do it. Because you see, you have to

remind yourself. If you don't remind yourself of what the word says and you let the feelings of your heart just run with you, the enemy is going to get ahold of that then, and he's going to love that. That will be his play area.

And he will say, ooh they feel condemnation. Wonderful. And they aren't applying the word of God here. They actually believe it's God doing it. So, I'm going to pour it on and I'm going to make them believe it to the point that they will become so discouraged that they want to turn away from the Lord.

That's his goal. So, you have to know enough of the word of God to be able to understand where this sort of thing comes from. And that's why John says, whenever our hearts condemn us, you need to understand that God is greater than our heart. He knows everything. Put your trust in Him. His Word says that He doesn't condemn you.

You guys know who you are. Some of you do have that overactive conscience. And when you mess up, you are very aware that you've messed up. And not only are you very aware you've messed up, you have a tendency to beat yourself up when you mess up. And you have to be very careful about that because the heart just runs away with self-condemnation.

But again, you have to come back to the word of God through faith. Right? We remember that we are in Christ and that condemnation has passed. Why is there, therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Why? Why doesn't God condemn you? Because he condemned his son. Right? Because he condemned his son.

That's why. That's why there's no condemnation for you. Condemnation has already been served and Jesus took your condemnation. All right? So, we've got to remember that.

Verse 21 says, *“<sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;”* Right? Our confidence is not in ourself. Our confidence is in Him, what Jesus did on the cross. He says, *“<sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.”*

Oh, okay. We got to be careful here again, notice verse 22. It says, whatever we ask from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him, we receive whatever we ask.

If you read that and you look at just that verse alone, and you look at it in a fairly superficial way, you're going to come away thinking that because you were obedient to God you earned the right to get whatever you ask for. Because that's what it kind of sounds like on the surface of that verse.

Look at verse 22 again. Well, actually the end of verse 21 says, we have confidence and whatever we ask, we receive from Him. Why? Because we keep his commandments. So, in other words, if you're a good person and you do what you're told, you can ask anything you want.

Did your parents ever say that to you when you were growing up? If you're a good boy or if you're a good girl, I'll let you take you to the candy store and you can pick out whatever you want, right?

I mean, yeah, that's not what John is saying here. What he's saying is obedience, your obedience to God, what it shows is that you have fellowship with God through his Spirit. And because we're in fellowship with God, in such close and intimate terms, you're only asking what is in keeping with his will.

That's why you can ask and you'll receive whatever you ask for. Because, you see, you're in close fellowship with Him. And the reason we know you're in close fellowship with Him is because you're keeping his commandments, okay? That's how you know.

It's really difficult to obey God when you're not in good fellowship with Him. Have you ever noticed that? If you feel distant from God, you're going to struggle walking in obedience to the Spirit. If you're kind of playing fast and loose with the things of the world and going your own way and kind of doing your own thing and kind of poo-pooing sin, it's like, eh, it's not that bad, not that big of a deal, you're going to struggle. You're not in close fellowship with the Lord; and because of that, you're not going to be praying even about the things that come from that fellowship.

You see, this is what Jesus spoke. And it's almost like John was remembering what Jesus said. We read in John chapter 15, verse 7. Let me put this on the screen for you. This is Jesus talking. He says,

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**John 15:7 (ESV)**

*"7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, (guys, that's close fellowship) ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

See, this is what John is talking about here in 1 John chapter 3. He's not saying, if you're a good person, you can ask God and He'll give you what you want. He's saying if you're walking in obedience to His commandments, that shows you're in fellowship with Him. And if you're in fellowship with Him, that means abiding closely with Him, then you're going to be able to ask whatever you want and it'll be done because, you see, you're going to be asking according to His will.

It's when we get out of fellowship sometimes that we ask stupid things, or we ask things that are contrary to His will.

So, he goes on here in verse 23, and he says, *“<sup>23</sup> 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.”*

All right. Do you guys remember when Jesus was asked to sum up the greatest commandment? What's the greatest commandment? Jesus said, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind (Mark 12:30). But he also went on to say, love your neighbors as yourself (Mark 12:31). Those two together are no less great, or the one is no less great than the other. And even said that the law and the prophets are summed up in these. So, this was a summation of the law and the prophets.

Well, John is kind of doing the same thing. Jesus was speaking more from an Old Testament law perspective because He was talking to the Jews who were very fixated on the law.

John is speaking really from more of a New Testament commandment platform, and he's saying that he sums up these things by saying that we are to first believe in the name. Do you know what it means to believe in the name of God's son, right? The name means all that He has claimed, all that He has said, all that He is. That is what it means to believe in the name of Jesus Christ, all right. So, he says, this is his commandment, that you would believe in the name of His son, Jesus Christ, right? And two, love one another.

So, John is kind of coming up with his own New Testament version, if you will. And you can kind of think of this as our first duty to believe in the name. And again, that's another way of talking about trusting Him and having your confidence in Him and what He did on the cross.

Are you confident in what Jesus did on the cross? Do you know that you that you know that you know that what he did on the cross was enough for you to be

saved? Do you know that? That's what it means to believe in His name? Right? So, that's his first command, right, to believe. And that's our first duty, having established that first duty to believe. And that's a priority of putting faith in Christ first.

Then as part of the transformation of that first duty, we are to show the evidence of our saving faith by loving others, loving one another. And again, that is evidence that we've been saved.

And then John ends the chapter in verse 24 by saying, *“24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.*

Now, I want to be very careful. There are people who cannot see the word commandments without assuming that John is talking about, or that the Bible is talking about the 10 Commandments. There's people that just cannot separate them. And, so, there are people, and I'll tell you right now, who read this verse, and they say whoever keeps His commandments abides in God.

And they go, okay, well you see there, I have to keep the Sabbath. I have to keep the food laws, you know. I have to keep the law. I have to go back to the Old Testament. I have to go back to the, you know, the Old Testament. I go to Leviticus. I got to go back and do it. I got to go back and keep the law. I got to keep the commandments of God. And they get all confused and they basically lose sight of Jesus.

Jesus becomes, you know, an afterthought to their salvation because they're fixated on the word commandment as applying only to the law of Moses, and they forget so many things along the way. They forget. They forget that the law never saved anybody.

And if you just go back to Romans and read Romans again, you'll see Paul said, nobody's going to be declared righteous by keeping the law (Romans 3:20). No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by keeping the law. It just doesn't work that way. The law was never meant to declare you righteous. In fact, it was meant to do the opposite. It was meant to declare you as a sinner. That's what the purpose of the law is, to show you how much of a sinner you are.

So, when John says whoever keeps His commandments abides in Him, he's not saying whoever finds his righteousness in the commands of the Old Testament law is going to be abiding in God. Because we know from the rest of scripture that's not the answer. Okay? So, you got to interpret this verse with the rest of the Bible. You have to do that.

You have to go to Romans. You have to go to Galatians. You have to go to Hebrews. And you have to be reminded of the fact that the law can't save you. And, so, whoever keeps His commandments abides in God. John is simply saying, whoever walks in obedience to Him. And this is obedience that comes not through the law, it comes through the Spirit.

One of the things the writer of Hebrews so beautifully communicates is that we as believers have something that is so much superior to the Old Testament law, and that is the Spirit. Because the law was written on tablets of stone and it was out here. It was external to you. But when you got saved, the God who wrote those commandments came to live in your heart. They're no longer tablets of stone. They've been written upon your heart. And now through the Ministry of the Spirit, we walk in obedience to the Spirit, not to the letter of the law, but to the leading of the Spirit.

And that's something that, there's a lot of Christians, I'm just telling you, there's a lot of Christians in the world who miss that fact altogether. And they believe that Jesus did something really important on the cross, but they got to keep themselves saved by keeping the law. They have to be obedient to the law. And it really is heartbreaking.

So, whoever keeps His commandments, whoever walks in obedience to the Spirit abides in God and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given to us. So, the Spirit not only communicates God's guidance for our lives, right, but he also communicates assurance to our hearts. And he speaks to us and he says, we know that he abides in us by the spirit. We know this by the Spirit.

So, there are all kinds of benefits to abiding in the Lord. And there's this assurance that we have that can only come through the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. But a large part of the abiding that John is talking about is abiding in faith.

When the Bible says you need to abide in Christ, have you ever thought what does that mean? What does that mean? I just need to get really close to Him. Well, yeah, but how do you do that? I mean, practically speaking, how do you abide in Christ? Well, it comes primarily through abiding in faith. It comes down to faith. Never letting go of faith.

Jesus, I believe, first of all, and foremost. And that's why we remind ourselves of it every communion time. I am saved by the blood of the Lamb. Okay? First of all, my faith is in what you did on the cross.

But now that I've got that dialed in, I need to abide in faith every day. Every time a challenge comes my way, I need to abide in faith. Every time a doubt begins to enter my heart, I have to abide in faith. I have to keep coming back to faith. I have to keep building myself up in faith. Faith is something we can't just let go. We can't just go, well, I got faith.

One of the most common things people say to me is, I have really weak faith. What do I do? How do I build up my faith? Well, the Bible says, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

So we got to be in the word, we got to be reminding ourselves of the word always. It's like a muscle, it'll atrophy if you don't keep using it. Faith is that same way. If you don't keep exercising it. The way we exercise it is getting into the word, and then God will bring some exercises across your path from time to time where you'll be kind of forced. Something will happen in your life, and you will be forced to deal with it.

Well, you're either going to walk in faith or you're going to walk in the flesh, one of the two. And that means you're going to try to fix it yourself or you're going to trust the Lord. And those are opportunities to grow in your faith. And have you ever noticed when you go through a very difficult time in life, you come out of that time with a faith that's stronger than when you went in.

And it wasn't fun to go through it. It wasn't fun to have those muscles exercised. It never is. But you come away and you go, you know what, that was beneficial. I have a deeper, stronger faith in the Lord.

And, so, we start with faith in Jesus and his finished work on the cross. We continue every day with faith by trusting Him daily for life and provision. He's able to take care of whatever your issues may be. He can take care of you. He knows how to take care of his children. That's not in question. What's in question is whether we will trust him to take care of us. That's the question, and that when we abide in faith, when we abide in faith, it opens up a whole new revelation from God to us that we are saved.

And that's what John is ending this chapter with. It's something that the Apostle Paul talked about. Let me show you this. Romans 8, you know this. Romans 8:16.

**(Slide)**

**Romans 8:16 (ESV)**

*<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that (what) we are children of God,*

The spirit does it, but he does it as we abide in faith, abide in Christ. As we put our faith in him, put our trust in him, the spirit communicates to us. But let me just say this, the converse is also true, okay? The one who does not abide in faith but loses sight of faith and begins to step out in the power of self, in the power of their own intellect, and as the Bible says, leans upon their own understanding, that person is not going to walk in confidence that he is in Christ. He will not have, or she will not have the assurance that they are in Christ through the Spirit because they're not relying on the spirit. They're relying on self.

And, so, if somebody says to you, I don't know what that's like when the Bible says that the spirit will testify with our spirit, that we are children. I don't know what that even feels like. I've never had the Spirit testify that to me. You can ask them, are you trusting in Jesus fully?

Are you, first of all trusting Him for your salvation without question. And secondly, in your daily life, are you trusting Him to see you through, to strengthen you, to encourage you, to help you, to work out situations that are troublesome and difficult? Are you trusting?

And a lot of people aren't. You'll be probably shocked to know how many born-again Christians are trusting Jesus for salvation, but not trusting Him for their daily life. So, where's their assurance coming from? Well, probably nowhere.

The more we trust, the more assurance we receive, the more we choose to trust. Because the more you choose to trust, the more you're going to see God's faithfulness play out in your life.

Do you understand, Christians, that He delights to see His children when they choose to simply trust him? When they simply make up their mind, I'm going to trust God. God is tickled, loves it, and it brings an assurance in your heart because you see God moving and moving powerfully. So, there's where we stop.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you so much tonight for the reminders of your word. And I thank you, Lord, that your Spirit testifies with our own hearts when we



hear the truth, and we know and the Spirit in us says yes and amen. Lord, we desire to be people who walk in the assurance of the knowledge of our salvation. And we've seen tonight several ways in which the Apostle John described these distinctive characteristics of a born-again believer.

But we know that those boil down to faith, putting our faith in Jesus, most certainly for the forgiveness of sins but also for our daily lives and abiding in that faith every day. Abiding in the truth, abiding in faith, abiding in confidence. The Lord is my shepherd. Father, be with us, strengthen our hearts. We commit them to you tonight, and we choose to trust you. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.