

Abiding in Christ # 11

1 John 3: 18-24

Living a Christian life requires much more than church attendance during weekly services. Being known as a Christian is literally to be known as a follower of Christ, one who strives to live life as Christ lived. Being a Christian isn't merely identification with certain deeds or actions, although they will be evident in our lives, it is genuinely a life we live; it is who we are.

John continues to provide basic admonitions for the Christian life. The truths he speaks of in this passage are not new to us, nor are they beyond our ability to comprehend. They are really simple thoughts that reach profound depths. If we are to be all Christ desires us to be, then we must live our lives as He lived His. We ought to be more like Jesus than at our conversion.

Let's take a moment to consider the [admonitions](#) of the text as we think on: [Abiding in Christ](#).

I. The Challenge Revealed (18-20) – John offers a profound challenge to every believer. This challenge concerns:

A. Our Expression of Love (18) – [My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth](#). That is simple enough to understand isn't it? We are admonished not to limit our love to words that we speak, but to genuinely show our love in deed and in truth. Simply, our actions speak much louder than our words. We can talk of loving others and even challenge those around us to love others, but until we actually express our love through action, we have not really loved. Talk is cheap. We are admonished to show our love through action. Live it out daily as we serve others and care for them.

- The work of love must also be performed with pure motives. Some may act in the appearance of love, but real love was not the motivating force. Let us love in truth as well.

B. Our Persuasion in Love (19) – [And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him](#). Genuine love flows freely from the believer who is in fellowship with Christ. It just comes naturally. When our hearts are right with the Lord, we will act in love and our love will be evident for others to see. Love is a genuine characteristic of Christianity. If there is never any love or compassion shown, there is little evidence of conversion. Lost people can show love, but it should always be evident in the lives of believers.

- When we think of it, we are never more like our Lord than when we express love to others. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is the second great commandment, second only to our love for God. Those who belong to Christ will naturally possess and show love for others. Possessing and sharing this great love bears witness to our relationship with Christ.

C. Our Discretion through Love (20) – *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Real love, love as Christ loves, cannot be fabricated or imitated. One either possesses it through a relationship with Christ or not. At the moment of salvation we are filled with peace and wonder, but as we progress in the Christian life we all fail and miss the mark. Each of us, at some point or another, has found ourselves warming by the fires of denial. We have allowed doubt and sin to enter our hearts. Often during those moments we begin to question and even doubt our salvation. We ask: how could I possibly be saved and do such things? It is during these moments our hearts condemn us.

- What comfort and peace we find in this verse. It certainly does not encourage or condone sin, but it does reveal great truth. We are not saved by feelings and we are not kept based on whether we “feel” saved or not. God is greater than our hearts. He is greater than our feelings of doubt. We are saved by grace through faith, not of our works. When our works and actions don’t measure up, we do not lose our salvation because it wasn’t secured by works originally. You will not always feel saved, but salvation is in the finished work of Christ. It is freely given, not dependent upon works or feelings.

II. The Confidence Revealed (21-22) – Many were the difficulties and distractions of the day and John sought to instill confidence in the church. We too can embrace this same confidence. Notice:

A. Our Assurance (21) – *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* He has spoken of times when we doubted, and here he speaks of the great assurance we enjoy in Christ. I too struggled with assurance of my salvation, but the Lord helped me and I eventually got past that struggle. All believers need to get to the place where our faith and trust rely solely upon the Lord. He alone secured my salvation and I rest completely in Him.

- God desires that we enjoy confidence in Him. That isn’t to say we reach a point of arrogance, but that we enjoy assurance through Christ. If we live in doubt of salvation, we in essence live in defeat. A defeated Christian will not be diligent in their work and lack confidence. It is possible to rise above and enjoy liberty in Christ!

B. Our Appeal (22) – [And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.](#) John also reveals great confidence believers have when making supplications unto the Lord. He does not imply that we can ask for anything at all and expect God to grant it, but we can come with complete assurance that He will hear and answer prayers that are prayed in accordance with His will. These prayers will be received of God because they are prayed from hearts that desire to keep His commandments, living in a way that pleases Him.

- John isn't encouraging the "health and wealth" or "name it and claim it" prosperity doctrines so prevalent today, but simply we can rely on the Father to meet our needs and honor our petitions. [Luke 11:9-10 – And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.](#) ^[10] [For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.](#)

C. Our Allegiance (22) – We cannot miss the heart of this truth. Many prayers go unanswered because they are offered from a heart polluted by sin. We cannot expect to live as we please, totally ignoring the will of God for our lives and expect Him to answer our prayers. If we desire to receive the Lord's blessing, we must humble ourselves before Him and walk according to His ways within His Word. Eternal security is wonderful, but it is no license to sin. If we expect to be victorious in life and bold in prayer, we must keep our lives pure before the Lord.

III. The Commandment Required (23-24) – John closes this thought with a charge to keep particular commandments. If we expect to possess Christ-like love and enjoy power in prayer, these characteristics must be present in our lives. We are commanded to:

A. Respond in Faith (23a) – [And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.](#) This is the foundational element in Christian life; it is the cornerstone for all that follows. Faith in Christ is the beginning. We cannot expect to enjoy any of the benefits of God apart from a relationship with Christ. Many today wonder why God seems so distant and their lives are in such a mess. Many of them likely do not enjoy a personal relationship with Christ in salvation by faith.

- The need for faith doesn't end at salvation. As we continue to grow and mature in the Lord, faith must remain and grow as we do. We cannot expect to receive the Lord's blessing if we doubt His ability or willingness. We must offer prayer in faith!

B. React in Love (23b) – [and love one another, as he gave us commandment](#). Again we are reminded and admonished to love one another. We never outgrow the need to love others. We never reach a point spiritually where love is nonessential. In fact, as we mature in the Lord our love for Him and others should grow and become more evident. Regardless of the situation, we are expected to react in love as Christ loves. When we consider His great love, we see much room for improvement in the love we share and show!

C. Remain in Obedience (24a) – [And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him](#). Just as our faith and love must endure, so must our obedience to the commandments of God. We are saved by grace and have escaped the condemnation of the law, but we are still expected to live in accordance with the Word of God. If we are to enjoy fellowship with Christ and abundant life, we must be submissive to His will for our lives and submit to His authority!

D. Rest in Grace (24b) – [And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us](#). Fear and doubt are not of God but of the devil. God doesn't desire believers to live their Christian lives wondering about their salvation. He wants us to enjoy complete victory and liberty through Christ. We are indwelt with the Spirit and can have absolute confidence in salvation and our eternal destiny. If you are saved, stop worrying and start resting in His abundant grace.

Conclusion: This has been a simple passage, but it reveals profound truth. I am certain we all could love others more than we do. I'm sure we could possess more concern for the condition of lost souls. No doubt we all fail and come short at times, possessing a need for continued growth.

There are likely some who continue to struggle with assurance of their salvation. It is possible to get that settled and enjoy victory. That is what the Lord desires for you. He doesn't want you living your Christian life continually worried about your salvation.

Maybe you know there was never a moment when you trusted Christ in salvation. Maybe the Spirit has dealt with you and you know you need to respond by faith. If so, Jesus wants you to come to Him and receive His gracious gift of salvation. He stands ready to meet whatever needs we may have!