

Confidence in Conversion: *How to know we are truly saved* - Part 3
1 John 1-5

Introduction: How's your weary meter? I don't just mean being tired, I mean soul weariness, the kind that sleep alone does not fix. We are actually experiencing a time when we resonate with the Psalmist in crying out, "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. **My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord, how long?...I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood by bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.**" (**Psalm 6:2-3, 6-7**).

Perhaps before the last 6 months we could read that Psalm through the lens of our mind but not experience. But we have faced the reality of COVID, loved ones getting sick, death, fear, anger, growing violence, unpredictability, deep polarization in both politics that has spilled over to the church, forest fires, brutal heat, divisions based on race and views of social justice, government officials who are not consistent in message or example, isolation, smelly masks, no one looking at you in the eye when you walk down the street, most kids having to do school through a screen, and now another SCOTUS seat to fill. I'm telling you, if the ground opened up or if flying monkeys with roller skates descended down on us, would it really surprise. All of this has caused a lingering languish as our weariness meter is pegged at 11. We feel unsettled, a troubling even in our bones. This morning I want to remind us of this: **this feeling is real, there is a reason, and assurance that comes with it.** This week I've taken much comfort in the Sovereign Grace song "**Hide away in the love of Jesus**" (aka "Come weary saints")

Come, **weary saints**, though tired and weak
Hide away in the love of Jesus
Your strength will return by His quiet streams
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Come, **wandering souls**, and find your home
Hide away in the love of Jesus
He offers the rest that you yearn to know
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Hear Him calling your name
See the depths of His love in the wounds of His grace
Hide away

Come, **guilty ones** weighed down with sin
Hide away in the love of Jesus
The freedom you long for is found in Him
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Over the last 2 weeks we have looked at the book of 1 John with the lens of **1 John 5:13**, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*" We looked at the fact that a follower of Jesus should **examine his life often** (2 Cor. 13:5), to test ourselves to assure us that we are in Christ. We looked at the fact **false assurance is real, and tragic** for many who will stand before Christ one day, expecting to be welcomed into eternal rest, only to find wrathful rejection (Matt. 7:21-23). We talked through the fact that assurance comes through **perseverance** or endurance of our faith that is a work of God in our life (Phil. 1:6), knowing that He who

began a good work will complete it, just as the one who *caused us to be born again* has secured it for us (1 Peter 1:3). Finally, we saw that **assurance of our salvation** comes when the results of **new birth in Christ**, which comes through faith, are seen, evident, and growing. These results do not save us, but those who are saved WILL HAVE these results in life.

We looked at 2 major areas of change highlighted in 1 John. **First**, there is a change in our experience and relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We have a growing love for God, a knowledge and affection for Jesus, and walk with the Spirit as He guides, convicts, and opens our eyes to the Word of God. **Second**, we looked at how we have a new desire for *obedience and holiness, a growing hatred of sin and willingness to admit, confess, and repent of our sin*. This does not mean we are or will be perfect, but it means growth in **a desire to obey**, worship, and make much of Christ.

This morning we will conclude this portion of our study of the gospel with the **change in relationship to others and the world itself**. Since Christ and the gospel changes everything, it changes our relationships with fellow believers and identity in this world, knowing that we are now **citizens of heaven** (Phil 3:20), **strangers and exiles** on the earth (Heb. 11:13), and **sojourners** (1 Pet 2:11) passing through this world. The test question this morning is simple: **do you have a growing love for other believers** (*particularly those sitting around you today*) and **do you have a growing lack of love for this world** (*the one you are living in today*).

Supernatural Love For Other Believers

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers." 1 John 3:14

- **Love: An Old Command Made New**

*"Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an **old commandment** that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a **new commandment** that I'm writing to you, which is in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."* 1 John 2:7

Love is hard. Everyone loves, but most everyone loves himself most of all. To truly love others requires ultimate humility, seeing OTHERS as having value greater than ourselves, to see them as an image bearer of God Himself and thus worthy of love. Love typically is formed around people we think are worthy, who agree, are on our side, have something to offer, or pass whatever other unspoken test we have for them. To love like God loves is not a new command (see Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18), but something radically new happened when Jesus came and died. He called His disciples to **love each other, and by loving each other, the world would KNOW THEY WERE HIS DISCIPLES**. (John 13:34-35).

This definition of love separates all others since loving believers means we MUST LOVE THOSE WHO DIFFERENT than us, who bother us, or whom we would NEVER love without supernatural ability or motivation. In fact, the church is made up of different ethnicities, backgrounds, socio-economic make-up, ages, and genders. *"here there is not **Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.**"* (Col. 3:11, Gal. 3:28). We love fellow believers differently **BECAUSE** we have everything in common because of Christ, where we DO NOT have that with those outside of Christ!

This is admittedly **impossible**, since we *naturally love those like us*. That is why we had to have something **NEW given**:

1. **Sacrificial Love Modeled by Christ** - Jesus gave the commands to the disciples hours before He went to the cross and gave the epitome of love (Rom. 5:8). This became the foundational

example to every **husband who strives to truly love His wife** (Eph. 5:25) like Christ loved His Bride, and gave Himself up for her. When Christ died on the cross, it not only gave us an example, but the actual **power to do it, ushering a New Covenant through His blood**, including forgiveness of sin and a new heart. We also were promised the Holy Spirit.

2. **Supernatural Production through the Power of the Holy Spirit** - When we walk by the Spirit through the Word, and are filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), we have the fruit of the Spirit produced in and through us (Gal. 5:22). This means that to love through this command is **IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT NEW BIRTH AND THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**. When the world wants to engage in love, it is only an echo of true love, since it cannot love the way Christ did.

- **Love casts out hate** - It's fascinating that John defines loving each other as "Not hating his brother" (1 John 2:9-11; 4:20). This highlights its **importance and reality**. If we say we love God and yet hate our brother, we walk in darkness and are not in the light. Two things stand out here:

1. **Believers have the opportunity to work out conflict that leads to hatred** - Not only have believers been given a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18), we are called to reconcile with a brother **before we enter into worship** (Matt. 5:24). Hate comes when we allow conflict to continue on, festering in our heart until our bitterness, anger, malice, and slander produce hatred. These things a believer can **put off** (Col. 3:5-8; Eph. 5:31-32), and turn in kindness, lovingkindness, and forgiveness. Now, not that this process is difficult, takes two believers desiring to reconcile, and may take time, but it is **possible**. The inability or lack of a desire to **cease our hatred or growing hatred** is a mark of a darkened heart, not one walking in the light.

2. **Those outside of Christ have no counter to hatred** - When there is no possibility of forgiveness, or atonement for sin, there can be no reconciliation or restoration. That is why we see such hate driven actions. Anyone who stands against us is the enemy. People play the **victim, blame others for their unhappy plight, and try to remove those they feel are oppressing them**. The crazy part of all of this is they will name "LOVE" as a motive for hate, but they are deluded in their thinking. What they truly need is Christ who will take all of their shame, sin, and guilt on Himself, and wash them clean, giving them new life and new hope.

- **Love is sacrificial & misunderstood** (1 John 3:11-16)

"Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." (13, 16)

There is no love without sacrifice. We will lay our lives down for those things that we deem most valuable. Here, it is clear that what or WHO is most valuable is **fellow believers**. We lay down our life in **service, in forgiveness, covering a multitude of sin, in bearing with one another, in encouragement, admonishing, and in patience**. This presupposes that we **spend time** with each other, pursuing each other since we cannot play out "one another's" without personal knowledge and care.

But somehow this kind of love and life will be misunderstood. Christ said it that if the world hated Him, they will hate us (John 15:18). This is the height of irony, since all Jesus did was LOVE!!! He healed, sacrificed, served, and spoke the truth, and His reward was the call to crucify Him. People like to think what Jesus would do today in the midst of all the craziness. The answer: **He'd be hated**, since He would not match up or line up with people's goals or values, and they'd want to cancel, silence, or get rid of Him. Do not be surprised when the world hates us when we show true love, folks.

- **Love is active (1 John 17-18)**

One of the songs of my youth in the Christian music world was "Love is a Verb" by DC Talk (but it was way cooler since love was spell "luv"). Their point was that love should be active, not just a statement. Many people may profess love to another, but true love must manifest itself in action. The **specific way** this is seen in God's church is that is we see a **brother/sister** in need, and close our heart to them, the love of God does not abide in us! This need is primarily a **material/physical need**, but could extend into other needs as well. **Please NOTE:** The Bible always talks about working from the **inside out! God changes our heart and that dictates our hands.** Take care of yourself and home before others (1 4:9-12), and take care of those in the church before extending yourself outside of it.

- **Love is an extension (4:7-12)**

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (8)

We are infinitely loved. God loved us not only in Word (Eph. 1:4-5) but in action. He sent His Son to **be the propitiation for our sins** (10), taking on the wrath of God for us, substituting Himself for those who were enemies. If He loved us this way and much, **we also ought to love one another.** (11). This means that the only way to grow in our love for each other is to grow in our love of God, our understanding of His sacrifice, and extending that love to others.

- **Love is obedience to God (5:2)**

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love and obey His commandments"

Love has limits. We love according to how God calls us to love, full of **grace and truth.** We cannot define love by whatever we feel, or what jives with our mind and heart, but what God has laid out in His Word. In other words, it is NOT LOVING to tell someone that rebellion against God in thought or action is helpful or hopeful since it is by nature sinful. It is NOT LOVING to affirm disobedience, even if it seems REALLY DIFFICULT to do. It is NOT LOVING to call others to love if we ourselves are not willing to live it out.

Diagnostic Questions: Do we love fellow believers? Would you rather be with unbelievers or believers? Have you committed to know, love, and serve other believers with your life, so that you can love those outside well? Are there fellow believers that you are in a hateful relationship with? If you are a born again believer, what would need to change in your life to emulate love for brothers/sisters in God's church?

Supernatural Detachment from the Passing Away World

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." 1 John 2:15

- **This world is no longer our home...or goal**

Caedmon's Call had a song that said, *"This world has nothing for me, and this world has everything. All that I could want and nothing that I need."* They tried to put to words the angst of being a believer in this world, to live well in a place that we know is not ultimate, and to engage in a way that does not cling to the system or materials that it possesses. This world calls for attachment at multiple levels, from the **desires of the flesh, the desires of our eyes, and the boastful pride of life** (2:16). These were exactly what were given to Eve in the Garden in Genesis 3, and the same temptations that face us today. A

desire to have and possess what feels good, looks good, and what we believe is ours through hard work and personal accomplishment, rather than recognizing God and His glory in all things!

Does this mean a born again believer cannot have nice things in this world? Not at all. What it does mean is that we hold all things with an open hand, seeing every good gift as coming from the hand of God, receiving it with thankfulness, and knowing that if it is taken away, it does not change our joy or hope, but only our circumstances. This world is not our home or goal, since it is passing away. So we do not clutch to it with the hope that things will "**get better**" or "**go back to the way it was**", since we know that by nature it is going away. This is why the **dissonance that you feel is right and good**, but it also means that we look UP and FORWARD for hope, not to the world. But how do we function in a world that seems set against us and getting worse?

- **Through salvation, we have overcome the world**

God is greater than the world

"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

God is in us, and He will not let us go. He KNOWS the world is set against us, knows the world hates us, and He has given us the Word and the promise that we will be with Him one day as an anchor of hope (John 17:13-16, 24). We are not of this world, but are being built for the world to come.

Christ is our Intercessor while in this world - This still boggles my mind: Christ is Advocating and Interceding for us RIGHT NOW as our great High Priest (John 17:20; Heb.4:15-16). He lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25), and Advocates for us when we struggle with sin (1 John 2:1). He has not left us alone, He is not unaware of our plight, and He will see us through until we can be with Him forever.

Faith is the gift that gives victory in this world -

*"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world --- **our faith**. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:4-5)*

This is where all of these tests of assurance come full circle. It is the faith that God gifts to us that gives us victory, allowing us to see clearly the world around us, the truth of reality, and the promise of the future. It is **faith** that changes everything. **Faith that is the proof and assurance. Faith that endures until the end. Faith that allows us to see God, understand our sin, repent, follow, and obey.** We overcome the world because one who is born again is no longer of this world.

*So the train of thought goes like this: The **new birth** happens as we are brought into contact with the living and abiding word, the gospel. The **first effect** of this new birth is that we see and receive God and his Son and work and his will as **supremely beautiful and valuable**. That's faith. This faith overcomes the world, that is, it overcomes the enslaving power of the world to be our supreme treasure. Faith breaks the enslaving spell of the world's allurements. By doing that, faith leads us into **obedience with freedom and joy**. God and his holy will look beautiful and not*

burdensome. The new birth has taken the blinders off. We see things for what they are. We are free to obey with joy.¹

So are you weary this morning? Are you languishing during this time? Are you feeling out of place or anxious in this world? The answer is, a born again believer will feel this, because this world is not our home. **But our hope is in the gift of faith, that we can see God, His plan, and His work through Jesus on the cross.** Our hope fills us with joy, no matter what we face around us. We can be assured in our salvation when our lives are changed, toward God Himself, our sin, and others around us.

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/everyone-who-has-been-born-of-god-overcomes-the-world>