

Walking in the Light – Part 8

Resting in Confidence Before God – 1 John 3:19-24

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – October 27, 2024

Intro:

- This morning, we are continuing our series through the letters of John as we are learning what it means to "walk in the light." John wrote these three letters to those in the church so that we would know we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).
- Throughout this first letter, John communicates profound theological truths about what is true of God, what we have through Christ, and how we are to think and live as Christians. Walking in the light means we own and confess our sins, keep His commands, love each other, and live as Jesus did. If we abide in Him and He in us, we will be and become more and more like Christ; His characteristics will be found and seen in us as we continue to fight against sin, overcome the evil one, and do what is right according to His Word.
- Our identity as children of God fuels our faith and our faithfulness as we journey with Him, experiencing His joy and expressing His goodness in this life and throughout eternity. In contrast to the world, which becomes increasingly dark, we, as God's children, will become increasingly bright.
- The Apostle John, our good pastor, has given us so much to consider, and he has given us clear commands as to what we are to do, helping us to know that we have eternal life. In our passage for today, John helps us to deal with and quiet our internal struggles, doubts, and accusations that come out of our own hearts so that our hearts can be at rest and we can have inner peace and confidence in God and before Him.
- We are going to read our passage in full, then address God through prayer and unpackage what the Word has for us this morning.

1 John 3:19-24 NIV (page 1055)

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Set your heart to rest

1 John 3:19-20 NIV

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

- All of us need to hear this, especially those who have a hard time getting out of your head. You have thoughts that spin around and around in your mind that have been uploaded to you by your heart that has weaponized itself against you. It is like it has picked up a machine gun of accusations and keeps rapid firing one accusation after another, one question after another to bury you in condemnation, steal your joy, and rob your peace.

- The thoughts go something like this, "Do you really think you are a Christian? You know you sin all the time, you are a horrible person, don't fool yourself, God doesn't love you, how could He after all you have done? He doesn't want anything to do with you . . ." it is like a never-ending game of "Wack-a-mole" where you are constantly knocking the thoughts down, but the faster you go, the faster still they come, being constantly consumed by your thoughts, doubts, and imperfections leaving you depleted, debilitated and depressed about yourself and your relationship with God.
- John gives us help to calm down our conscience and to put our hearts at rest. God is greater than our hearts. He has the last and final Word, and He knows everything. Yep, He knows all the negative stuff, all that you have done, all that you are doing, and all that you are going to do. But you know what else He knows? He knows all of the good stuff that you have done, are doing, and are going to do. He knows your limitations, and He knows your motivations. Where our hearts are prone to fixate and focus on our imperfections, God sees way above and beyond that. He sees our love for Him, He sees our sincere desire to please Him, He sees every time you have fallen down, and He sees every time you have gotten up. He forgives you in His Son, helps you by His Spirit, and claims you as His child. He sees you as you are totally and fully, and loves you totally and fully in His Son.
- ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1 ESV).*** He is greater than your heart. He knows everything, and what He says is what is. God's work is final. Let your self-condemning heart be put to rest, trust in Him, and believe in His Word about you. You can put your self-condemning heart to rest so you can be at peace and have confidence before God.

Have confidence before God

1 John 3:21-22 NIV

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

- After we have dealt with our overactive conscience and accusing heart, we can stand in confidence before God when we pray. This is a beautiful and powerful state of being, and there is a promise connected to this that we can receive from Him anything we ask because we keep His commands and do what pleases Him. So, what does this mean? Because I, for one, have asked Him for tons of things that I have not received. Does this mean that I still have a condemning heart or that I am not keeping His commands and doing what pleases Him? And even if I am, is God obligated to give me what I ask for?
- The truth is that God is not obligated to give us anything. And we can't "force His hand" to make Him obligated to do what we want Him to do by keeping His commands and doing what He pleases. God is sovereign, wise, and loving and does not give us everything we ask for.
- Commentator David Allen writes, "No father gives his children everything they ask for because the result would be spoiled and self-centered children. As Christians, we are sometimes like children who ask for things that would harm us in the long run. Our loving heavenly Father knows when to say no. But John's point is that as we live in obedience to the Word and will of God, our prayers will be reflections of His will and therefore will be readily answered" (Preaching the Word, 1-3 John, p. 166).
- Keeping God's commands does not earn us answered prayers. However, if our prayers are to ask God for help to keep His commands, which is to believe in Christ and love others, if we ask

God for His help to do these things, He will answer that prayer every time because we are praying according to His will. A little later in this letter, John spells it out, "*If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us*" (1 John 5:14).

- So, standing confidently before God empowers us to pray for the continued faith to believe in, trust in, and give ourselves to Jesus, the Son of God, and to pray for the love we need to love others. God will answer these prayers every single time. We need His grace to stay in His grace, we need His love to stay in His love, and we need Him to do this in us. And then, if we did this together as a congregation, faith and love would grow to impact, engulf, and transform more and more people in this community and the world. What a fantastic way to pray so that we will live in faith and love.
- And let's not overcomplicate His commands because we are really good at making easy things complicated. John knows this, and you know this. So here is a verse for you to commit to memory as the essence of what it is to be a Christian.

Keep His commands

1 John 3:23 NIV

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

- His command is in two parts. The first is to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. What does this mean? This means that you believe that He is the only begotten Son, that He indeed is God in all His perfection. In Him, there was and is no sin, and because of His great love for you, he gave His life to pay the penalty for your sin. In Him, we are forgiven, and in Him, we receive eternal life. We believe in Him by giving and devoting our lives to Him as both our Savior and our King.
- We follow Him as our good shepherd, we love Him as our faithful friend, we honor Him as our great King, and we treasure Him above all others and all things. We entrust ourselves to Him and trust what He says about Himself and promises to us that He is the resurrection and the life and whoever believes in Him, even though they die, yet shall they live (John 11:25). The first part of this command is to believe in God's Son Jesus who is the Christ.
- The second part of this command is to love others, and we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Our love for others is the fruit of our belief in Christ. We do this not to earn salvation but to express that we are saved. Our love for others is the evidence of our salvation, not the basis for our salvation. God will give us this love -and in our living, we must give ourselves to love our brothers and sisters in actions and in truth.
- John boils down all of God's commands to two things: faith in Jesus and love for one another. Sometimes, we overcomplicate what God asks of us, but at the core, Christianity is simple—faith in Jesus and love for others. When we center our lives on these two commands, everything else falls into place. Our faith in Jesus grounds us, and our love for one another reflects the love we have received from God.
- The last thing that John communicates to us in this passage is for us to know that the person who keeps God's commands has the Holy Spirit living in them.

Know His Spirit lives in you

1 John 3:24 NIV

The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

- If you keep God's commands, which is to believe in Christ and love one another, then know that you are living in Christ, and if you are living in Christ, then His Spirit is living in you. You are abiding in Him, and He is abiding in you. This also helps us to put our hearts at rest and to be at peace.

Phil 2:13 NLT

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

- Know that in your fallen nature, you don't either have the desire to do what pleases God nor the power to do so. The fact that you even have a desire to do God's will is evidence that His Spirit is working in you, and if His Spirit is in you, then you are a child of God.
- God doesn't just ask us to obey His commands and then leave us on our own. He gives us His Spirit to guide, empower, and remind us that we are His. The Holy Spirit is the constant presence of God in our lives, assuring us that we belong to Him.
- We don't need to live in fear or uncertainty. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). This is the greatest assurance we could ever have—that we belong to God, and He dwells in us. Paul put it this way:

Rom 8:14-17a NIV

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ

- Know that the Spirit lives in you because this will give you peace in this life and peace when you depart into the next. This will give you joy in this life because of the joy that is yours because of the promise of God for eternity. Because you are a child of God, you are an heir of God. You will receive eternal life, and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Conclusion

- From our passage today, we are reminded that we can rest in God's love. Even when our hearts condemn us, God's love is greater. We can approach Him with confidence, knowing that He hears us and delights in us. Our calling is to believe in Jesus and love one another, and through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live out this simple yet profound command.
- So, let's embrace the peace, confidence, and joy that come from knowing we belong to God. Let's trust in His greater love and live in a way that reflects that love to the world around us.
- This week, I encourage you to spend time reflecting on the truth that God is greater than your heart. If you've been feeling condemned, give that burden to Him, knowing that He fully knows and loves you. And as you experience His grace, ask Him how you can share that love with someone else this week. Rest in His love, and let His Spirit guide you in love for others.

Benediction

May the God who is greater than our hearts quiet your doubts and fill you with His peace. May you walk in the confidence of His love, trusting that He hears your prayers and delights in you. As you

believe in Jesus and love one another, may His Spirit dwell richly within you, guiding and empowering you to live out His commands. Go in His grace, rest in His love, and reflect His light to a world in need. Amen.

Questions for Growth Groups

- What stood out to you from today's passage?
- Romans 8:1 says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." How can we practically apply this truth to silence our self-condemnation and trust in God's love and forgiveness?
- How might obedience to God's commands shape the kinds of prayers we bring before Him?
- John simplifies God's commands into two parts: believing in Jesus and loving one another. How do these two commands encompass the Christian life? Why do you think John focused on these two?
- Romans 8 teaches that we are God's children and heirs with Christ. How does this truth give you confidence and peace in your day-to-day life?
- What are some practical ways you can rest in God's love this week, especially when feelings of condemnation arise?
- Who in your life can you show love to in a tangible way this week as an expression of your faith in Christ? How might God be leading you to love that person?