

First John (16) - Vital Pieces Of Evidence

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[0 : 00] This passage we read from verse 13 to the end of the chapter. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.

And so on through to the end of the chapter where we find what we're calling vital pieces of evidence with regard to bringing God's people assurance of their salvation, of their relationship with God.

We saw in the previous part of the passage here in verses 7 to 13 last time how we have God's love made clear to us. And following on from that the writer is now, John is now looking at further matters for evidence as to enable us to know assurance of our relationship with God.

As Christians we always need a number of things that you find peppered throughout the epistles of the New Testament especially. There are three very obvious matters that are brought out in John and also in Peter and also in Paul.

And first of all there's exhortation. You can see in verse 7 here that there's an exhortation. Exhortation, Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God. In other words, he's exhorting us.

[1 : 21] He is encouraging us to do things. These exhortations are so important, a feature of the writings of the apostles. And then in verse 1 you have an imperative, a command.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are of God. And as you go through, as we've gone through John, you'll have seen we've come across exhortations and imperatives.

And we need each of those. The imperative, the command, as well as the exhortation. But thirdly, in this passage tonight we're coming to affirmations.

We need affirmations as much as we need these imperatives and exhortations because to affirm the truth for us, to set out proofs for us in the writings of the apostles is designed to bring us further encouragement and confidence, not only in the truth itself but in our relationship with God.

And that's important for all the apostles. These three matters, exhortations, imperatives, and affirmations. And in verse 13 he's saying, Beloved, by this we know that we abide in him.

[2 : 34] He's coming to affirm certain things and he gives us a number of elements following that by which he is following out this affirmation.

There's first of all evidence. They're all pieces of evidence. As we've said, they're interlinked evidences or pieces of evidence towards building up our assurance in our relationship with God.

There's first of all evidence in relation to what he calls here abiding. Abiding in him and he in us. By this we know that this is true because he has given us of his spirit.

And then there are evidences as well, elements of evidence in relation to the day of judgment. From verse 17 onwards, by this is love perfected with us so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment.

Because as he is, so also are we in this world. Evidence relating to abiding, first of all. You notice how he says here, By this we know that we abide in him and he in us.

[3 : 43] Now of course you know that for John that's one of the really important words in the theology of John. Abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us.

Or abiding in God and God abiding in us. And these wonderful words that he used in teaching the disciples in John's gospel.

We read some of them in chapter 16. If you go to chapter 14 of John's gospel again. Where Jesus teaching the disciples about his leaving physically but sending the spirit.

A remarkable thing he says there is that anyone obeys him or loves him. He will keep his commandment. And we will love him. And we will come and set up our home with him.

Remarkable words that Jesus is saying about God and his people. Whoever loves him, whoever loves Jesus. He will, he says, keep my word.

[4 : 43] He will be obedient. We've seen how much of a feature that is in 1 John as well. But then he says, we will come. My father will love him. And we will come.

By which he means, I and the father will come. And make our abode with him. Or set up our home with him. The same words abiding that you find here. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us.

Because he has given us of his spirit. How do we know that we abide in God? How do we know that God lives in us? What a remarkable thing that is. Even to just stated that God would have actually chosen to live in the likes of us.

Well we know that because he has given us, he says, of his spirit. But whenever somebody comes to possess the spirit of God, that person abides in God and God abides in him.

There is a mutual indwelling. Now we're taking, we're coming across things here which really we cannot fully appreciate or understand or explain properly. Properly, properly in all the dimensions of them.

[5 : 49] How can I possibly explain to you or how can you possibly understand fully what it means for God to live in a human being? And for us to live in God?

For us to be in Christ spiritually? And for Christ to live in us? For God the Father and God the Son through the Holy Spirit to come to dwell in our hearts?

Of course we can't appreciate that fully. We can't actually understand it fully. We can't communicate it fully. But we can know the truth of it. And that's what John is really saying.

We know that we abide in him and he in us. Because he has given us of his spirit. And what is the evidence that he has given us of his spirit? If we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit, how do we know that he has given us his spirit?

Well he mentions two things in relation to that as well which we'll see. The first is that we come to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. And the second is that we love one another.

[6 : 56] Let's work our way through that just slowly because one of the complications of John's writing is that while he uses simplicity of language and he uses imagery that's very simple in itself.

Light, darkness, or you find here abiding. All these things are simple concepts in themselves but they're actually very complex in the way that he weaves them together.

It's like strands of truth that he's woven together and they're all related and interrelated and interlinked. Sometimes it's difficult just to pick out one strand and look at it in itself without disturbing the other strands that you find there.

But let's just see how he does this. We know that we abide in him because he has given us of his spirit. Now Paul says to the Romans, if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.

This is what makes the greatest difference between someone who is not regenerate, someone who is not converted, someone who is not yet regenerate by the spirit of God, someone who is not yet saved, and someone who is.

[8 : 09] The difference, you can say, you can narrow it down to the one possessing the spirit of God and the other not. The two great experiences, if you like, in human life relate to the spirit of God.

Because when Adam fell, he fell into death. The spirit was no longer inhabiting that human being as a home.

There is a vacancy there. You might say that that person, spiritually and morally, has become derelict. The occupant is gone.

The house is no longer lived in the way it was at his creation. When he created man, you remember there that God says, Genesis says, that he fashioned him from the dust of the earth.

And God breathed into him and the man became a living soul. God breathed into him. The spirit of God came to inhabit him.

[9 : 20] But that left, the spirit left, because death came upon us. And where you find, indeed you might say that is really the reason why the person is now dead, why Adam and all his descendants, apart from Jesus, are all dead, because spiritually dead, where the spirit does not inhabit us, you have death.

That's the first great point of experience in human life. The second one is when the spirit comes back. When the spirit comes to, again, inhabit us, when the spirit comes to regenerate us, when the spirit comes to bring us back to life spiritually.

Remember this morning we saw Ephesians 2, you were dead in trespasses and sins. And he goes on to speak about following the same course as everybody else, fallen sinners.

But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love with which he has loved us, rich in mercy, he has quickened us. He has brought us back to life.

And the spirit comes again to inhabit our human persons. That is the difference between the regenerate, the unregenerate, the saved, the unsaved.

[10 : 32] It's not a matter of difference of gifts. It's not a difference of personalities. It's a difference of life in the one case and no life in the other. It's a difference of having the spirit or not having the spirit.

That's what really John is dealing with here. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.

These words in Psalm 68 that we sing very often, which were prophetic of Christ's ascension, resurrection followed by ascension, where he says, you have ascended up on high and led captivity captive.

Those that held us captive, these powers that are in the universe, the powers of darkness, Christ took them and led them captive. He has got them under his control.

And you received gifts for human beings. And especially he mentions this, that God the Lord might dwell amongst them.

[11 : 33] That is the great gift, the gift of the spirit, which Christ died in order to procure for his people. The coming of the spirit is part of the resulting fruit of Christ's death and resurrection.

When the spirit comes, he brings life. So how do we know then that we have the spirit, as we said? Well, there are two things following on from this, where he says that, By this we have seen and testified that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Now, I think that's just the apostle just as a sidestep saying, We as apostles have come to bring you eyewitness report. They saw the Lord Jesus Christ.

They saw the way in which the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. And that apostolic testimony is important. Because as you find in the New Testament, these letters from the apostles, they're very much part of the truth of God.

And you have to deal with them as God-inspired. But that's not enough. It sounds strange to say that's not enough. But it's not.

[12 : 50] Because we've all had Bibles, I'm sure, from our youth. We're all familiar with the Gospel from our youngest days, most of us at least. We know what the Gospel actually contains.

We know what the Scriptures say. Many aspects of them are very familiar to us. But that of itself, this testimony, even the testimony of the apostles, who testified that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world, we need something else in order to convince us, in order to bring us to embrace that and to live by that.

What is that other something? It is the Spirit of God. The Spirit that opens your eyes. The Spirit that comes to bring you to life. The Spirit that changes you from within. The Spirit by which you are born again, as John 3 puts it.

John chapter 3. We are born from above. We are born again. Born of water and of the Spirit. And we enter in by that into the kingdom of God.

So he's saying here that it is the Spirit that brings us these next two things. We've come to know and believe the love that God has for us. And also, come also to love one another.

[14 : 03] The love that he goes on to speak about there later in the chapter. Well, he first of all comes to confess that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God.

It mentions here that whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

So that's the first thing. The confession in verse 15 is itself a fruit of the Spirit of God working within us.

You can't imagine a Jew, a devout Jew, such as John or any of his fellow Jews. You cannot imagine them coming to say about this Jesus that's been with them, that called them to be his disciples, and that they're following through the course of their life in this world.

You cannot imagine them coming to the conclusion, this man is God. No Jew would say that without it being something that God opened their minds to receive, that God taught them about, that God actually brought clearly to their understanding.

[15:16] But that's what he is doing. He calls him the Son of God. He comes to confess him as the Son of God. When you come to confess Jesus as the Son of God, what underlies that confession?

Have you come to that confession just by your own strength? Is it just your own mind that's come eventually to make this confession? No. Yes, you're doing it with your mind. You're doing it willingly. But it's produced by the Spirit of God.

It's produced by the Spirit that God has given us. So how do we know that we have the Spirit? We have this confession that Jesus is the Son of God.

So you see, whoever makes that confession, God abides in him and he in God. And that's for us tonight, such an important feature of every Christian life.

It means that you come to regard Jesus in a way that guards his deity, that guards his divinity, that he is God.

[16:21] And when you come across someone who says, I'm a Christian, but I don't believe that Jesus was God, then some of you actually say, well, that really hurts me because it's part of my confession.

It's part of what's important enough in my life to be a foundational matter of truth for me. How can I know God as my Savior if Jesus isn't God?

If the claims that Jesus made are not actually accurate and true, that he himself is none other than the Son that the Father sent into the world.

And that's in a sense what we're doing. When we come to take communion, we come to the Lord's table. We take these elements and we say of them, they represent my Savior and my Savior's love and my Savior's death especially.

But my Savior is the Son of God. My Savior is divine. My Savior is eternal Son who took human nature in order to die and rise from the dead for me, to love me to that extent.

[17:34] You make that confession. You take the eyewitness report of John and you build on that by having the Spirit convince you, leading you into the truth.

You can't see the Spirit, but you know the effect of his work. You know the result of his work. That he is indeed someone that brings to you that conviction as to who Jesus is and what his mission was about and how you relate to him and why he means so much to you.

None of that has come about without the Spirit and pressing it upon your mind. But there's the second aspect of it. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. We have come to know and believe the love of God, that love that God has for us.

And it's important that John combines these two words together, to know and to believe. Because to know and to believe the love of God is to embrace it, to welcome it, to bring it into your own confession, to bring it into your own way of life, to bring it to yourself as a foundational matter on which your life is based.

[18:59] We all know about the love of God just by reading the Bible. We all know that God sent his Son into the world. We have known that for many years, most of us.

We believe that, outwardly at least, we believe because this is the Word of God that that is indeed what is the case. But what John is saying here is that we've come to acknowledge it and to trust in it.

To trust it as that which provides for us the eternal life that we need to have. By this, he says, we know. We have come to know and to believe that the love, the love that God has for us.

So there's the strands. These are the strands of teaching. first of all saying, we know that we abide in him, that he has made his home in our hearts, and that we live rooted in him.

Christ in us and we in Christ. And we know that because he has given us of his Spirit. But how do we know that he has given us his Spirit? Because he's brought us to make this confession that Jesus is the Son of God.

[20:10] and also to know and believe the love that God has for us. Isn't that your own conviction tonight?

Isn't it your own conviction that Jesus is no less than the Son of God? And isn't that conviction accompanied by this knowledge and belief of the love that God has for you?

Not just intellectually, not just outwardly or formally, but in a way that says, I really am I embrace that. I am concerned that my life will be based upon that and everything that it's providing for me. That is, he says, evidence related to abiding. And secondly, he takes us to evidence related to the day of judgment. He says in verse 17, by this is love perfected with us so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment.

Now if you cast your mind back to verse 12, he mentions there no one has ever seen God. And we saw last time how that verse is remarkable in the way that God is seen, as it were, in a spiritual way, in a way.

[21 : 19] If we love God, if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. And we saw that that meant that God's love reaches the purpose that it has in itself, that God has in what he seeks to achieve by his love and that it's not just simply stopping at the sending of his son into the world or the death of Jesus, that the love of God reaches as far as to make us love one another.

And that's his love completed, as it were, or brought to this final aspect of what it aims at and sets out to achieve and does achieve. And now he's saying, on the other hand, this is our love made perfect.

Our love comes to reach its achievement or full achievement in this way that we may have confidence for the day of judgment.

Love is perfected with us. Well, of course, none of us loves perfectly. That's not what he's saying. As I've tried to explain, it means love really coming to reach its own purpose and reach its achievement and it does that by the two marks which follow.

First of all, confidence for the day of judgment and secondly, love for one another. Confidence for the day of judgment.

[22 : 47] That's a big phrase. That's a big issue. But that's what he's saying. By this is our love perfected, brought to its full achievement so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment because as he is, so also are we in the world.

When you come to think of the day of judgment, that really is an enormous thing to fill your mind, isn't it? The day of judgment is an awesome thought.

When we follow the teaching of the Bible about the day of judgment when every one of us must come to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, when Christ will be revealed as the judge, the righteous judge, and we will all be judged by him, it's an awesome thought that your whole life will be brought before Jesus to be judged.

How can you have confidence against the day of judgment? How can you approach the prospect of meeting with God and his judgment in confidence? Where do you get your confidence from?

What is John talking about when he says that we may have confidence for the day of judgment?

Because many people don't have confidence for the day of judgment. They're filled with a sense of dread at the day of judgment.

[24 : 06] And even Christians at times, the thought is just so overwhelming that even they sometimes tremble at the prospect of meeting with God in his judgment. So how can John actually say anything like this?

That we may have confidence or boldness for the day of judgment? Well he explains it by what follows. Because he says as he is in the world, that's Jesus, so also are we in this world.

There is the key to your having confidence towards the day of judgment. Because as he Jesus is in the eyes of God the Father, so also God's people in Jesus are exactly like that.

How acceptable is Jesus to God the Father? 100% fully acceptable. There is nothing in him whatsoever but complete acceptability to God the Father.

Everything that Jesus is, everything that he has done, every word he has spoken, all his actions, especially his death and his resurrection from the dead, they are all pleasing to the Father. The Father fully approves of that.

[25 : 16] Here is the amazing thing. All who are in Jesus, all who abide in him and he in them, they are as acceptable to God as Jesus himself is.

I know that sounds an impossibility. How can I possibly be made as acceptable to God as his eternal son is? Well, there is the key because we are in Jesus.

And when we are in Jesus, God sees us in him. He knows that we have faults. He knows that we are sinful, but when our sin is dealt with, when the righteousness of Jesus covers us, when our sin

is blotted out, what does that mean?

It means that we have full acceptance with God because of Christ, due to what Christ has done. Don't ever think that you have a partial or incomplete acceptance with God, that God is just only partly pleased with you in Christ.

It's not the case. You are as pleasing to him in Christ because of Christ as Christ himself is. That's your confidence for the day of judgment.

[26 : 37] So when you look at yourself and you think, who am I? I'm going to face God. How can I possibly face God? How can I have confidence in coming to face God? Are you in Christ?

Are you a believer? Have you come to trust your life into the hands of Christ, to entrust yourself to him? Have you come to give your life to him and receive him as the Savior offered in the gospel, as he is?

Yes, you say. Well, then, you have already confidence. You have no reason not to have confidence because the confidence is not in yourself. The confidence is not related to what you've done or not done.

The confidence is not in regard to somehow or other you've managed to manufacture an acceptance with God and your life is now so much more improved that God is bound to accept you and be pleased with you.

It's nothing to do with that. Look away from yourself. Look at the perfection of Jesus. Look at the righteousness of God's Son.

[27 : 45] He's saying, as he is, so also are we in this world. That's why he goes on to speak about no fear in love.

He says, there is no fear in love, but perfect love or love reaching its own achievement or reaching its own purpose and end casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment.

The fear he mentions here is really equivalent to being afraid of God. What he's saying is, why should anyone in Christ be afraid of God?

If God is fully pleased with Jesus, and he's fully pleased with those who are in Jesus, well there's no need to be afraid of him. Because you're already fully accepted in him.

And that's why he's saying here that fear and love are really opposites. There is no fear in love. There's no fear in the love of God or in our love for God.

[28 : 49] Perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment. We think that God might punish us, and so we're afraid.

There's no need to be. That doesn't lessen the awesomeness of the day of judgment. That doesn't lessen the enormity of the thought of coming to meet with God and to be judged by him.

But it's a very different thing to think of that without Jesus, and to think of that in Jesus. To think of that without Christ, all you have is yourself.

and you know that that's not going to get you any acceptance with God. But with Christ, his acceptance is your acceptance.

His death that he died becomes yours as if you died that death. His resurrection from the dead is your resurrection to life.

[29 : 54] Because in union with him, you abide in him and he abides in you. And everything he has done for you becomes your property. What a wonderful thought that we can have confidence towards the day of judgment.

And that we love God because we are complete in Christ. And that love casts out every apprehension. Somehow or other he will not be true to his promise.

But somehow or other it will not work out that way. And so we need to be afraid of him because he might punish us after all. Do away with the thought. As a Christian, as someone who trusts in Christ, the only way, and it's never going to happen anyway, it's the only way that you would not be acceptable to God is if God stopped being pleased with Christ.

If something was discovered that wasn't quite right about what Jesus has done, then you might start to be afraid. But that's never going to happen.

Because it will never happen, we can have confidence towards the day of judgment. You see how important again, friends, Jesus is to us. Everything we're seeing in the course of these studies and throughout the whole Bible comes ultimately to the place that Jesus has in God's redemption from us.

[31 : 23] Psycholo ■■ebo para out of our érer sence. We have Jesus, you have life. You have Jesus, you have righteousness. You have Jesus, you have confidence towards the day of judgment.

You don't have Jesus, you don't have life. You don't have Jesus, you don't have righteousness. You don't have Jesus, you don't have confidence towards the day of judgment. he is absolutely crucial crucial to our relationship and standing with God crucial to you tonight, crucial to me crucial that you have him that you're in him, that he's in you that you've given your life over to him that he has come to inhabit your life crucial that you have the spirit crucial that you have that evidence that you're a child of God and the second thing in love being perfected he says is the love that we have for another we love because he first loved us if anyone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen well, love is there any word more distorted in its meaning than that word in our world today? the word love taken from its biblical moorings taken into just what human beings want to make of it how distorted it becomes from the wonderful pure word as it's used in the Bible the love of God the love of God's people for him and for one another the love that God commends to us as ought to exist between us human beings between husbands, wives, parents, children members of the church people who belong to the church the love that's brought to us in the scriptures is such a pure quality and yet you see the word love just stretched out of all proportion and all resemblance to the word as it is in the Bible you know that meaningless phrase love is love which is used to justify all kinds of aberrant behavior the kind of thing that you find so commonly commended in the world today between people

I don't have to go into the detail of it you don't find what I mean love is love and when the Christian voice is raised and you say well that's not in accordance with the Bible well what's that?

I'm not dealing with the Bible people who say it's just my own mind I know what love is I know what I want love to be love is love love is what I make it you know that's just the world we're living in but this love in the Bible the love that is patterned on the love of God himself it's a very different thing I was thinking of how to illustrate this for people well if you take I don't know if you take something like some people aren't into cars of course but you know what a Ferrari is like or looks like most people will know anyway it's got all these beautiful lines beautifully sculpted wonderful appearance great performance it's just one of the super cars in the world isn't it?

[35 : 02] and if you were to take a Ferrari and say well yeah it's okay but I think I can improve on that or I want to really change what it does and what it looks like I want a Ferrari to be a more practical car than it is I want it to have a bigger boot and I want to take out that powerful engine because it wastes so much fuel and all I'm going to do is just put a very simple diesel engine into it that'll do and instead of the boot which is really pretty tiny I'm going to stretch that and I'm going to add things to it I'm going to bulk it up a bit so that I can add things to it it'll take a lot more luggage and a lot more stuff because I want this to be a very practical car think what's happening you have the Ferrari badge still there it's no longer a Ferrari there are only tiny bits of it left really that you could say resemble a Ferrari well that's what people have done with the word love they've tacked on so much that they think should really properly belong to love to human love to Christian love it's lost its shape it's lost its beauty it's lost its appearance it's really something else it's grotesque compared to be something beautiful

John is telling us it's a thing of beauty if anyone says I love God and hates his brother he's a liar I come across the word often in John's writing here for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen how can he love God whom he has not seen it's very logical isn't it if I say about someone who's a brother or confesses to be a Christian and has done nothing to me or maybe he has done something that needs to be sorted out and I say well I hate that person I don't want to deal with that person anymore but I love God well I'm denying myself I'm denying what I'm saying I'm really calling it into question claim to love God is not valid if I hate my brother or sister that's what he's saying and he's reinforcing it by the final verse in the chapter this commandment we have from him whoever loves God must also love his brother finishing with an imperative having made all these affirmations these things that are designed to give us more certainty and assurance he comes to clinch everything with this final commandment you see it is a commandment singular he's not saying we have the commandment to love God and we have this other commandment to love our brother also no John is actually saying there's the one commandment and both of these elements belong to the one commandment you see so nobody can come to this and say oh well I know the commandment

that I have to love God and I'm fulfilling that one but I have another commandment that I must love my brother and I can leave that one aside or temporarily shelve it no he says there's just the one commandment it's indivisible you cannot cut it into two you cannot say I'll have one side of it and not the other side this is the commandment whoever loves God must also love his brother evidence evidence is vital pieces of evidence evidence that we need for our life to be robust assured more and more reaching into certainties of God's salvation relating to abiding in God and God in us relating to the day of judgment and it's all about Jesus it all revolves around him and stems from him may he bless his words to us let's conclude we're going to sing in conclusion psalm 143 that's on page 187 the tune this time is st. John psalm 143 verses 7 to 12 on page 187 my spirit fails oh lord come quickly to my side hide not your face from me lest to the pit I slide let morning bring your love anew for I have put my trust in you so to tune st. John from verse 7 on to the end of the psalm my spirit fails oh lord my spirit fails oh lord come quickly to my side hide blood your face from me lest to the pit I slide let morning bring your love your love anew for I have put my trust in you to you I lift my soul show me the way to go I hide I hide myself in you lord save me from my foe my God teach me to do your will may your good spirit lead me still for your great mercy sake oh lord preserve my life and in your righteousness deliver me from strife in love put all my foes to shame destroy them for I bear your name [41 : 29] I'll go to the door to my right this evening now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and evermore amen here I died the earthly hope or the time or I I see you kind of that I can't believe that this anti ■ it