

## 1 John 4:12-16 (NKJV)

**12 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.**

**13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.**

**14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.**

**15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.**

**16 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.**

The book of First John is a book about assurance of salvation. The end goal is not just assurance for assurance's sake. It is assurance as a platform for great joy. John is reflecting the desire our **heavenly Father** holds for **all His children**. He **wants** us to have Joy. He **wants** us to **share** in **His** joy. But we cannot have joy unless we know that all of the promises God has made to **His children** He has made **to you and me**, because we are **His children**. And we **know** it.

Think about it. What good is a promise that God has made to **someone else** if it does not **apply to us**? It is **our assurance** of being a child of God that allows us to have hope and joy based on what God has promised. Assurance is vital to enjoying the salvation we have in Christ.

I was reading Randy Alcorn's book called **Happiness**. And I was convicted about mistakes that I had made in representing God. I have said things like God cares more about us being **Holy** than us being **happy**. But that is not accurate. God knows that the **path** to true and lasting happiness is through **holiness**. When we are picking between a **substitute happiness** that the world offers that is counter to holiness, then yes, God wants us to choose **holiness**. But part of the reason that **holiness** is so important is that it is the path to the **eternal unbroken happiness** that God has for His children. God cares that we live a **Holy life** partly because that is the path to sharing in God's happiness forever. And it also leads a believer into happiness in our walk with Christ **in this life**. It will also be a path to suffering as well. But that is temporary and even **that** does not need to steal our joy. In fact we are to oddly **count it all joy** when we face trials.

So my point is that our joy is important to our Father. Our happiness is important to God. But the path to that happiness is very much different than what our flesh would tell us.

Let me use this as an illustration.

I have Paul's instructions to the Elders of Ephesus from the book of Acts on my bathroom wall. In it, Paul describes the grueling hours of work Paul did teaching the Ephesians in the heat of the day when most people would be taking their siesta's. Paul tells about giving up his **rights to have people provide for his needs**. And he encourages these elders to do the same kinds of things. Then he ends his instructions with this line.

**Acts 20:35 (NKJV)**

**<sup>35</sup> I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'** "

The word **blessed** and **happy** are synonyms. You could say it is more **happy** to give than to receive. Our flesh says just the opposite. It says it is more happy **to get what you want** than to **give others what they want**. In fact it will tell you that the reason you are **not happy** is because people are not **giving you what you want**. But who are the happiest people? What sustains your happiness? What sustains kids happiness? The thrill of getting wears out quick. The satisfaction of **giving** continues with us. So we see that even a **life of service** is not so God can **get as much work out of us as He possibly can**. Part of the reason that He calls us to a life of service, a life of giving, is that He knows we will be happier.

But no matter what happens in the here and now, God is going to make every one of His true followers eternally happy. At the end of the day it might be true that everything a human being does is because, in some way, maybe even twisted ways, we think it will make us happy. Everyone wants to be happy in whatever way they perceive happiness. But our world and our flesh have no idea how to go about this joy, this deep seated happiness that God provides for His children. So we will only find this joy through our walk with Christ. And that is what God truly wants for us.

Now about our text.

Here is the flow of thought.

No one has seen God.

So how can we have assurance that we have been saved? How can we know we are right about God? How can we have confidence before God? We have not stood before God and had him tell us, face to face, that we are now His. So how can we know?

We know because we show the signs of God being in us. We show the signs of the Holy Spirit. We show the signs that a miracle has happened in us, even though we cannot see God. Even though we may not have had an experience that we could tell in any way was supernatural.

It can be a bit like catching a virus. You do not know when that life enters your body. But you will soon know that **you caught it**. The experience of **catching it** may not be noticeable. But its effects of having it sure will be. One of the inevitable results of having this new spiritual life inside of you will be that **you will love the brothers**. You will find you are drawn to reach out to meet their needs because they, too, are fellow followers of Christ.

This text then moves to a second proof. But remember, these are not really unrelated proofs. A person does not just get **one** of them and not the others. It is like when a flu makes you very sick. You get the fever, and the cough, and the runny nose or whatever. They all are evidence that you have the disease. They are symptoms of the same condition. They are all symptoms of a change that happened in you.

The second evidence in this text is that you will believe that **Jesus is who the apostles say He is**. You will believe this truth in a way that is life changing. It will become a core belief that your life is lived by.

Now let's examine the text.

**12 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.**

**13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.**

We have looked at these verses previously. I just wanted to point out one more thing about it that will help us as go further.

Notice in verse 12 God abides in us and in verse 13 we abide in God and God abides in us.

Now how does God do that?

He does it by giving us His Holy Spirit.

That is what verse 13 says. And that is also what other verses in the NT tell us.

**1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV)**

**19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?**

**Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)**

**13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,**

**14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.**

## 2 Timothy 1:14 (NKJV)

**14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.**

We see that our body is where the Holy Spirit lives. He dwells **in us**. He is the seal that guarantees our inheritance. God lives **in us** by His Holy Spirit. That is how He lives in us. That is how He abides in us.

Now, there are those who teach that you can be a Christian, you can have decided to follow Jesus, but you have **never had the Holy Spirit**. Our text and other texts tell us that such a thing is an impossibility. Every believer has the Holy Spirit in them, or they are not a believer. This inaccurate teaching about the Holy Spirit is normally due to people overemphasizing what a human contributes to his salvation. It is as if our decision to follow Christ saves us. This is called decisional regeneration. So it makes sense that if I can **make** a decision that **saves** me, and that I have an **innate ability** to do such a thing, then the Holy Spirit's **indwelling** was not **necessary**.

But, they continue, if I want to be a **grade A** Christian instead of a **grade B** Christian, then I need **something more**. I need to **really** get the Holy Spirit. Often these teachings include the necessity of spiritual gifts like the gift of tongues being present.

It is important for us to understand that if a person is a believer, they have the Holy Spirit in them. It is **impossible** that they do not. The Holy Spirit's influence may be at varying degrees throughout our Christian lives, but His presence in us is absolutely essential. We cannot be a believer without it.

**14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.**

Now what does the Spirit of God cause in a believer's life? Well, among other things, it causes us to **believe in Christ**.

Now it is important to understand here, although I am sure we are very aware of this, that this belief we have in Christ is not one **brought on by our imaginations** conjuring up what Christ **must be like**. This Christ is not discovered by us thinking about what a Christ must be like. No. It is a revealed Christ by eyewitnesses.

You and I have no idea what Christ is like without the Bible. Remember, we cannot see God. And we didn't live on the planet when Christ lived here. We would know **nothing** about Christ if we were not told about Him from the eyewitnesses or from the prophecies about Him.

The point is, this belief in Christ is always rooted in a belief in the **Bible record**. They cannot be separated. There is a false teaching out there that is popular in liberal theological circles. It is called **higher criticism**. Basically

these people do not believe that the Bible is inerrant. So they take it upon themselves to weed out parts of the Bible that they think **aren't true** from those they think **are true**. They say that Jesus would **not** have done one thing. But Jesus would have done this other thing. And in so doing they create a God of their own making. It is a most dangerous form of idolatry. Because it claims to believe in Christ. But it does not believe in the Christ that the apostles gazed upon intently, which is the word for "seen" in our text. It does not believe in the Christ that they testified of.

A person cannot believe in the **true Christ** if they do not believe that the **Bible is true**. The two, the **testimony** of the Christ and **belief in the Christ** are inseparably linked.

Now what did the apostles see and teach?

**the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.**

Here is the Gospel in a sentence. It is not all there is to know about Christ. But it is the essence of God's plan of salvation.

We see in it that

the Father coexisted.

The Son coexisted with the Father.

The world needed saving.

The Father sent His Son to do the saving.

How? How was He a savior? Much of our world doesn't mind the idea that Christ came as a savior if they get to define how he did such a thing.

Was He a savior by **good moral teaching**? Some people believe that. Was his moral teaching going to save us? It is clear that we needed **more** saving than moral information. The law **already** proved good moral teaching and that didn't work. The problem with us is not something information can solve.

Was He a savior by **His good example**? Again, no, that isn't enough. We already know way more about **how we should live** than we **have the power in ourselves to do**.

There are lots of people who want to describe this Savior in terms that are palatable with a stance that will not surrender to King Jesus. But the way scripture describes Christ as Savior demands that **every knee bows** and **every tongue confess** His Lordship. It requires a response of surrender from every human.

So how IS Christ the Savior?

Well First Christ **lived a perfect life**. In order to not deserve any punishment from God's hand, a perfect life **was required**. This is something that no one before or after Christ have ever done. No one ever will. So Christ did give us the example of a **perfectly lived life**, but that was **not sufficient**, in and of

itself to save us. It would save Christ. But it would not save us. His perfect life was a **prerequisite** for our salvation. But it was not enough. We could never rise to the level of his example. One failure would disqualify us for salvation. Christ would have accomplished his own salvation by His perfect life, but not ours.

No. We had a **guilt** problem. And it was not just a problem of **guilty feelings**. That problem could have a solution. No we had a problem of being **convicted by the law of God**. The law declared us guilty of sin. And the wages of that sin is death. We are caught, dead to rights, in our sin. And we are declared guilty and sentenced to death.

That is the problem with all humanity. So to have a Savior, we need someone who can deliver us out of this impossible dilemma.

And that is where the cross comes in. Christ is our **Savior**, secondly by **taking all of our sin upon Himself**. He took our **sin-earned** death penalty, and He died in our place on the Cross. He took our curse away from us by becoming cursed Himself.

He did that thing that only He, in the History of mankind, was qualified to do. He **died in our place** as our Savior.

But His salvation does not end there. He is still working in this salvation work.

**Hebrews 7:23-25 (NKJV)**

**<sup>23</sup> Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.**

**<sup>24</sup> But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.**

**<sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

We see that Christ is in Heaven still **doing work** for us. He is **interceding** for us. He is representing us to His Father. He is always there. He will not die like the earthly High Priests. We find other places that Christ takes our prayers, our feeble attempts at communicating with God, and He translates them and adapts them for the Father's use. He is **actively representing us** to His Father. It makes me wonder why **I** don't pray more, why **we** don't pray more, and with more confidence. Christ is still saving us to the uttermost.

Then not only this but our text has been telling us **another way** in which Christ is our Savior. He has sent us the **Holy Spirit**. And that Holy Spirit is convicting us of sin and drawing us through the word to the Savior daily. He dwells in us.

And then finally we know that this salvation we have is **past tense, present tense, and future tense**. One day after our death, or if Christ comes before our deaths, we will be granted a new body.

**Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

**<sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

What Adam and Eve unleashed on the world was far worse than they had the capacity to imagine. In an instant they unleashed on the world the **penalty** of sin, the **power** of sin, and the **presence** of sin. We now probably have 10,000 years of human history. I doubt they would have ever guessed what the seeds of that original sin has produced.

For humans to get back to a garden state (not NJ) God had to do business with sin. There will never be a peaceful, safe, joyful world until sin is gone. When Christ came He removed the **penalty** of sin for everyone who would ever believe on Him. So that first obstacle was overcome.

But there is the **power of sin too**. That is a real problem. To people born in sin, in their natural state, they can't not sin. They are in the state of sin according to Paul in Romans. But Romans tells us that Christ's death and resurrection provides us with **power over sin now**. We are no longer under the power of sin. As Mike said often in our study in Romans, sin's power cord was unplugged as a result of us being given new lives in Christ. We are no longer living under the **domain** of sin. We are now under the **domain** of Christ.

So that is **2 of the three**. But we all know that as long as we live in a world of sin, we will sometimes fall **into** that sin. We will choose it because we think what it offers will please us. We think it offers better happiness than God's path offers. Or sometimes we might be ignorant of it being sin. So as long as its **presence** remains, we still have a **potential problem**. We will never be able to let down our guard as long as we know that **sinful actions** and **attitudes** are an option. We know that we might choose those things. And we know that those **we love and trust and depend upon** might choose those things as well.

Well the good news is that Christ will complete that for us as well. What a wonderful and complete Savior He is. He will not only take care of the **penalty** of sin and the **power** of sin. One day He will remove the **presence** of sin. And we will live in new bodies with no remaining sin muscle memory.

We will no longer have a body trained by sin to obey it. We will be completely free of all of sin's influence and effect. Praise God. What a Savior.

OK now at the end of verse 13 we see that God sent Christ as the Savior of the world. There are generally 3 ways of understanding this. 1- Christ will save **the whole world**. That is Universalism and most Christians regard that as a false teaching. 2- Christ paid for all the sins of **every human being**. But some will not **gain the benefit**. They say Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, but some will choose against having this count for them. This is generally the Armenian belief. And 3- the whole world means those scattered all over the world. Salvation is found in none other. So whoever in this world is to be saved, they will be saved by Christ. This is called limited atonement. This belief says that Christ only died for those He came to save, those the Father has chosen from before time began. Christ only covers the sins to the world that will come to Him. This is generally what reformed theology teaches. It is called limited atonement.

Let's move on.

**15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.**

So how do you know if the Spirit is living in a person? How do you know if **God is abiding** in a person? How do you know if they are **abiding in God**? This person believes in Christ the way the apostles passed down the Gospel. In this case John says "**Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God**" How this is stated is important. It does not say that **Christ** is the Son of God. Christ is the title of the Messiah. If it were stated this way it would allow for the Christ to come and go out of the life of Christ like the gnostic false teachers taught it.

No. The way John says it, it leaves no wiggle room. It says that **Jesus**, that person born as a human baby and raised by imperfect humans, **that person** is the **Son of God**. That is the gospel that the disciples passed down. Jesus is the person who was sent as Savior. There was no goodness **swooping in** on Christ's adult body and then **swooping back out** prior to the cross. Nope, nothing like that. Jesus **IS** the Son of God. When **born** He was and He **still** is. His body was resurrected. He is keeping it in whatever form it is in.

This is another proof of salvation. This is another evidence that should assure us. But again, we have to keep in mind this is not an isolated evidence. A person cannot have this belief and show none of the symptoms of having the Christian condition. It will coexist with other evidences, just the like the presence of a flu or a pregnancy.



I say this because it is important. If a person says, oh yes I am a Christian, I am a believer. I prayed to Jesus once. I believe the right stuff. But the person really seems to have no change. They have no other symptoms. They really don't have an interest in spiritual things. When their passions are aroused, they will not obey Christ. There is **no reason for assurance**. This intellectual assent, by itself, is not assuring. Demon belief and saving belief are two different things. It was important that I state this because there are so many people who get false assurance by such a thing. And we do them a terrible disservice to slap them on the back and say, yes, you prayed the prayer, you are good now. You can go back to your life of sin or live obediently to Christ. Both options are covered for you now. No That is not grounds for confidence. But now let's focus on the positive side of this statement.

Do you regard Jesus Christ, as revealed in scripture, as your **only salvation**?

Do you thank God for sins penalty and power being removed by Christ?

Do you look **longingly** for the time when **sin's presence** will be removed too?

Do you see Christ as really being the **core of your life**, the **center** of your life?

Do you find yourself easily **praising Him** for who He is and thanking Him for the blessings in your life?

Are you interested in Christ and the things of Christ?

I mean, these are things that are just there in your life. You don't need to pretend them. You don't need to force them. They are continually just part of day to day life?

If these kinds of things are true for you, how do you think that happened?

Being raised as a Christian kid won't even produce these things in your life.

There has to be a spiritual miracle for us to really be drawn to the true Christ.

Look at this text:

**1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

If you truly regard Christ as being your Lord and you are genuinely glad for it, you didn't decide that. You didn't make that happen. That is a Holy Spirit miracle. I will say again that if you are **committing intentional known sin** and that is wreaking havoc on your assurance, the best thing to do is stop. Get whatever help you need. We all need help. But stop feeding that obstacle to assurance. Sin is the **devil's will** for your life. Not God's. It is designed to rob you of happiness. It does not **provide** the kind of happiness that God desires for you. It is temporary happiness with a baggage of misery.

But even in those times of defeat, recognize that if you **cling to Christ for salvation**, and you are **continually drawn to Christ**, if there is **no fleshly reason** you keep coming back to Christ, but you **keep coming anyway**, that is evidence of assurance. That is evidence of the Holy Spirit's work. Let that be a deep encouragement to you even in the struggle.

I hope we are seeing the great lengths that John is going to **to make sure** God's children have assurance. **John wants** us to have it. **Christ wants** us to be certain of it. **Our Father** wants us to fully enjoy the privileges His Son won for us. That is the kind of God we serve. The assumption in 1 John is that every believer **can have** and **should have** assurance. So I trust we are involved in the process of incorporating this heart felt, head understood assurance in our lives. This will **empower** and **enable** and **fuel** the kind of Joy that our God wants us to experience.