

1 John 4 12-16 July 26

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.

We will focus this morning on verse 16 of our text.

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.

Look at the statement- known and believed.

It is easy to pass by these words without realizing how important that statement is.

Known and believed.

Here are the two necessary elements of a saving faith.

First we must **know** the content.

Second, we must **respond to it** with all that we are.

What we are talking about is the proper combination of the **objective** with the **subjective**. We are talking about the Christian life where what **we know** is incorporated into what **we are**. The **objective doctrine** is woven into the day to day **life decisions** that we make.

You and I, as well as the whole Christian world, tend to gravitate to one extreme or the other.

One side is the **objective doctrinal truths** of the Bible. These involve logic and mental effort to understand. It requires discipline to dig deeper into truths. It involves our brains to mine the riches of what scripture says. We may err on the side of doctrine, the objective truths of the Bible. And we may see that possessing that and guarding that is the main thing in the Christian life. If I can present a **true version** of what scripture says, and if I can do that better than those around me, then I am good. We may think that is the whole of this Christian life. That is one side. That is the objective extreme. That is my doctrine.

The other extreme says, my **experience** is everything. My sweet communion with Christ, my compassion and empathy for people, that is true spirituality. Watch my life and you will see the experiences I have, the dwelling with God that should happen. That is all I have time for. My **subjective experience** of God, my belief, that is what a Christian should truly focus on. That is the **subjective extreme**.

I think we could look at the teachings of many different denominations and we would find a tendency toward one extreme or the other. We could read different writers and find the same thing. We probably find that each of us has a preference regarding the **objective** and the **subjective**.

But when Paul was giving his pastoral advice to Timothy, the person he was mentoring in the faith, he told Timothy to

1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV)

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Scripture walks a perfect balance of **objective** and **subjective**, of the **facts we proclaim** and the **walk that results** from **believing** those truths. We are continually exhorted to **know the right things** and **believe** them in a way that is congruent. We are never told to do one at the exclusion of the other. It is always **life and doctrine, knowledge and belief**.

Let's look at another passage that displays this truth.

Romans 6:17-19 (NKJV)

17 But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

19 I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.

In verse 17 it says you **obeyed from the heart** that form of **doctrine** to which you were delivered. And then the rest of the passage describes **how true belief** in their **true knowledge** worked itself out. Their experience, their **subjective lives**, were changed dramatically by that **objective truth**.

Let me ask you this. Who has had the most dramatic effect for good in your Christian life? Think about that. Put a name to that face.

Did that person appeal to scripture? Did they live a faithful life?

Do you see what I mean? Your ministry to others is **maximized** by watching your life and your doctrine. You will have the greatest impact on the lives of

others if you are **knowing the right stuff** and **living a life congruent** to that which you say you believe. Do you want to have an impact on those around you? Know what you believe and live it out boldly, especially when it is hard for you. Live so people will see that what you say is true for them is also true for you.

The opposite is also true. If we have taught those who are watching that we have two sets of rules, 1- the set I tell **you** about and 2- the set **I** go by, we would do well to stop talking and start repenting. We should ask God to help us to live out what we say we believe. We should pull together the resources at our disposal to help us in that pursuit. It is very unlikely that we will be used heavily in the process of **saving those who hear us** if we are not **living congruently**, if we are not watching our life and our doctrine. If a truth is not good enough for **us** to live by, why would we think that **others** will believe it is good enough for **them**?

So we see that **knowing** and **believing** are both critical. They are necessary. Now let's look at their relationship.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

How does knowledge relate to belief? Well, think about **your** salvation. Scripture tells us that Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We must **hear** or **read** the mental content that we then "know". We hear the words. We can make sense of them. They paint a mental picture. So in a sense, we know them. We can tell others of this thing we heard. And when God is moving in our hearts we **believe** those words, we **believe** that story. But it does not end there. We find our **belief** drives us to **know** more. We are driven to know Christ, like Paul says.

Philippians 3:8-11 (NKJV)

⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Did Paul know Christ when he came to Christ? Yes. In the most basic way he did. But did he have room to grow in knowing Christ? Of course he did. So he **knew**. He **believed**. He wanted to **know** Christ more. He **believed** what he

found out. He wanted to **know** Christ more. He did. He believed what he found out.

That is the relationship of knowledge and belief. **Knowledge** results in **belief**. **Belief** inspires greater **knowledge**. I know something. Then I believe it.

Then I **really** know it. I know it more than just facts in my head. I know it as a conviction. I know it as a certainty. I have **experienced** that truth.

Think about this this morning. What do you know **this week** that you did not know **last week**? What is a certainty about your walk in Christ **this year** that you did not know **last year**? How is your belief in Christ driving you to know Christ more **now** than **yesterday**?

While we have a historic record of coming to Christ, if that is our **only** testimony of Christ we are in danger. What is Christ teaching of Himself to you right now? What deeper knowledge of Christ have you come to in the last season of your life. What testimony to **God's goodness to you** has been fresh in your life lately?

Remember, we cannot separate knowledge and belief, objective and subjective, knowing stuff and living stuff. What do you know **of Christ** that you did not know a year ago? That is the sweet stuff we get to share with those who care to listen. That is our testimony of what Christ is doing in our lives.

In our text we read this

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.

So what have believers heard **the facts about** and then, as a result of believing the facts have come to experientially known as a fact? **God's love**.

We read this. We sing Jesus loves me this I know. But what do we believe it in our heart of hearts? **Do you believe that Jesus loves you?** Do you believe that Jesus **approves** of you? Do you believe that Jesus truly wants you to be **happy** at the **deepest level**? Do you believe that His plans for you **are good**, even when you face circumstances that could be used as proof of the alternative? When you face those life circumstances, do you jump back to the **rock solid assurance** that whatever is happening in my life is happening because the **God who loves me knows what He is doing?** Do we know, even going into it, that He will ultimately use this for my good and for the good of His people?

Look at what you say? Is that what people would conclude by what you say? Is that how you respond? Would someone watching you get the idea that you have a rock solid belief in a God who loves you and that your life's circumstances are no exception?

You see that is where we **really** live. That is where we display what we **really** believe. That is what the people around us know about what we really think of God. It is by how we **respond** to the **here and now** life. Our desire to die, which is a very logical desire for a believer, isn't much proof to them. How we **live** is the proof. Believers in trouble will tend to turn to people who live like **God loves them**. Those are the people they will go to for help. Those are the people they will go to for advice. Those are the people they will call on when life gets tough. Because all of us, every single one of us, **needs affirmation that our God loves us**. He has not **abandoned** us. He is **there** for us. He wants what is **best** for us. And those who live that way will be a beacon that draws others to that light. Those who **believe it**, even when life dishes out circumstances that say otherwise, will be the people that **hurting believers** run to.

Naturally I have to quote Martyn Lloyd Jones. **I do not know what the future holds for me; nobody does. Our whole life and world is uncertain, and I say that in a world like this the supreme matter is to know that God loves me- to know that I am in that relationship and that whatever happens around me, God will always be with me. Whatever may or may not come, God loves me and I am a child of God. If I know that, then there is a sense in which anything else does not matter very much and cannot vitally and essentially affect me.**

So the million dollar question comes down to this. Do you really believe, in your heart of hearts, that God loves you?

If you do not believe that God loves you, you have little reason to obey Him. You will react like the kid whose dad always punishes him, no matter if his behavior is good or bad. Pretty soon the child learns not to care what His Father says He wants. It makes no difference. He learns to hide his behavior because nothing is ever gained by open relationship.

That is how miserable Christians live. They don't believe that they are loved. They don't believe the positive promises are true for them. Hence the promises have no power to motivate them. They believe a bunch of "shoulds" but there is no joy in carrying them out.

While the truth is really the opposite. Scripture tells us over and over that **God loves His children**. He **runs to them** when they turn to Him. He leaves 99 of his **found** sheep to find the **one** lost one. He is like a **hen** who pulls them under his wings for protection and safety. There are so many illustrations that we cannot **misunderstand**. The **Father** loves His children. The **shepherd** loves his sheep. The **hen** loves its chicks. The **farmer** loves his crops. If you are in Christ, God loves that person that you see in the mirror.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

So we heard about this love. We have believed it. And that makes it a **certainty** for us. It draws us to **run to Christ** no matter what. That is the normal Christian life. If you do not believe that God loves you, if in your heart of hearts you believe something else, do business with that. Get to the bottom of that. That belief will sabotage your obedience and your joy. It will undermine your reasons for living a life pleasing to God. And it will keep you miserable, always wondering if you measure up and trying stupid stuff to impress God. You don't need to **win the approval** of a God who **already approves of you**. You simply need to submit to it and enjoy it.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Now if we take this phrase apart from its context it can get hokey really quickly. We start defining abiding in love by our **perceptions** and we end up believing that anyone who runs a soup kitchen or reaches out to the homeless abides in God and all the church members who speak out against sinful lifestyles don't know anything about God.

But we have already learned about proper doctrine. We know that God describes Himself in the Word. That is the only way that we know if we **abide in God**. It is not mysticism. It is living in **practical relationship**, living in ways that we know please God. And to abide in love is doing things in **human relationships** that are according to God's desires in our **spiritual relationship**. We are loving God first. And in our love for God we submit to what God wants and requires. If we **love** Christ we **obey** Christ. It does not say if we love Christ we have mystical experiences that define for us what love really is. God's word is very specific. You do not have to be a genius to be able to **quote** and **understand** what Jesus commands. It does not require a mystical bone in your body.

This is describing a lifestyle of living in relationship with Christ. We live with an understanding that He is our Lord. This means we have no rights except the rights he provides us. We are free to **serve Christ** and **worship Him**. We are guided by the commands He has given us. We are restricted by the **restrictions** He has provided. We are free to do those things He has given us **the freedom** to do. But in all of that we recognize that **He is Lord**. We are not the Lord of our lives. **No one else** is the Lord of our lives in that sense. Only Christ gets our absolute allegiance.

As we abide that way we understand that **loving God** and **loving people** are the ultimate priorities. Nothing is more important than that. And as we see that in our lives, as we live that way, we can have confidence that God is abiding in us. Think about it. What natural self serving human motivation

would move you to do the things you are doing? Sure we are not as loving as we long to be. But still, the evidence of our spirituality is that we lay self aside for the benefit of others. And the greater the need that surrounds us, the greater our sacrifice.

Now as an overview we can conclude some things that are true of believers, those who are **living in love**. And this may be an aid to your assurance. I have borrowed heavily from brother Jones. They are largely things that first John tells us.

First a believer is one who no longer believes that God is **against him or her**. We have talked about this in the past. If you feel that God is against you and you are not living in a state of sin, you need to do whatever you must to resolve this issue. God is never **against** His children. He may need to take steps to discipline us. But it is never because He is against us. It is because He is **for** us.

Second, a believer who knows that God loves him or her no longer has a **dread** of God's punishment. This truth is coming in just a few verses in our text. We are not going to face His punishment. And faith in God's character and God's word relieves us of that fear.

Third, a believer knows and rests his or her confidence in the fact that not only is God not **against us**, He is **committed** to our **welfare**. He is strongly and totally **for** us. He is for **me**.

Fourth we believe that the sin problem we have is taken care of in Christ. We don't understand why He would choose to forgive our sins. But we know that for sure He has. He has atoned for our sins. He has provided God's propitiation.

Fifth, a believer has a sense of **gratitude** toward God. We know we are loved. We know that we have sinned. We know that our sin deserved judgment. But we have been forgiven. So now we have a continual spring of **gratitude** based on the facts of our redemption. When we truly know God and we know what God has done for us, we cannot help but have an **attitude of gratitude** toward Him and his astounding love toward us.

Sixth, we find that we **hate sin more**. I know that we may have a funny way of showing it. We may hate ourselves for the battles that we **lose** on that front. But over time we **hate it more**. We put more things in place so we will not sin. We pull in more resources to prevent it. And more and more the thing that sickens us most toward **sin** is that the God who loves **us** hates **it**. It is a wonderful sign when our **sin makes us sick**. That is a rational response. Choosing to sin is not a rational response. That is irrational. It is stupid. But

being **heart sick about it** is the most rational of responses for someone who loves God.

Seventh, when we buy into this love of God, when we understand He has forgiven us. When we realize what that took, we find in ourselves a desire to **please this God**. Do you desire to live a more godly life, a more committed life, a more obedient life than you are living now? That is a wonderful evidence of your salvation. Why would you care if the Spirit of God was not in you?

Eighth, we desire to **know Christ more**. Do you want to know God better? Is there a real desire in your soul to do so? Guess who put that there? It is not natural. You must believe that this God **loves you**. Otherwise you would not so much want to **please Him** as to **hide from Him**. But if you believe He loves you, you want to **know Christ**. You cannot get enough of God.

Ninth- are you dissatisfied with your degree of love for Christ? Do you look at your life and think, Christ deserves better than this from me? Do you think, I wish I was doing a better job of loving Christ, given how wonderfully He has loved me? Guess what? That is evidence of salvation. Human pride is quick to be **self** satisfied. Pride is proud of its own accomplishments and blind to the seriousness of one's shortcomings. It says, I am glad I am not as bad as that tax collector. But true faith says please forgive me because I am the **big** sinner.

If you are unhappy because you do not live better, that is a good sign. That may well be a sign of walking in the light. The truth is, though we should continue to strive to treat Christ in the way **He is worthy of being treated**, it is likely that we never fully will until we see Him.

Love always feels its own insufficiency. And that is accurate. And that is not from us.

And 10th We delight in **learning more about Christ**. The world does not want to learn more about the real Christ. Christ is demanding. He tells us to take up the instrument of our own death and follow Him. They may want to imagine more about Christ, but not know what God revealed about Him. The flesh does not want to hear that because flesh lives for its own comfort and advantage. But those loved by God, those learning to love God, want to hear more and more. We don't care about the cost. We know that He is worthy. The price is just part of the process. We love Christ and we cling to Him. And the more we can learn about our Savior, the better.

How does your life look? Do you believe that this God who is love, loves you? What would happen if this week every response was motivated with the understanding that God loves us?