

Abide in Him

1st John 2:24-3:10

Ephesians 4:17-32

Romans 8:1-17

Responsive. 1 Peter 1:3-8

Song: And can it be.

Last week we took a rather large section on chapter 2 and I think covered quite a bit of ground. Wrapping up some final thoughts on John's warning about the influence of the world on the christian, and how the love of the things of the world actually separates us from God. Our selfish ambitions, desires, lusts, and even pride in our knowledge and experience John says are all things of the world to which is already passing away and is not something that we should be concerned, or even focused upon.

Then we moved on to cover this small section where he talks about the last hour, and anti-christs. How that there are, and there will be people who have at that time, and who will in our present time, come in to the assembly to deceive and lead people away from the truth of scripture. In a sense this does not seem to happen much within the church like it did in the case here with John, it isn't to often that someone comes into a protestant church and starts denying the deity and incarnation of Christ, but that being said we are surrounded by other religions who fail John's test of truth, they deny that Jesus as the Messiah and only way to salvation. They offer alternatives, other so called prophets, or just like the gnostics did here, enlightenment through knowledge, or spiritual experiences.

Last week we focused mainly on this idea that anti-christ is not necessarily one specific future man of sin who will arrive, but rather anyone who denies Christ. Digging a little deeper into this, another form which is not so blatant or obvious would also be those who deny apostolic authority. These are those who come in the spirit of anti-christ that John mentions later in this book. In the gospel of John, we see Jesus telling his disciples in chapter 13, verse 20. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

If you deny scripture, the records, and writings of those who God has inspired, then you are denying whom God has sent, and if you deny them, then you deny Christ. This is probably the more common form of anti-christ that we could see arise in our churches today. False teaching, false doctrine, denying teachings of God's word, or even trying to excuse away and soften hard teaching in the bible, because it does not fit in the mold of today's society, or just plain having a complete disregard for the authority of the apostles and scripture. This is the spirit of anti-christ that we are more likely to have to deal with within the church today.

John says that we have fellowship with the apostles, and they with the Father and the Son. It is in this connection that we find our salvation. God sent his Son, to die for our sins, in our place so that we may become heirs to the promises of God, and have fellowship with the father, but it is through the teaching of the apostles and scripture that we learn of Christ and his death, burial, and resurrection.

If we go back to the beginning of Chapter 1 here, John says this very thing. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life- the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was

manifested to us- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ.

If we deny the teaching of scripture, if we try to dilute the teachings of the apostles, if we are not standing in fellowship with the apostles, whom God has revealed himself to, then we are in the wrong fellowship.

John says that those who abide in the teachings we have heard from the beginning, the teachings of the prophets, and the apostles then they will also abide in the son, and in the father, and those who abide in the son, will be given the promises that God has promised his children, eternal life.

Remember John said that this is the last days, God's word and redemption plan has been revealed, and completed in Christ. So here in verse 28 he tells us why we must abide in Christ. "And now little children, abide in him that when he appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. Those who are Christ's, who abide in him know that their sin has been paid, it has been forgiven, it has been covered. So in the culmination of God's plan for his creation, when Jesus returns to gather his people we who are his can stand at the judgment seat in confidence, not because of our own work, or knowledge or experience, but we can stand in confidence because of Christ's blood.

In that day, all those who are not abiding in Christ, will be full of shame, and sorrow because they will then see their unworthiness before the throne, and how hopelessly lost, and rebellious they are. Christ will put them to shame at his return, but those who are his can sing this song a new that we sang this morning, No Condemnation now I dread, Jesus and all in him is mine, alive in him, my living head, and clothed in righteousness divine, Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

So I guess we must answer the question, what does it actually mean to abide in Christ. It is really a quite easy and straightforward but it is important to understand what it means to abide in Christ to be able to get the full understanding of what John is talking about here. The definition of Abide, is to accept, or act in accordance with a rule, or recommendation. It means to comply with, observe, follow, keep to, stand by, act in accordance with, to heed, and respect.

To abide in Christ is to do all these things. It is a connection with Christ, and living in a way that our life reflects our savior. Abiding in Christ is not something that comes with years of study, or reaching a certain level of holiness, it is something that all believers do, and is a mark of true faith.

In the last verse of chapter 2 here we see the effects of abiding in Christ, "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him." Practicing righteousness is simply, doing what is right. We who abide in Christ, strive to be righteous, for he who we abide in, who we observe, who we follow, who we heed, respect, and act in accordance with is righteous.

As we went through the book of James we saw James arguing this very same thing. I keep talking about the book of James it seems as we are going through 1st John but there are so many parallels. It is hard to understand how people can read James and think that he is teaching a different gospel when we keep running into the same teaching no matter what book in the bible you read. God's people will strive to do what is right because it is God who is working in them to do so. Just as Paul

said in Galatians, we do what our father does, if our father is the devil, then we will practice lawlessness, and sin. But If we are God's adopted children, we will have the traits of our father and we will practice righteousness for he is righteous, because we are born of God.

Notice here, that John says those who are born of God, he does not say those who are baptized, or those who walk down the aisle and prayed a prayer, or those who are moral, or good people, or those who rightly practice the sacraments of the holy roman church, he does not say that these are signs that someone is abiding in Christ, but rather he says it is practicing righteousness. This simple test of obedience to God, of abiding in Christ, of being righteous because he is righteous works as assurance for us. John tell us here in these last 2 verse of chapter 2, to Abide in Christ, so when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him.

So now continuing on into chapter 3, John continues with the language of those who are born of him. He says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be be called children of God! What great assurance and confidence we should find here, We are the children of God, when we are faced with difficulties, or persecution we have father who so loves us that he sent his Son to die so that we may become his adopted children. If this father did this for us while we were apart from him if he loved us while we were enemies, how much more so will he watch over and care for us now that we are his children.

It is because of this love, because of our abiding in Christ that the world does not know us. Jesus said that if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world the world would love you, but because I have chosen you out of this world and you are not of it, the world hates you. The world doesn't understand us, God's children are Christ like, and the world hates us because they hate him.

This is just more affirmation of true faith, abiding in Christ, living a righteous life, love for our brothers and sisters, and hatred from the world all affirm a life who is abiding in Christ, a person who is living Christ like. Not loving the world, not loving the things of the world, but instead loving God. This has far reaching implications into our lives. The world does not understand how we can be satisfied, and content with what we have, We understand that all that we have has been giving to us by God and we should rejoice, and praise him for what he has given. While the world is always seeking more, lusting after the next big thing.

The world does not understand how we can face tough situations in our life with relative peace, because we understand we have a sovereign Father who watches over, and cares for us, who promises that he will never leave, nor forsake us. The world does not have this peace, they do not have this understanding, the world can not understand the Christian because the world does not have Christ. So they hate us for it,

Verse 2, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We do not know what the future holds, we do not know or understand when Christ returns what our resurrected bodies will be like, but we do know that when he returns we will be like him. Turn to Roman's 8:28-30. This passage is very familiar to all of us, but there is an important part I want to point out here.

It says, "and we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." And here we see the golden chain of God's redemptive plan, "

verse 29, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

This is the key here, and what I wanted to pull out of this passage, all those who he predestined, all those who are Christs, who abide in him will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And that all happens because of the following verse, “Moreover whom he predestined, these he also called, whom he called, these he also justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified.

God's plan, is that we will be conformed into the image of his Son. It is already not yet, we are justified, through Christ and his work on the cross, but this justification is still working in us creating in us righteousness as we progress through this christian life. And when Christ appears again, we will be fully conformed to his image, we will this will be the completion, and culmination of God's plan for his children. When he is revealed, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

John goes on to say in verse 3, and everyone who has this hope in Christ, purifies himself just as Christ is pure. Those who abide in Christ, will practice righteousness, they will purify themselves because he is pure. This hope that we have in Christ, knowing that when he returns we will be fully conformed to his image encourages us to seek righteousness and purity in our lives now. He who abides in Him is righteous, purifying himself, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The the following verse's here John starts to go into what appears to be some controversial subject, and he seems to contradict himself. Previously he said in chapter 1, if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar and his word is not in us, and here, starting in verse 4 he says. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin. And this is where he seems to contradict himself, He goes on to say,

“Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen him nor known him. Little Children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he has been born of God.

Ok, So what do we do with this contradiction, how do we handle what John is saying here. Well first off, we need to remember who John is dealing with. The gnostic, false teachers were telling the assembly here that you don't need to worry about the sins you commit in the body, because what matters is knowledge and spirituality. What we have seen throughout this book is John arguing against this teaching. He says here that sin is lawlessness. Sin is a rebellion against God, committing sin, puts us on the side of the Devil and those who are anti-christ and it stands in direct opposition of Jesus, the righteous one.

So with this in mind when we look at these verses it begins to make sense. Jesus came to take away our sins. John already said in the first chapter here, that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and in verse 7 of chapter 1 he says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. All those who abide in Christ, have their sins paid, and covered by Christ's blood. Christs righteousness is imputed, it is put to our account so that we may be counted as righteous, so that we may be conformed to his image.

So in one way, it could be said that we are sinless, because Christ has paid for our sin making for himself a righteous and holy nation through his blood, but yet we are still in this body, we still yet sin, and struggle in our day to day walk.

It is clear that what John is talking about here, is not actually sinless perfection, but rather a life defined by habitual, continual sin. Those who abide in Christ, seek righteous, and purity, they may fall into sin, but they do not dive into it, and live in it. John says in verse 7, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous. This is in opposition to those who practice sin, they practice lawlessness. John wants to be perfectly clear here, it isn't what a person says they are, it is what they do. Once again, sounds a lot like James doesn't it.

These false teachers that he was dealing with, they talked to the talk..they sounded knowledgeable, and religious, but when it came down to it, they didn't walk the walk. Their lives did not show forth righteousness of one who is abiding in Christ, they are liars and the truth is not in them. Jesus came to take away the sins of the world, and those who abide in him can not and will not live a life in sin like the world. I have said this many times as we went through Galatians, and James, and I will say it again here. If your life is not different then anyone else in this world, if you continue, and habitually commit sin and there is no repentance, no turning from it and you think yourself to be a christian. I am sorry, but you have deceived yourself for those who are Christs practice righteousness, not lawlessness.

Instead of trying to convince yourself that you are ok, instead of putting your faith in something you have done, or a decision you think you made turn to Christ, run to him, and flee your life of rebellion and sin. Lets go back to Galatians a minute, chapter 5, verse 16. "I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to another so that you do not do the things that you wish. BUT! If you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I have also told you in tn time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If this sounds like you, if you are living a life of fornication, and lewdness, or if you are known as someone who is hateful, contentious, jealous prone to outbursts of anger. Or someone who is consumed by their own selfish ambition and goals, or maybe you like to party and get wasted on the weekend. Paul says here simply, you are not a Christian. Stop deceiving yourself to thinking that you are. Christ has come, to take away these sins, and a person who is abiding in Christ will not continue in a pattern of such things.

In closing today, looking at verse 8-10..." He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Christ is victorious over Satan, Christ is victorious over sin, and we can be victorious over Satan, and sin through our savior Jesus Christ.

And lastly, looking at verse 9, Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he has been born of God. We are not sinless, we are not without sin, but true Christians do not make a practice of sinning. For Christ remains in us if we have truly been born of God, then we will abide in him, and in the father, and those who abide in him practice righteousness, and seek purity.