

1st John: Abide In Him

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The video version is available at: https://youtu.be/xKSNO_nRyB8

The scripture reading is 1st John 2:28-5:21

The apostle John wrote to believers to warn them about false doctrine that had crept into the church. He pulls no punches in his letter. He clearly delineates two choices—either to walk in the light or walk in the dark. John reminds believers to continue in the gospel they heard from the beginning. John tells believers that they are to abide in Yeshua.

1 John 2:28 NKJV 28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

What does it mean to abide in Yeshua? How can we tell who abides in Yeshua and who doesn't? How can we tell whether we truly abide in Yeshua?

John instructs his readers throughout his letter to abide in Yeshua. The word “abide” is translated from the Greek word “men-o,” number 3306 in Strong’s Concordance meaning to stay in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy, to abide, continue, dwell or remain. John uses this Greek word eighteen times in this letter where it is translated as abide, continue or remain. If we stay in relationship, continue in expectancy and remain in place with Him we have confidence that we will not be ashamed when Yeshua returns. The word “confidence” is the Greek word “par-rhay-see’-ah,” number 3954 in Strong’s Concordance meaning all outspokenness, frankness, assurance, or confidence. Thayer defines it as free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, or assurance. This boldness or assurance comes from our continued relationship with Yeshua. In fact, those who abide in Yeshua are called children of God.

1 John 2:29 - 3:3 BBE 29 If you have knowledge that he is upright, it is clear to you that everyone who does righteousness is his offspring. 1 See what great love the Father has given us in naming us the children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not see who we are, because it did not see who he was. 2 My loved ones, now we are children of God, and at present it is not clear what we are to be. We are certain that at his revelation we will be like him; for we will see him as he is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, even as he is holy.

The first trait of those who abide in Yeshua is that they practice righteousness. Righteousness is another word that John repeats throughout this letter. However, we are not perfect in the practice of righteousness. John tells his readers that we do not yet see what we will become but, when Yeshua comes, we will see Him as He is and we will be made like Him! In contrast, those who do not truly abide in Him practice lawlessness.

1 John 3:4-9 NKJV 4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

John presents sin as a lifestyle of lawlessness as opposite from a lifestyle of righteousness. He states that one of the reasons that Yeshua came was to take away our sins and to destroy the works of the devil whose name, by the way, means the accuser. John reaffirms that Yeshua was without sin and for us to be made like Him means that we will eventually be without sin in our lives. We are to strive to make ourselves holy even as we are transformed into Yeshua's likeness. Paul also tells believers that they are being transformed.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Since we are children of God, born of God. John tells us we carry His seed within us, and, because we carry His seed, we cannot continue in a lifestyle of sin. John pointed out earlier in his letter that when we do sin, we have an advocate with God, Yeshua, that when we repent and confess our sins, we are forgiven. Those who abide in Yeshua live a righteous lifestyle, and those who live in sin are children of the devil.

1 John 3:10 NKJV 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

This brings up another trait of those who abide in Yeshua; they love their brothers. In contrast, those who hate their brothers are like Cain who hated his brother because of his brother's righteousness.

1 John 3:11-13 NKJV 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

Hating a brother is a trait of the world not of the children of God. John likens hate to murder which is abiding in death instead of life. In Contrast, loving leads to life.

1 John 3:14-15 NKJV 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John had earlier explained that those who abide in Yeshua receive the promise of eternal life.

1 John 2:24-25 NKJV 24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life.

Those who hate their brother do not have eternal life in them and, therefore, do not abide in Yeshua. Those who do abide in Yeshua do exactly the opposite of taking a life; they offer their own life for a brother.

1 John 3:16-18 NKJV 16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

But, like with living in righteousness, we are not perfect in loving each other. Even if our conscience condemns us for not always loving each other, God knows our hearts.

1 John 3:19-21 NKJV 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. 20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

The NKJV Study Bible explains what John is saying in these verses:

Our conscience may not acknowledge the loving deeds we have done in the power of the Holy Spirit, but God does, and He is superior to our heart. Unlike our conscience, God takes everything into account, including Christ's atoning work for us. God is more compassionate and understanding toward us than we sometimes are toward ourselves.ⁱ

Loving each other is part of keeping God's commandments as is living in righteousness. When we keep God's commands living in righteousness and loving each other, we abide in Him.

1 John 3:22-24 NKJV 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. 24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Another trait of those who abide in Yeshua is the presence of the Spirit of God living in us. This is a hard one. How do we recognize the Spirit of God? John tells us to test the spirits. The first test is whether the spirit we are listening to acknowledges that Yeshua came in the flesh.

1 John 4:2-3 NKJV 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

John earlier wrote that the spirit of antichrist denies that Yeshua is the Messiah and that He is the son.

1 John 2:22-23 NKJV 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

John goes on to add that the one who denies that Yeshua came in the flesh is also of the spirit of antichrist. Those who are of the spirit of antichrist are those who are of the world. They are those who, like Cain, hate righteousness. But we don't need to fear these people; God, in whom we abide with Yeshua, is greater than those who live in the world.

1 John 4:4-6 NKJV 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John reminds his readers that God's actions and intents toward us are motivated by His love for us! He is not like the world which is motivated by hate.

1 John 4:7-11 NKJV 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we

might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we 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.

This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit that lives within those who abide in Yeshua. The Spirit of God testifies that God sent His son Yeshua to be salvation for the world.

1 John 4:13-15 NKJV 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.

Paul also writes that only those within whom God's Spirit lives testify that Yeshua is Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:3 NKJV 3 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.

It is the Holy Spirit living in us through which we recognize that God loves us and sent His son for us. We know that we abide in Yeshua when we recognize God's love for us.

1 John 4:16 NKJV 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.

Receiving love from God and in return loving God is tied together with loving each other. We can't have one without the other!

1 John 4:20 - 5:1 NKJV 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

John returns to the concept that those who abide in Yeshua are children of God. As children of God, we love God and we love everyone else who has been born of God. We love our brothers and sisters in Yeshua! The evidence of our love for God and each other is our obedience to God's commandments.

1 John 5:2-3 NKJV 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

John states that God's commandments are not burdensome to those who love Him. David said following God's commandments was a delight.

Psalms 119:34-35 NKJV 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. 35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.

Moses told the children of Israel that God's commandments were in their hearts to do them.

Deuteronomy 30:14 NKJV 14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

It is the spirit of the world that makes us see the commandments as difficult. The spirit of the world cannot understand God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 NKJV 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Paul also tells us that the spirit of the world cannot submit to God.

Romans 8:7 NKJV 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

We are not of the world. We are children of God and, through our faith that Yeshua is the Messiah, we have victory over the world.

1 John 5:4-5 NKJV 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

John begins to wrap up his letter by taking his readers back to the beginning. Who exactly is Yeshua? At the start of his letter, John gave his testimony as an eye witness of everything he had seen and experienced as a companion of Yeshua. Now John introduces other witnesses both in heaven and on earth to Yeshua's identity, mission and accomplishments.

1 John 5:6-8 NKJV 6 This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Yeshua is the one who came by water and blood. Given the context of John's letter written to refute Gnosticism, a form of which taught that the Spirit of God came on Yeshua at his baptism and left before his death, we can understand that the Spirit of God was on Yeshua at both His baptism, the witness of water, and His death, the witness by blood. The Father, the Word and the Spirit witness in heaven. The Word is the Son dwelling with the Father. John told us in his gospel that the Word was with God in the beginning and became flesh manifesting Himself as Yeshua. On Earth, the witness is the Spirit testifying along with the water and the blood of Yeshua's baptism and death. The testimony in heaven and on earth is the same.

1 John 5:11-13 NKJV 11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

John concludes his letter with three things that we know about who we are and three things we know about the world.

1 John 5:18-21 NKJV 18 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true,

in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

First, we know that those who abide in Yeshua do not live in sin and that the world has no hold on us. Second, we know that we are children of God and not under the sway of the wicked one unlike the world. Third, we abide in Him who came in the flesh and in Him who is true. We follow the true God; we are not like the world which follows after idols.

Those who abide in Yeshua live in righteousness and love each other as defined by God's commandments. We accept the love of God who loves us so much that He sent His son in the flesh, and we receive the gift of the Spirit of God. We receive the promise of eternal life through our faith in the Son. Those who abide in Yeshua have overcome the world, and they have confidence in their victory when Yeshua comes.

Study Questions:

1. 1 John 3:9 states that whoever has been born of God does not sin because His seed remains in him. What is the seed that John refers to? (In Hebraic thought, a statement can have multiple layers of meaning!)
2. One of the teachings of Gnosticism was that Yeshua was just a man upon whom the Holy Spirit rested from His baptism until just before He died. What does John say about who Yeshua is? How does he refute this idea that Yeshua is just a man?
3. John states in two places, 1 John 3:22 and 1 John 5:14-5 that we can ask anything of Him and receive it. What are the conditions of our requests? How does that influence or direct what we ask?
4. The title of this teaching is Abide in Him. John relates Yeshua's teachings about abiding in Him in his gospel (John 15). What additional traits do those who abide in Him have according to John 15?
5. John contrasts the world or, in Paul's terms, the spirit of the world with those who abide in Him. What are some of those contrasts that either John or Paul make?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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ⁱ The NKJV Study Bible. Earl D. Radmacher, Th.D. ©1997, 2007 Thomas Nelson, Inc. P.2010