

1 John Chapter 4C

Many of you know Deb and David Reichard who run the Hands of Compassion Children's Home in Guatemala. But you probably don't know Deb's parents, Tom and Susan Stukenberg who actually started the orphanage.

- The Stukenberg family is a very unique family. Tom and Sue have 9 biological and two adopted children. Many of them have spent the majority of their lives on mission field.
- One of their daughters, Mary serves as a medical missionary in China. (*training*)

One year the Stukenbergs had a family reunion in China and that reunion included a two-day evangelistic outreach in Beijing. Tom and Sue carried 50,000 Gospel tracts into China and during their visit, the family split up into teams of two.

- They spent 2 days riding busses all around the city of Beijing handing out Gospel tracts and talking to as many people as possible along the way.
- Well the second day of their evangelistic outreach the police carried out a synchronized effort and the entire family with the exception of Mary who lived in China were dragged into police headquarters for questioning.
- Each family member was taken to a separate room where they were questioned for more than 8 hours.
- Throughout that interrogation, they boldly shared the Gospel with the officers and government officials who interviewed them.
- The next day the family was escorted to the airport where they were forced to leave the country. 7 yrs Mary was not arrested and she remains in China today.

Here is something I would like you to think about; if YOU were living in a country where it was against the law to be a Bible Believing, Evangelical Christian, and the police followed you around for a month; they tapped your phone, they viewed your internet browsing history, they listened in on the conversations around your dinner table, they questioned your co-workers. After a month of careful investigation, would they find sufficient evidence of true Biblical faith in your life?

- Would they see you as a threat and lock you up? OR, would there be insufficient evidence to bring about a conviction.

Well the Apostle John is not seeking to lock anyone up, but he is carefully laying out a clear standard for the evidence of true Biblical conversion. He is helping to answer the question: "How do I know that I am really saved?"

In our text this morning, John lists three evidences of saving faith in the life of a true believer. (Indwelling H.S, Confession of Christ and Love) In each case, there is a reference to the believer's abiding in God and God's abiding in Him.

- Then as John moves on to Vs 17-21 He elaborates on the final piece of evidence, showing the origin and benefits of Christian love.

This morning, with the help of God we will finish up chapter 4. I have broken the remaining verses into two sections each section having three points.

1. We will consider three indications of true biblical conversion. Each one of these three evidences is established on the previous one.
 - a. We have been given the Holy Spirit (*and by the Spirit*)
 - b. We confess Jesus as the Son of God. (*And so*)
 - c. We abide in Love
2. John elaborates on that love showing both the origin and the fruit of love.
 - a. Love gives us confidence
 - b. Love removes the fear of judgment
 - c. Our Love is a response to God's love

Evidence #1, We have been given the Holy Spirit

1 John 4: 13 **By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.**

- The words “**By This**” point forward to the threefold evidence of true Christian conversion and the first evidence that John points to is the Holy Spirit who has been given to every believer.

John doesn't take the time to elaborate on this gift of the Spirit, here in Ch. 4. He simply states a fact, as believers we have received the H.S. and from the context, we can assume that the true confession of Christ and a sincere love for the brethren serve as indisputable evidence of the GIFT of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

- In Chapter 3, verse 24, John used similar wording to say that we can be assured of the Spirit's presence in our lives when we walk in obedience.

Because there is a good bit of confusion in the church regarding the sending of the Spirit and His indwelling presence in those who believe, I think it may be good for us to dig just a little deeper this morning into this gift of God.

In John 13, Jesus told his disciples that he would be leaving and where he was going they could not come, (*At least not yet*) As you can imagine the news of his departure troubled them. SO in John 14, Jesus sought to comfort them saying:

John 14:16 **I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.**

- On this side of church history, we recognize that Jesus was speaking about the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the church.

But a careful study of the Old Testament reveals the fact that the Holy Spirit has always been active among God's Chosen People.

- He inspired the preaching of Noah, (Peter tells us) a preacher of righteousness.

- He regenerated Father Abraham, by the grace of God through faith in his promised Child
- He put the words of God in the mouths of all of the prophets.

And yes, even in the O.T. the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of God's covenant people to bring the conviction of sin as well as the GIFTS of repentance and faith in the promised Messiah.

- Regardless of the time or spiritual economy, it has always been the work of the Holy Spirit to bring regeneration to men and women of God's own choosing.

When Abraham was disheartened because the promises of God were so slow in coming, God spoke to him saying:

Genesis 15:5 "Look toward heaven, (Abraham) and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- Right there in Genesis 15 Abraham was justified, declared righteous by grace through faith and a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

If you dig deep enough into the O.T. you can find a few individuals who experienced the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 41:38 Joseph is spoken of as a man in whom is the Spirit of God.

Numbers 27:18 The LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.

Daniel 4:8, 5:11, the Prophet is spoken of a man in whom is the Spirit of God.

But then my friends, on the Day of Pentecost there was a dramatic expansion of the work of the Holy Spirit. As the proclamation of the Kingdom stretched beyond the borders of Israel, the rule of the King through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit expanded as well.

- As the light of the gospel moved from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and then to the ends of the earth, the convicting, regenerating, sealing, sanctifying work of the Spirit also spread to the ends of the earth.
- SO that today every newborn believer across the globe is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sealed for the day of redemption and baptized into the Body of Christ.
- We understand from the writing of the Apostle Paul that it is only by the work of the Spirit that a person is able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

1Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Here in 1 John 4, the Apostle points to the Gift of the Holy Spirit as clear evidence of true conversion. And it is by the Holy Spirit that believers confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

NOW before moving on to the second item on his evidence list John pauses for a moment to express the apostolic authority behind his writing.

- This particular verse is reminiscent of the opening of the letter where John points to what he has seen and heard and touched. Here John reminds us that he is an eyewitness to the life and work of our blessed Savior.

1 John 4:14 **And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God which was communicated through the Apostles, came to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through first hand eye witnesses.

- Still today This same Gospel remains the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.

Now as we move on John tells us that the second evidence of true conversion is the confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

- Because there were a number of false teachers in John's day who denied the miracle of the incarnation and rejected the divine sonship of Jesus, John holds the confession of Jesus as the Son of God as important evidence of true conversion.

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

- To confess Jesus as the Son of God is MUCH MORE than a simple, intellectual ascent to the historic facts of a religious leader, a good teacher or even a prophet.
- The word “**Confess**” (HOMOLOGEO) means to say the same thing as. The confession of Christ that affirms salvation is an agreement with and a profession of the Spirit Inspired Truth concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - Believers then, SAY the same thing that God has SAID in his Word.
 - They proclaim the Eternal existence of Christ, His Virgin birth, His incarnation, The fact that he was fully God and fully man.
 - We confess that Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life and bore the wrath of God in his body on the cross for those who would believe.

Those who have been converted by the Regenerating work of the Holy Spirit would agree with the statement of John from vs 14:

1 John 4:14 **the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.**

- According to John True Believers by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit will confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God the only Savior of the world.

Looking back to the Gospel of John we see the confession of Peter.

In Chapter 6 when the unbelief of the crowd was exposed and the people began to abandon the Lord Jesus, He turned to his disciples and asked:

John 6: 67 "Do you want to go away as well?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

- Later in the beautiful surroundings of Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered:

Matthew 16:16 "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

SO let me stop here and ask, IS your personal confession of Christ based on the revelation of God in Holy Scripture. Has the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

- DO you believe that He is the eternal Son of the Living God?
- Have you experienced the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and come to a place where you have repented of your sin and cast your whole life, your past, present and your future on the mercy of God that he has revealed in the person of Jesus Christ?

Let me remind you again, according to John, the evidence of true conversion is three-fold, The abiding Holy Spirit, the confession of Christ and finally we come to the evidence of love.

Here in verse 16, the first half of the verse establishes the basis for the evidence that is stated in the second half of the verse. (Let me say that again) - Let's read it.

1 John 4: 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. (Foundation) God is love, (evidence) and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

- Because God by his very nature is love, those who (PPT) continually abide in love display that vital union with God that only comes through Jesus Christ.
- Believers abide in him and he abides in them and the divine attribute of love provides unmistakable evidence of their conversion.
- Just a few verses earlier John wrote:

1 John 4: 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Having listed three evidences of Christian Conversion, John elaborates on his third point, (Abiding in love) here He shows the origin and the benefits of that love.

- a. Love provides believers with confidence
- b. Love removes the fear of judgment

c. Our Love is a response to God's love (*Hang on this is important!*)

1 John 4: 17 **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.**

- “**By This**” refers back to the love that was mentioned in Vs 16.

By abiding in Him, his love is continually being perfected in us (Passive Voice – telling us the perfection of that love is the work of God in us) and this love creates a confidence a humble boldness concerning the coming Day of Judgment.

- The logical reason for our confidence might be explained in this way:
- IF you KNOW that you are loved by God, if you are convinced that Jesus Christ willingly bore the full measure of God's wrath for your sin on the cross.
- If you have been assured by God's unchanging Word that **there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**, then you can face the day of judgment with confidence, knowing that the debt of your sin has been fully paid.
- Looking back we see that John is repeating what he said in Ch 2, Verse 28.

1 John 2:28 **And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.**

- This may be difficult for me to share but I believe it will be beneficial.

Ten days before my father passed away, I had a heart to heart conversation with him. You see, over the past year he kept telling me that he was ready to die, that he was confident as to where he was going.

- I didn't know that would be the last time that I would see him in this life; and I said to him, “Dad throughout the year you have often spoken of the confidence that you have as you face the end of your life. Can you tell me WHAT is the basis of your confidence? What is your assurance built on?”
- Well he went on to share the basis of his confidence (that's between he and I) but that gave me the opportunity, one more time to share the Gospel with him.

Back in 1 John 4, at the end of verse 17 John establishes the basis for Christian confidence on the day of judgment when He says: **because as he is so also are we in this world**

- Friends, this is an important detail for us to grasp so listen carefully.

As HE, (As Jesus) is the beloved son of God, so now WE also while we are still in this world, have become the beloved children of God through the adopting grace that is in Christ alone. JOHN tells us in his Gospel:

John 1: 12 **But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,**

- The Spirit that we have received (that John spoke of in vs 13) According to Paul is, **“The Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"**
- Our confidence is founded upon the adopting grace of God and not our own works. It is not based on our religious efforts or the good deeds that we have done. OUR confidence as believers is founded on the solid rock of Christ. His perfect life, his atoning death and his glorious resurrection.

When you take the time to reflect on the Day of Judgment remember this:

It is one thing to know there is a day coming when we will stand before the judge of all men; it is quite another thing to realize that through the Adoption that is ours in Christ Jesus, the judge that we will face is our own beloved brother. (*gave his life*)

- Even now, John says, we are God’s children.

1 John 3: 2 **Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**

- On that day we will be like him, the former things will have passed away and all things will be new. We will be glorified, robed in his perfect righteousness..

IN verse 18 John take this confidence a step further saying that love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18 **There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.**

- This is one of those verses that is frequently quoted BUT generally misapplied. All too often it serves as the catch phrase that we bring out whenever someone is struggling with fear, any kind of fear.
- BUT in this context, John is targeting a specific fear, the fear of eternal punishment that is removed by the perfect love that is ours in Christ.
- For the true believer the abiding evidence of God’s love serves to dissolve the fear of punishment.
- But for the unbelieving the fear of punishment is real and the torment that the Bible describes as outer-darkness (Flames, worms) is a real and looming fear.

Finally, John tells us where this fear conquering love comes from. It is not natural to man it comes from GOD!

1 John 4: 19 **We love because he first loved us.**

If you are a believer this morning, I want to remind you that God set his love upon you long before you took your first breath. As a matter of fact before the world came into existence with adopting love he chose you to be his precious child.

Ephesians 1: 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.**

In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

- Before the foundation of the world, God predestined believers for adoption according to the good purpose of his will.
- Think about it, we don't get to choose our biological children. Right, if you don't like the way they come out you can't send them back.
- But in adoption, you actually choose from a multitude of needy children which one you want to make your own. You set your love upon them before you even know them and then you bring them home with you.
- Well God has set his love on us, he has given us the spirit of adoption and right now, we're just waiting for him to come and take us home.

As we await that day when Christ will come for us, the adopting love of God constrains us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

20 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. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- If you are a child of God this morning, then love for your brothers and sisters is clear evidence that you abide in Him and He abides in you.
- Some of you might be looking forward to finishing this book so that you don't have to be confronted with the command to love one another every week.
- If that is you let me drive the stake deeper into your heart.

The Love that we are commanded to share with one another is:

- It is a forgiving love (Matthew 18)
- It is a love that bears one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- It is an unselfish love that counts others more significant than ourselves. (Phil 2:3)
- It is a love that considers the interests of others, (Phil 2:4)
- It is a love whereby we lay down our lives for our friends. (John 15:13)
- It is a love that restores a brother who is caught in sin with a spirit of gentleness. Galatians 6:1

BUT it is also a righteous love that boldly confronts the dangers of sin and false doctrine.

- This is the Love that motivates the elders to carry out church discipline, it is a corrective and restorative love for the one who is fallen.
- This is the love of a watchman on the wall who warns his beloved brothers of the schemes of the enemy. As Paul told Timothy:

1 Timothy 5:20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

- Friends, the church is a family, and just like raising children, there are times when it takes tough love to shape and mold our children into the image of Christ.
- SO this morning:

1 John 4: 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Pray: