

Abiding and Appearing

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Date: 10 December 2025

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[0 : 00] John, 1 John chapter 2, and if we could read it verse 28. His letters, how he gets that title, because love seems to run all the way through all that he says.

And even when he sometimes has to challenge his readers and even sometimes rebuke them, it's always done in a spirit of love. John, of course, was now an old man, and John had some of the most amazing privileges that any person in this world has ever had.

John, of course, was the disciple whom Jesus loved. We know that Jesus had 12 disciples, and out of the 12, there was an inner three that were closer to Jesus than the others.

But out of these three, there was John, and he was the one who leaned on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper. And John, of course, was the one who was given the responsibility of taking Jesus' mother home with him after, remember, on the cross how Jesus spoke.

And he said to his mother, behold your son, and to John, behold your mother. So Jesus was taking care of his mother.

[1 : 49] There's obviously that Joseph had passed away by this time. And so Jesus on the cross is making provision for his mother.

And nobody better to trust the care of his mother than to John. John, of course, was the one who was given the most extraordinary revelation, remember, on the Isle of Patmos.

And he was given the most extraordinary revelation of Jesus Christ, given great revelations of heaven, great revelations of hell, great revelations of future events.

And so when John would come to write this and the readers would pick up what he had written, they were aware that they were reading the letter or hearing the letter being read of a man who had unique privileges to see and to hear things that nobody else really in this world had ever heard. And John is at pains in this epistle to show us that foundational underneath everything, that love is right at the very heart of it all.

[3 : 01] And John is so keen to demonstrate the importance of love that he challenges us to see how our love is towards other Christians, to other believers.

And in fact, it's very challenging because from the word of God, it is very clear that if we ever hate another believer, then that is pointing to the fact that we don't really love God.

So it's the sort of writing that brings you up short. Because John is saying here, if you do not love other believers, then something really is wrong.

And that doesn't mean, of course, that we will find that every Christian means exactly the same thing to us. And we know that there will be many Christians who will have different views and different opinions and different ways.

And we have to and we often agree to disagree. And that's quite that's all right. It doesn't say that we have to agree with everybody, but we have to love them.

[4 : 13] Even if we don't agree with them, we're still to love them. That is a base command. And it comes with that challenge that if we don't love them, that it is evidence of something wrong within us.

Because John says, if anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, that's what he says in chapter four, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

And so now John addresses his readers and he terms them little children. It's a term of endearment. And little children is very apt because that's exactly what we are.

Because the moment that we're born again through the regenerated work of God, that's when we become little children. Spiritual infants.

And even when we develop and mature and move to the strong meat and such like, we still remain as little children.

[5 : 19] It's not a sign of immaturity. In fact, it is a sign of maturity, child likeness. Some people might think that when you mature as a Christian, then a strong independence streak will run through you.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Christian will always operate just like little children do. Children are dependent on their parents.

Children cling to their parents. And that's exactly what the Christian does as well. The Christian is somebody who is constantly clinging to Jesus, constantly depending upon the Lord Jesus.

So as a Christian develops and the Christian grows, there will be this growing child likeness about them. It's not a sign of immaturity.

It is a sign of maturity. And again, the fact that we are children is a wonderful thing because it means that we've been ushered straight into the family of God.

[6 : 27] Because the moment we're born again, the moment we're justified, we're also adopted. We're taken into the family of God with all the brothers and sisters that we have. And it's the most wonderful privilege in the world that we live in because it gives us a great sense of security.

We live in a very insecure world, a very unstable world. And knowing that you belong to God, that God loves you, that God loves you so much, the Father loves you so much that he gave a son to die for you, not only gives you a sense of security, but a sense of belonging.

It gives you a sense of identity. And people throughout this world are always looking for a sense of identity. Who am I? What am I about? People want this sense of identity.

They crave it. And even when you scrape underneath all the superficial veneer, there's this craving for a sense of identity. The Christian has that.

And so it gives us an incredible sense of peace, this incredible sense of security all the time. And again, the world pushes people to become a somebody.

[7 : 45] That's part of the ethos of this world. You've got to be a somebody. You don't want to go through life as a nobody. You've got to be a somebody. And there's pressure. Not for the Christian.

Because the fact that we are in Christ, that we belong to Christ, that we are his child in this world, removes from us any sense of that pressure.

That the world pushes on us all the time. And so this knowledge also produces a sense of direction, a sense of purpose.

Because we know why we're here in this world. We're here above all to glorify God. And you know, far too often we forget that. And when we forget that, we begin to struggle.

Because we look at life through the wrong lens. And sometimes we have to pull ourself up short.

Because we're looking at life and forgetting, it's actually not about me.

[8 : 49] It's about God. It's about his glory. And if we have that fixed in our thinking, if that is what pushes us on and propels us on, as it should, then life takes on a whole new meaning.

And it will remove so much of the struggling that so often we face. And we also know that God is working everything for our good. And so we see the duty now that John calls for, and he says, little children, abide in him.

Abide. Continue. Remain. Now it goes without saying that you can't abide in a particular place until you first come to that place.

That's a given. And that's how it is with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. We abide in Christ once we have come to Christ. Once we are at peace and at rest in him.

And so this is what we're commanded to do. Christ has loved us. We love him. And so we abide in him. Now to abide in him means that day by day we live by faith.

[10 : 01] We live in dependence and we exercise that faith in him all the time. But as we come to see what John is writing about, there are three real fundamentals which highlight when we go through John's letter will show us what that abiding is.

And the first of these is the truth. That we believe the truth. That we accept the truth. That the truth governs our lives. The truth is foundational to who we are and what we are.

That's the first one. The second is obedience. That once we know what the truth is, the truth is our guide in life, we are then to obey.

We're not to set God's word aside. We're not to live in disobedience. If we live in disobedience, we're not abiding. So we have to know the truth. Believe it.

Accept it. Walk in that truth in obedience to the Lord. And the third that he emphasizes so much is loving all our other brothers and sisters in Christ.

[11 : 10] And John is really saying, when you go through his letter, that if we do these three things, if we walk believing the truth and accepting the truth that it's key to our life, that if we live in obedience to that truth that's set before us, and if we live in love to our Lord and to one another, it is inevitable that we will be abiding in Christ.

However, we know that sometimes we aren't abiding in the way that we should. And I think probably the greatest example that we can make of it, or to illustrate it, is when you think of a couple. Here's a husband and wife. They're married and they live in this house together. They're abiding together under the one roof. And they live in a life of sharing, a life of togetherness, a life of closeness, of fellowship and intimacy.

That's how it is. But then along the way, maybe they begin to drift. They still live under the one roof. They still share certain things.

But the fellowship isn't there. The closeness isn't there. The intimacy is gone. They're still, as it were, abiding under the one roof, still sharing certain things.

[12 : 35] But it's not the way it was. And that's sometimes how it is with a Christian. And we can still be Christians in Christ.

But we find that we've wandered. And maybe we're not praying the way we used to. Maybe our devotions have gone cold. We're not reading the word the way that we used to.

We're not meditating upon the truth the way that we used to. We're not giving obedience to the word in the way that we should. We know what the word says, but we're just doing our own thing. And we're sin. We're not troubled too much. There's the odd time we say, oh, no, no, no. Got to get right. But we're not serious about it.

So we can be Christians and yet we're living far off. We're not, the warmth has gone. The intimacy has gone.

[13 : 35] The fellowship has gone. The closeness has gone. And that's what John is saying. You've got to face up to this. And it's important that we, if we find that we're drifting, that we deal with it.

Because you'll notice what John says. And now, little children, abide in him. Now, not later on. It's not something that you say, oh, I am drifting.

I'm going to have to sort this. No, no, it's right now. If that's what's happened, now you make sure that you are abiding in him. That's absolute key to it all.

And then we see the motive John gives us. Abide in him so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

The coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the major themes that runs right throughout the whole New Testament from Matthew through to Revelation. I read somewhere that somebody who had counted found that the second coming of Jesus, the return of Jesus, is mentioned 318 times in the New Testament.

[14 : 49] That's an extraordinary amount. And it shows us how important this truth is, how important it should be to our thinking.

And so John is saying it is imperative that you live abiding in Christ because Christ is coming again. And we know that he's coming suddenly. Not with no warning.

In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will come. That's what Jesus says. Not when you're expecting, but when you're not expecting. And so it's imperative that we are abiding in Christ because the opposite is true.

If we're living away from him, if the closeness has gone, as we were describing of how it could be, the reading has gone, the prayer isn't as it should be.

We're careless, we're not obeying, we're not obeying, we're not obeying, we're not obeying, sin, we're treating it lightly. And if Christ comes then, we are going to be red-faced, shamed, confused if he appears at that time.

[16 : 02] And that's what John is warning us about. You don't want to be found like that. You don't want to be in that situation, in that condition, to be caught living in a way in which you shouldn't.

And I'm sure if we're honest as Christians, we can look back on our lives and we can say hand on heart, I am so thankful that the Lord didn't return at that particular time.

I'm sure every one of us can say that because we were not living as we ought. And so that's why there's this urgency from John now, make sure that you're abiding in him.

And so the Christian, as a Christian walks through this world, Christ is always there. Because it doesn't matter what direction, every which way we look, Christ is there.

We look back and we look back to Calvary as a congregation remembering last Lord's Day the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17 : 03] Do this in remembrance of me. So as we look back, we're looking back to what Jesus did. When we look in, we see what Jesus is doing through the work of the Holy Spirit by the word, sanctifying us, conforming us to the image of Christ.

Day by day we're being changed. When we look around, we see our brothers and sisters also being worked in, conformed, changed to the image of Christ.

I'm sure often we've said, oh well, see how he's growing, see how she's developing, see how he's maturing, see the way she's growing. Jesus is at work.

We're seeing it when we look around. When we look up, we see Jesus there in glory. What's he doing? He's interceding for us.

When we look ahead, we see Jesus coming again. We don't know when. But surely our anticipation should be that of the church in Revelation.

[18 : 17] Virtually the last breath of Revelation is, even so come Lord Jesus. You know what? If you can say that right now, even so come Lord Jesus.

I guarantee you are abiding in him. If you're saying tonight, oh Lord, don't come just now. I'm not, I'm not, I am most certainly not ready.

Then I would suggest that we need to get back to abiding in him. Because we say, as it says, we don't want to be caught red-faced, embarrassed, ashamed at the return of our Lord.

But that we're there with joy in our heart. So ready to meet with him. Shame and embarrassment belongs ultimately to the unbeliever.

It's going to be their lot. I think it's one of the most solemn readings in Scripture. In Daniel, in chapter 12, it tells us there. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.

[19 : 27] This is of the resurrection. Some to everlasting life. And some to shame and everlasting contempt. That's one description of what hell is going to be.

Shame and everlasting contempt. It's an awful thought. We know what shame is like. It's an awful thing. Well, to think that forever, it's going to be a foreverness of shame and contempt.

But for the Christian, there is salvation. But we don't want, when the return of Jesus, to be not abiding as we should in him.

So that we will hear these beautiful words enter into the joy of the Lord. Into his fellowship and into his glory. And into the happiness of the eternal reward.

Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks for your word. For the challenge of your word. For the way that so often we are brought up short.

[20 : 39] It brings us to examine ourselves where we are. How we stand in relation to you. Forgive us, Lord, for how often we are not where we ought to be.

And we give thanks, Lord, that if we know that we're not where we ought to be. That there is the opportunity for us to get right with you.

We give thanks for the desire that is in your people to get right with you. And so we pray that there will be a constant desire within our hearts.

To live in this way of abiding with you. So that we will live in your truth, rejoicing in it. That we will live in obedience to that truth.

And that we might live with hearts full of love for one another. Lord, bless us, we pray. And take us all to our home safely. Grant us your grace, we pray for Calamurdo.

[21 : 37] And ask for your healing hand to be upon him. Restoring him to full health and strength. We're aware at this time there's so many colds and flus going about.

And so we pray for protection. We pray for your strength and grace. Watch over us and take away from us our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Amen. We're going to conclude in...