

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 11, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Assurance of Abiding* *1 John 4:12-16*

*“<sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” – 1 John 4:12-16 (NKJV)*

### **BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup>, & 3<sup>RD</sup> JOHN:**

- (1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience. Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...
- (2) **DATE = A.D. 90-95** - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D.
- (3) **PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus** – It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life.
- (4) **RECIPIENTS = Different audiences** - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

(5) **PURPOSE = Multiple purposes** - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

### **3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:**

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4,** *“<sup>4</sup> And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”* How may a Christians joy be full if they lack assurance of faith, or if they are unsure that that are even a Christian and assured of salvation? Why do you think that is?
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1-2,** *“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* What affect does sin in the life of a Christian have on his or her assurance? Why? What is John telling us here that might help?
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13,** *“<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* Why do you think this (assurance) might have been a stated purpose of John’s writing? Why so important?

*“<sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” – 1 John 4:12-16 (NKJV)*

Almost every Christian at some time has struggled with assurance of salvation.

- Perhaps you heard some godless university professor rail against the Christian faith
- Or you read some book or heard some podcast or video that raise some questions about the Bible, and faith, and God, and it caused you to doubt the truth of Christianity
- Then the enemy hit you with the thought, “How could you be a genuine Christian and have these thoughts?”
- Or, it may have been during a time of severe trial, where God did not seem to be answering your prayers.
- Difficulties in your life multiplied without relief.
- You cried out to God, but it seemed God wasn’t listening... or wasn’t there... you just felt an empty voice.
- You just couldn’t make sense out of what was happening to you.
- Then, you began to doubt both the Christian faith and whether you were really a Christian at all.
- The enemy has many such ways to shake our assurance of salvation.

## CASE STUDIES

The following are representative of the kind of problems Christians have with assurance.

**Case Study 1:** *An elderly lady who was on her deathbed said to her son, “I believe in Jesus Christ. I love Him and have tried to live for Him. But I have been far from perfect. Now I can only hope my faith is acceptable to God.” She died as she lived... with a sad uncertainty.*

**Case Study 2:** *The owner of a small business was a faithful in church attendance and was compassionate to the poor. But he never enjoyed the assurance that he would go to heaven. To the pastor he said, “Right now I feel good about my relationship with God. But I don’t always have this feeling. I often find myself worrying about the future. I’m afraid I might die right after I commit a serious sin.” He went on to cite Paul’s comment about working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and then he said he was afraid he might be cast away. He concluded, “I sure wish I could know if I’m going to heaven – but I’m afraid that’s impossible.”*

**Case Study 3:** *A young house wife who received the Lord a few years ago and underwent a remarkable change has been struggling lately with doubt and has begun to lack assurance of her own salvation. She believes that assurance is possible, and she longs for it. But she is plagued with feelings of doubt and fear about everything – including her relationship with the Lord. She doesn’t even understand where these feeling are coming from, but she had said to her pastor, “I sometimes even have a hard time sleeping at night and will wake up with bad dreams that I am not saved.” She desires assurance of her salvation, but it had become a struggle for her lately.*

The lack of assurance of salvation in these case histories comes basically from two sources:

### **2 Common Sources of a Lack of Assurance:**

1. **Faulty interpretation of key passages of Scripture** – A poor hermeneutic and interpretation of key passages of Scripture will certainly play into one’s lack of assurance and insecurity concerning their salvation
2. **Personal emotional makeup** – Some people are just more prone to doubts, insecurities

Again, most believers, at one time or another, have doubted their salvation. There can be several causes of doubt, some valid and some not. If you doubt your salvation, there are some steps you can take to find reassurance, dispel the doubts, and rest in the promises of God.

First, it is good to know that whether or not you have doubts is *not* what determines your salvation - Some genuine believers struggle with doubt, while some unbelievers who presume to be saved never have a doubting moment (and they will have a rude awakening

someday—see Matthew 7:21–23). So it is not automatic that the presence of doubt indicates a lack of salvation, or that the absence of doubt attests to salvation.

### **Reasons Some Doubt Their Salvation:**

- (1) **The presence of sin in one's life** - One reason people doubt their salvation is *the presence of sin in their lives*. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of “sin that so easily entangles.” Many true Christians struggle against “besetting,” that is, habitual sins, and this may cause them to doubt their salvation. It is important here to recognize that, despite the Christian's being a new creation in Christ, everyone still sins. “We all stumble in many ways” (James 3:2). No one reaches a state of sinless perfection in this world. The difference for the believer is the attitude toward sin and the response to it. As Adrian Rogers said, “Before I got saved I was running to sin; now I am running *from* it. And if I fail, I turn right around and start running away again” (“Assurance of Salvation,” [www.lwf.org/discover-jesus/assurance-of-salvation](http://www.lwf.org/discover-jesus/assurance-of-salvation), accessed 4/7/20). It is also important to know that the presence of sin in one's life *can* be a sign that you are not saved. The Bible is clear that willful, unrepentant sin is an indicator of an untransformed heart (see 1 John 3:6, 9; Romans 6:1–2). If you are living a lifestyle that the Bible condemns as sinful, then there is a spiritual problem. Do Christians sin? Yes. Do they willfully continue in sin? No. If you doubt your salvation because of sin in your life, then confess the sin to God and ask for His forgiveness for Jesus' sake. Then take steps to not repeat the sin: “Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God” (Luke 3:8, NLT). The very fact that you recognize sin and struggle against it in your own life is proof that the Holy Spirit is at work. Cooperate with what He is doing.
- (2) **The absence of good works in one's life** - Another reason people doubt their salvation is *the absence of godly works in their lives*. The Christian life involves more than turning from sin; it includes doing good. Jesus said that “every good tree bears good fruit” (Matthew 7:17), and Paul wrote, “Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14). There are some who inspect the “fruit” of their own lives, find it lacking, and wonder if they're truly saved. Their mistrust that they are a “good tree” could be because 1) they have set a higher standard for themselves than God has, minimizing what God is doing through them; 2) they are foolishly measuring themselves against others and their fruit (see 2 Corinthians 10:12); 3) they are being lax in their pursuit of good works; or 4) they are not saved and therefore do not have the motivating love of Christ. If you doubt your salvation because of a lack of good works, then confess the sin of omission to God and ask for His forgiveness for Jesus' sake. Then it is time to “stir up the gift of God which is in you” (2 Timothy 1:6, NKJV). There's plenty of work to do for the kingdom (Luke 10:2), and the Bible gives plenty of direction about the will of God, generally, for Christians. Be careful not to set up false performance standards or compare your good deeds with others'. Ask God what He would have *you* do, and do that.
- (3) **Questioning the genuineness of one's conversion** - Some people, especially those who were saved at a very young age, doubt their salvation because they don't remember their

conversion very well, and *they wonder if the decision they made as a child was genuine*. Such feelings are common in adults who were saved as children. In such cases, it is good to review the promises of God and remember that Jesus invites children to come to Him (Mark 10:14). Salvation is based on the grace of God and faith in Christ, not our knowledge, wisdom, or sophistication (Ephesians 2:8–9). Jesus promised that those who are His will “never perish” (John 10:28). If doubts persist about the genuineness of your childhood conversion, make sure of your faith. Regardless of what you did as a child, do you believe *now* that Jesus died for your sins and rose again? Are you placing your faith in Him alone?

- (4) Persistent guilt over one’s past sins** - Another reason for the presence of doubt concerning salvation is *persistent guilt over past sins*. We all have regrets about past misdeeds, and we all have a spiritual enemy that the Bible calls “the accuser” (Revelation 12:10). The combination of regrets and accusations can spur much doubt. Fortunately, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). If you doubt your salvation because of guilty feelings, then ask yourself, “Were those sins over which I feel guilty confessed to God?” If so, then know this: God has removed that sin from you “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12). This promise stands forever: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Sometimes, doubting is a good thing. Doubt can, like pain, alert us to a problem that needs addressed. We are to test ourselves to be sure that we are “in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Be sure that you are born again. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, then you have eternal life, and God wants you to be confident of your salvation (Romans 8:38–39; 1 John 5:13).

### SOME QUOTES TO CONSIDER:

“If any man is not sure that he is in Christ, he ought not to be easy one moment until he is sure. Dear friend, without the fullest confidence as to your saved condition, you have no right to be at ease, and I pray you may never be so. This is a matter too important to be left undecided.” - *Charles Spurgeon*

1. *What do you think of this statement? What is Spurgeon saying do you think?*
2. *Why do you think Spurgeon say that a person who is not sure he is in Christ should not be easy one moment until he is sure? Why do you think he says if you are not sure you have not right to be at ease?*
3. *What do you think He means by “this is a matter too important to be left undecided? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?*
4. *What might this statement be saying concerning why Christians doubt their salvation?*

“I believe hundreds of Christian people are being deceived by Satan now on this point, that they have not got the assurance of salvation just because they are not willing to take God at His word.” - Dwight L. Moody

1. *What do you think of this statement generally? What is Moody saying do you think?*
2. *What role do you think Satan plays in the whole issue of doubting one’s salvation? Explain, how?*
3. *What does assurance of salvation have to do with taking God at His word.? In what way does the Word of God affect and play into assurance of salvation?*
4. *What might this statement be saying concerning why Christians doubt their salvation?*

“Uncertainty as to our relationship with God is one of the most enfeebling and dispiriting of things. It makes a man heartless. It takes the pith out of him. He cannot fight; he cannot run. He is easily dismayed and gives way. He can do nothing for God. But when we know that we are of God, we are vigorous, brave, invincible. There is no more quickening truth than this of assurance.” - Horatius Bonar, Scottish Churchman/Clergyman and Poet (Hymn writer) of the 1800’s

1. *What do you think of this statement generally? What is Bonar saying do you think?*
2. *Why do you think he says that a lack of assurance or uncertainty about our salvation is “enfeebling” and “dispiriting”? What does it mean for something to be “enfeebling”? What does it mean for something to be “dispiriting”? How is a lack of assurance these thing?*
3. *He says that when a Christian lacks assurance or doubt their salvation “it takes the pith out of him”... why do you think he means by that? **Pith = essence, heart, core, nucleus, spirit, the soul***
4. *When we are assured of our salvation and free of doubts why are we suddenly vigorous, brave, invincible?*
5. *Why might this statement be saying concerning why Christian doubt their salvation?*

### 7 Reasons You May Be Struggling With Assurance of Salvation:

1. You don’t believe
2. You are trusting in your good deeds
3. You are focusing on an event or experience
4. You are trusting in a feeling
5. You are not studying God’s Word
6. You are forgetting Jesus
7. You are continuing in sin

Whenever I talk with someone who is struggling with assurance, I try to go straight for the most significant issues and that’s why I think you should always ask them, “What is the source of your confidence?”



- Often the response is to describe some sort of the salvation experience like the time when they went forward at the end of the service or when they said the sinner's prayer.
- The other common response is to speak of some sort of inner feeling of closeness to God.
- While it's wonderful and even desirable to feel close to God this feeling should not be the source of our confidence in salvation.
- Confidence in salvation must be rooted in some unchangeable facts and not subjective experiences.

Below are 4 truths that should anchor your assurance of salvation. Again listen to the podcast for a more detailed explanation of each point.

### **SOME BASICS: 4 Truths About Assurance of Salvation**

- 1. Assurance starts with the truth of God's Word**
- 2. Assurance exists exclusively in the work of Jesus**
- 3. Assurance increases through obedience to God's Word**
- 4. Assurance is supported through visible fruit**

Now, in the case of John's first readers, false teachers were spreading heresy among the churches. They had left to form new churches, and many had followed them. When your friends join a new group with new teachings, it can cause you to question whether what you believe is really true. So the apostle John writes to his little children to give them assurance that they were truly abiding in Christ.

### **13 Verse in 1 John to Note: (Remember the title of this study on 1 John is "That You May Know"... a favorite word of the Apostle John)**

- (1) 1 John 2:3: ***"By this we know that we have come to know Him..."***
- (2) 1 John 2:5b: ***"By this we know that we are in Him..."***
- (3) 1 John 2:13: ***"... you know Him who has been from the beginning."***
- (4) 1 John 2:13b: ***"... you know the Father."***
- (5) 1 John 2:20: ***"... you all know."***
- (6) 1 John 3:10: ***"By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious (known)..."***
- (7) 1 John 3:14: ***"We know that we have passed out of death into life..."***
- (8) 1 John 3:19: ***"We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him..."***
- (9) 1 John 3:24b: ***"We know by this that He abides in us..."***
- (10) 1 John 4:2: ***"By this you know the Spirit of God..."***
- (11) 1 John 4:6b: ***"By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."***
- (12) 1 John 5:2: ***"By this we know that we love the children of God..."***
- (13) 1 John 5:13: ***"These things I have written ... so that you may know that you have eternal life."***

Clearly, John wants us to *know* some things with assurance. He wants us to be solid and secure in our relationship with God. In our text, he wants us (1 John 4:13) to *“know that we abide in Him and He in us...”* In 1 John 4:12, John mentions God’s abiding in us. Then in verses 13, 15, & 16, he repeats the same truth in terms of mutual abiding, God in us and we in God. John wants to give us assurance of this mutual abiding relationship.

While *“abide”* is John’s word for fellowship with God, it would be a mistake to think that only some believers enter into this abiding relationship, while other believers do not abide. To be sure, the abiding relationship grows and deepens over a lifetime. Those who have walked with Christ for decades enjoy closer fellowship with Him than those who are newer in their faith. But in John’s mind, *every* Christian abides in Christ and Christ in him. If you are not abiding in Him and He in you, then you are not saved.

So when we talk about assurance of abiding, we are talking about assurance of salvation. **John’s message here is...**

*We can be assured that God abides in us and we in Him if we see His Spirit producing in us love for one another and confession of the truth about Jesus Christ.*

Some commentators put 1 John 4:12 with the preceding paragraph, but I am treating it with the following because of the theme of abiding. John’s statement (1 John 4:12) about God abiding in us and His love being perfected in us, serves as a topic sentence for verses 13-21. In 1 John 4:13-16, he discusses the abiding relationship; then in 1 John 4:17-21, he talks about God’s love being perfected in us.

#### **4 Truths Concerning Abiding Assurance in the Life of a Believer: (Outline breakdown of 1 John 4:12-16)**

- (1) **Although we cannot see God, we have evidence of His abiding in us when we love ... and that give us assurance (1 John 4:12)** – Genuine God like, agape love flowing from our life gives us assurance that we are His
- (2) **We know that we abide in God and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit... and that gives us assurance (1 John 4:13)** – His Holy Spirit’s presence in our life gives us assurance that we are His
- (3) **We know that God abides in us and we in Him when we confess the truth about Jesus Christ... and that give us assurance (1 John 4:14 -15)** – Jesus’ presence in our life, and our relationship with Him gives us assurance. It’s what you do with Jesus.
- (4) **When we know and believe God’s love for us and we abide in love, we abide in God and He in us... and that gives us assurance (1 John 4:16)** – Understanding and believing and trusting in God’s love help us have assurance. His love is never going to let us go.

Let’s look at each of these statements in a little more depth...



**ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT SEE GOD, WE HAVE EVIDENCE OF HIS ABIDING IN US WHEN WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER... AND THAT GIVES US ASSURANCE (1 John 4:12)**

*“<sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” -1 John 4:12*

*How does the love we have give us assurance?*

**3 Helpful Truths for Assurance in 1 John 4:12:**

- (1) Although we can't see God, the evidence of God in our life can be seen**
- (2) The supernatural love manifested in our lives for each other give evidence God is in us**
- (3) God's perfect love, that is unconditional in nature, flowing from our lives authenticates our salvation**

At first glance, **verse 12** seems out of context. John has been discussing God's love for us and our love for one another. Then, somewhat abruptly, he states, **“No one has seen God at any time.”** You wonder, “Why did he throw that in here? What does God's invisibility have to do with a discussion of love?” The same words occur in the prologue to John's Gospel in **John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”** But here, John continues, **“if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.”** What does he mean?

He means that the unseen God, who was historically revealed in the incarnation of the Son, is now revealed by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit in His people when they love one another. It's an amazing thought! People do not see God and they may not read the Bible, but they do see and read the lives of Christians. They read your Christian home. They read this church. They read you as you interact with others at work or at school. If they see a remarkable, other-worldly love in those places—especially if they see love when they would expect retaliation—they see God abiding in you. If they see anger, bitterness, verbal attacks, and hatred, then we are failing to “testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (4:14).

- **Caecilius** - A writer named Caecilius (ca. A.D. 210) said of the Christians, **“They know one another by secret marks and signs, and they love one another almost before they know one another.”**
- **Lucian** - The Greek writer, Lucian (ca. A.D. 120-200) said of the early church, **“It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it into their heads that they are all brethren.”**

- **Tertullian** - The church father, Tertullian, said, “It is our care for the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. ‘Look,’ they say, ‘How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another!’” I wonder how often outsiders would describe modern Christians like that?

John’s point (in 1 John 4:12) is that if we see God’s love surfacing in our relationships with others, then we have evidence of God’s abiding in us. This is especially true in situations where, if we were acting in the flesh, we would be indifferent at best or antagonistic or hateful at worst. When our knee-jerk reaction is to lash out at someone who has wronged us, but instead we feel an inner check and we speak in kindness, it is evidence that God is abiding in us. Although we cannot see God, who is spirit, we can see the evidence of His abiding in us when we love one another.

### **WE KNOW THAT WE ABIDE IN GOD AND HE IN US BECAUSE HE HAS GIVEN US OF HIS SPIRIT... AND THAT GIVES US ASSURANCE (1 John 4:13)**

*“<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” -1 John 4:13*

God’s Spirit is both the Spirit of truth (John 14:17) and the Spirit of love (Gal. 5:22). John has just spoken about love and he will go on to speak about the truth and love. As we saw last week, John does not separate truth from love or put love above the truth, so as to minimize or negate the truth. In verse 13, he is going to the source of love and truth in us, namely, God’s Spirit.

Note that John here does not say that God has given us His Spirit, although that is true. He says, “*He has given us of His Spirit.*” The Greek word means “out of.” Thus John is looking at something which God has imparted to us out of His Spirit, namely, truth (1 John 4:14-15) and love (1 John 4:16).

In John 3, when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the new birth, He said in John 3:6-8, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*”

### **What the Christian Life Is and Isn’t:**

- (1) **The Christian life is not only a matter of subscribing to certain doctrines, although it includes that -**
- (2) **The Christian life is not merely a matter of stopping certain sinful practices and adding certain godly ones, although it does require that -**

**(3) At its root, the Christian life is receiving new life from the Holy Spirit... at the moment that you are born of the Spirit, He comes to indwell you -**

Thus Paul writes in Romans 8:9, “*However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*”

To come back to 1 John 4:13, the apostle says, “*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*” You may wonder, “Is this just an inner, subjective feeling that the Holy Spirit is in me?” In the context, John is saying, “Don’t focus on subjective feelings. Look for evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life.” You can’t see the wind, but you can see its effects. Do you see love? Do you believe and confess the truth about Jesus Christ? These are effects of the Holy Spirit in your life. These things show that God has given you of His Spirit. When you see them, you can know that you abide in Him and He in you.

We could list many other effects that God’s Spirit produces in believers (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Love of God* [Crossway], pp. 97-101, develops these in some detail). Here are a few:

**Some Questions to Ask Yourself: (*These may help with assurance in your life*)**

- (1) Are you concerned about the things of God?**
- (2) Do you have a desire to experience more of Him?**
- (3) Do you love God’s Word?**
- (4) Do you have a sense of sin, so that you recognize that you are a sinner?**
- (5) Do you hate your sin and struggle daily against the flesh? - This inner war between the flesh and the Spirit is a sign that you have the Holy Spirit within you (Gal. 5:17)**
- (6) Do you have a living relationship with God, where you see His hand at work in your life?**
- (7) Do you have the sense that you may come before God as your loving Father, not as your Judge?**
- (8) Do you find joy in using any spiritual gifts that He has given you in ministry to others?**

John says in 1 John 4:13, “*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*”

**WE KNOW THAT GOD ABIDES IN US AND WE IN HIM WHEN WE CONFESS THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS CHRIST... AND THAT GIVE US ASSURANCE (1 John 4:14 -15)**

*“<sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”*  
-1 John 4:14-15

John first states the apostolic testimony about Christ (vs.14) and then applies it to the one who confesses this truth (v.15)

## **2 Truths That May Give us Assurance:**

**(1) The apostolic testimony is that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14)** - When John writes, *“We have seen and testify,”* it takes us back to the beginning of this letter in 1 John 1:1-3, *“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

John and the other apostles reported to us their eyewitness testimony about Jesus Christ. The gospel is rooted in verifiable history, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

- Jesus did not become the Son of God in the incarnation.
- He is the eternal Son of God, and He came to this earth because the Father sent Him to come and die to save us from our sins.
- It is vital to affirm that the Christian faith does not rest on the philosophic speculations of some creative religious thinkers.
- It does not rest on inner, personal impressions or mystical visions.
- The Christian faith rests upon the historic, apostolic witness to the person of Jesus Christ.
- They became convinced that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about God’s promised Messiah.
- They saw His miracles, heard His teaching, and saw Him transfigured in glory on the mountain.
- Concerning that event, Peter declares in 2 Peter 1:16, *“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*
- The apostles also watched Jesus die on the cross, they saw Him risen from the dead, and they watched Him ascend into heaven.
- All of these events, John says, *“we have seen.”*

But, of course, these are more than historical notes of quaint interest. These momentous events have to do with Jesus being “the Savior of the world.” *Savior implies that the world is lost and needs saving. It also implies that the world cannot save itself.*

- The world is helplessly, hopelessly lost.
- It needs more than reviving, because it is dead in its sins.
- The *world* refers to the evil system and people who are under Satan’s dominion, opposed to God.
- Thus it implies the *wickedness* of those who need saving.
- Jesus came to save sinners.
- It also looks at the *wideness* of God’s mercy in Christ.
- He did not come just to save a few Jews.
- His good news reaches to the uttermost parts of the world.
- Any sinner, no matter how wicked his life, may believe in Jesus as his Savior and receive eternal life as the gift of God’s grace and love.

**(2) If we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, it is evidence that God abides in us and we abide in Him (1 John 4:15)** - John’s point here is that if you confess the apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who saves you from your sins, you didn’t come up with that idea yourself. The Spirit of God opened your eyes to see it. Thus your confession of Jesus Christ sent from God as the Savior of the world is evidence that God abides in you and you abide in God.

In **Matthew 16:15**, Jesus asked His disciples the most important question in the world. It is the most crucial question that you can answer personally... *“Who do you say that I am?”* Peter gave the great answer in **Matthew 16:16**, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Then Jesus’ replied vs. 17, *“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”*

That is John’s point here... If, in your heart, you truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world and that He is your Savior, you didn’t figure that out on your own. God revealed it to you by His Spirit. Your confession is evidence that God abides in you, and you abide in God.

Then John comes back to the theme of God’s love that he developed in **1 John 4:7-8**... *“<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

**WHEN WE KNOW AND BELIEVE GOD’S LOVE FOR US AND WE ABIDE IN LOVE, WE ABIDE IN GOD AND HE IN US... AND THAT GIVES US ASSURANCE (1 John 4:16)**

*“<sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” -1 John 4:16*

It is important to know that John is *not* saying in these verses that the way to abide in God and have Him abide in us is to confess that Jesus is the Christ and to abide in love. **Rather, he is saying that if we do these things, it is evidence of God's abiding in us and us in Him.**

When John says, **"We have come to know and have believed,"** he uses a verb tense (the Greek perfect) that means, **"We have come to know and believe in the past with continuing results in the present and future."** Faith is not a blind leap in the dark. It is based on knowledge. John and the apostles came to know and believe God's love for them in the person of Jesus Christ and His voluntary sacrifice on the cross.

Then John repeats what he already said earlier up in 1 John 4:8... **"God is love."** As we saw last week, He is not *only* love. He also is holy and righteous. His love never negates any other of His attributes, nor do those attributes negate His love. The supreme demonstration of God's love is the cross, where He gave His only begotten Son to die in the place of sinners. There love and justice met and both were satisfied. God's love was demonstrated to us as sinners. God's justice was satisfied when Christ paid the penalty that we deserved.

John then concludes, **"The one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."** By **"abides in love,"** I think that he means both, **"abides in God's love"** and **"abides in love for others."** As we saw in 1 John 4:11, you cannot separate the two... **"If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."** If you have come to know and believe God's love for you, then you are under obligation to be the channel of His love to others, including those who do not deserve it. Remember, you didn't deserve it either!

It is crucial that each of us be able to apply personally God's love in Christ. The apostle Paul did. He wrote in **Galatians 2:20, "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."** That is John's confession, "I have faith in the Son of God." It also is John's love, which God has for us: He *"loved me and gave Himself up for me."* Can you say those things personally? "I believe in the Son of God. I have come to know and believe that He loved *me* and He gave Himself up for *me*." If so, John says that it is evidence that you abide in God and God abides in you.

## CONCLUSION

Some may still be thinking, "I do believe in Jesus as the Son of God and as my Savior, but I don't have strong faith. I often have doubts. I do abide in His love and seek to be the channel of His love to others, but I often fall short. How can I have assurance that I abide in Him and He abides in me?"

As we've seen throughout 1 John, the issue is *not perfection*, but rather, *direction*. The important questions are, "What do you do when your faith wavers? Do you come before the Lord in confession, asking Him to strengthen your faith? What do you do when selfishness



dominates your life, rather than God's love? Do you grieve over your hardness of heart and ask God to fill you with His Spirit and to produce the fruit of His Spirit in you? Fruit is not an instant product. It takes time and cultivation. Faith and love take time to grow (Phil. 1:9; 2 Thess. 1:3).

John wants you to know that if these qualities are growing in you, you can be assured that God abides in you and you in Him. If you do not see faith and love growing in your life, then do as Isaiah (55:6-7) directs: "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

### **SOME FINAL HELPS IF YOU DOUBT OR LACK ASSURANCE**

If you are plagued by times of doubt, consider the following guidelines for maintaining assurance:

#### **6 Helps for Dealing with Doubts about Salvation:**

1. **Read your Bible** – Read your Bible, especially the book of 1 John, to remind yourself of the solid foundation on which your salvation stands.
2. **Communicate with God in prayer** – Communicate with God through prayer, and confess every known sin. Keep sin confessed up and stay prayed up. This will help minimize the enemies ability to falsely accuse your of not being a child of God.
3. **Obey God's commands** – Obey God's commandments, and do what you know is right. This too will help to protect your heart from the attacks of the enemy, but will also confirm over and over again that you belong to God... that you are His.
4. **Spend time with other Christians** – Spend time with strong Christians, and let their love help you.
5. **Reach out to others in love** – Reach out in concern to others because you love them. Focusing on others is what we are called to and this will help to confirm your faith.
6. **Do some heart checking and soul searching** - Recognize your doubts and depression may be more emotional than spiritual. This will help you avoid unnecessary feelings of guilt because of your supposed lack of faith.