

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

The Gospel in Miniature

1 John 4:14-16

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I realize that not everybody is a football fan, but I am, particularly since my son has started to play at a good level. Football is often not far from my mind and when I think of football, in part I think about the simplicity of sticking to the fundamentals. A team that blocks and tackles well is a team that is often going to succeed. Success is not found in a lot of trick plays, trick plays and different kinds of antics won't give you success if you are not successful in blocking and tackling, everything depends on that foundation of the fundamentals.

In the passage that is in front of us today, we are going to see the fundamentals laid out before us in 1 John, chapter 4, I encourage you to turn there.

The success of living a good Christian life and fulfilling God's purposes in your life depend on mastering the fundamentals and sticking with them and not being distracted away from them. When the apostle John wrote this, he was in his 90's, and he was writing toward the end of the apostolic era. And after 60 years of ministry, after the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, it is interesting to me that he comes back to the fundamentals. After 60 years, he is still emphasizing the fundamentals of Christian living, of Christian thought as he writes to these people to encourage them and in order to help them know joy and holiness and assurance in their lives.

So often in counseling, people want esoteric answers and they want sophisticated things to be able to know. But the truth of the matter is that almost all our problems, all the things that distress us and trouble us will be resolved if we will bring them under the umbrella of these fundamentals that we are going to see here in 1 John, chapter 4. I am going to read verses 13-16 this morning for our text and then we will start to unpack it. 1 John 4:13-16 where John says:

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the savior of the world. Whoever that confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

What we see in this passage really is the gospel in miniature. We see it summary of the key components of the gospel in this Spirit-inspired brief four verses. He gives us a clear summary of the gospel, he gives us a means by which we can test the reality of our own profession of Christ. And understand that John is writing this in the context of people who are struggling with

a lack of joy, who are struggling with sin in their lives, who are struggling with a lack of assurance of the reality of their salvation. John goes back to the simplicity and the purity of the gospel.

Look at chapter 1:4, we have looked at this so many times in these series of messages on 1 John, but I just want it to be in front of you here today. John says:

I am writing these things so that our joy may be made complete.

Everything that he is writing in this letter is designed to promote the joy to Christians who read it. In Chapter 2:1 he says:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Knowing that they are struggling in their sanctification, knowing that everything is not as it should be in their lives and in their thinking, he says:

...I am writing these things to you so you may not sin.

And then over in chapter 5:13 he says:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Look, because it is familiar to us here at Grace Church, that all sounds so simple and so basic. When we are talking about the fundamentals of blocking and tackling in the Christian life. When we talk about these things, I would venture to say that if I could put an umbrella over all of the difficult concerns and the different things that you have brought that are heavy on your heart today, you would fall under one of those three umbrellas—you are lacking joy, you are discouraged, you are struggling with issues that have you down and you wonder where God is at in the midst of your difficulties. Or you are struggling with sin, with temptation is hot on your heels and you are finding that you are not walking as purely as you would like and you come in with a guilty conscience because there is sin in your life. It may bleed over and you say “You know, I wonder if I’m even a Christian or not, the most important question of all, I don’t know the answer to. The most important question of all, what will happen to me when I die? Am I rightly related to God or not. When I take my last breath here on earth and I take my next inhale in eternity, where am I going to be? I don’t know.”

Well, I realize that the manifestations of the particular issues that trouble you are as different as the number of people in this room, but the truth of the matter is that most of everything that concerns our hearts can fall in to one of those three umbrellas. And the point that we are making here this morning here is that it is not that difficult, it is not that complicated to get your heart straightened out, to get things so that you know joy and that you are walking in holiness and that you have an assurance of eternal life. You don’t need a big bunch of psychological self-help books, you just need to be clear on the gospel and believe it and be committed to it. And so after

60 years of apostolic ministry, writing to people who were lacking joy and holiness and assurance, John writes this passage here in 1 John 4. All of his goals, all of his aims come to a summary focus like a laser beam here in this passage as he teaches them the gospel in miniature as he summarizes it for them.

And beloved, I don't mind telling you and I don't hesitate to tell you that the encouragement, the joy, the strength for Christian living that you need is found in the simplicity of these words that he has laid out before us.

Now, the sequence of thought in the passage here just in general is this, we know that we abide in God because God has given us His Holy Spirit. Look at verse 13 which we looked at last week, he says:

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us...

How is it that we know that we have true salvation? How is it that we know that God's Spirit dwells within us and that we are walking in the light? John says we know this because God has given us His Spirit. How do we know that He has given us His Spirit? How do we know that this invisible transaction has taken place in our lives? Well, the next three verses unpack that. We know that we have the Spirit because we confess that Jesus is the Son of God and we dwell in love. Look at verses 14-16 with me, we know that we have the Spirit and verse 14 says unpacking this, unfolding it as it were, expanding on that thought he says:

...and we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

Jesus said that part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit was to glorify Him. Here in pointing out the ministry of the Spirit, it immediately unfolds in to a pointing to Christ in verse 14. How do you know that you have the Spirit? What is your confession? Do you confess that God the Father has sent God the Son to be the savior of the world?

Secondly, flowing out of that, if that confession is true, if you truly, sincerely have confessed that, you have truly been born again, and in verse 16:

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

So, how do we know? We know that we have entered in to the realm of salvation by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. How do we know that the Spirit truly abides in us? It is by this confession and by this love that flows from it. That is the general flow of thought here in this passage.

Now, as you look at it in closer detail, what you see is that this is just a simple unfolding of the very gospel itself. I am going to summarize that for you under four different points this morning. How do we recognize the gospel? Stated differently, how do we know that we are true

Christians? There are four areas of thought, four areas of life that we need to look at to consider our attitudes toward:

1. The Gospel in Miniature Points You to the Revelation of Scripture

You start with the revelation of scripture. The revelation of scripture is the first mark to prove the reality of a professed faith in Christ. Look at verse 14 with me again where the apostle John says:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

The “we” there is emphatic, who is it that is doing this testifying? John is referring to himself in the apostolic circles. He says, we, the apostles, we have seen and we testify to this truth that I proclaim to you. They saw Jesus with their own eyes and what they saw still lingered in John’s mind to produce an abiding conviction about Christ. He says we have seen this, I saw it in the past, and it continues to bear witness to my memory and to my heart and to my testimony—the Greek perfect tense there. We saw Him with our own eyes, we have this abiding conviction. I am speaking to you out of that which I saw for myself and which the 11 other apostles saw for themselves as well.

Just to give you a little refreshment on that, on what that was like for them, in what sense how ordinary their experience was while still very extraordinary, turn back to the gospel of John. I just want to give you a little context and flesh out a little bit the reality of their sight, the reality of their sensory experience of Jesus. He wasn’t writing an abstract theological paper here. He was speaking out of that which he saw, that which he himself experienced. John 13, beginning in verse 23 where it says and they are at the Last Supper here, Jesus told them that one of them was going to betray Him, look at verse 23 and notice the physical dimension of this, the personal experience of this. John is referring to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, he said:

There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved (they are right next to each other) And Simon Peter gestured to him and said to him “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking?” So he, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, said “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” And He dipped the morsel, took and gave it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot.

My only point here is that John was up close and personal with Christ and this was a matter of personal experience. And so when he says in 1 John 4 “...we have seen and we testify...” he is speaking of that which he had direct personal experience of.

Now, turn over to the gospel of John chapter 20 just to amplify this a little more. John 20:4-7 when Peter and John saw the empty tomb. They had heard from Mary and now:

The two were running together and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. And Simon Peter also came following him and he went in to

the tomb and there, he saw the linens wrappings lying there and the face cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by themselves.

They saw this for themselves, they were speaking from direct firsthand eye witness experience as they spoke.

And then one more, expanding the circle over to Thomas just a little bit in that familiar passage about Thomas and his unbelief about the resurrection. You know he said in 20:25:

Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger in the place of the nails and put my hand in to His side, I will not believe.

He had taken a hard and fast position—I won't believe unless I see this for myself. Verse 26:

Eight days later, Jesus came, stood in their midst "Peace be with you." (And He targets Thomas)

(Verse 27) And He said to Thomas "Reach here with your finger and see my hands and reach here your hand and put it in to my side and do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him "My Lord and my God."

The point of all of this is that the apostles saw Jesus up close enough that it changed their unbelief to belief. For us today, all that we know about Christ, all that we know about His salvation comes to us through that apostolic circle that Jesus commissioned. He commissioned the disciples to "Go and make disciples of all the world."—Matthew 28. And it is only through the writings of the apostles that we have this testimony, it is only through the writings of the apostles that we know the truth about Christ, the truth about atonement, the truth about salvation, the truth about eternal life. Anything else outside of those parameters is not true, it is not something we can rely on, it is not something that we can repose our trust in. The apostles have testified to us, they are the ones who have seen, they are the ones testified. And now, 2000 years later, we have the enduring impact of their testimony, we have their enduring testimony found in the writings of the New Testament, so much so that, look at this in chapter 4:6, we looked at this a few weeks ago, speaking as an apostle, John said:

We are from God, he who knows God listens to us, he who is not from God does not listen to us.

There is no gospel apart from the scriptures. And the point for all of this here this morning is that the truly redeemed heart, the person who is truly born again heeds the scriptures, he heeds and listens to the scriptures, he uses them as the final authority over all of life and belief. The scriptures are his final authority, that is the mark of a true believer and there is no gospel apart from the scriptures.

Let me remind you of what 1 Corinthians 15 says on this point. In the simplest terms the apostle Paul said:

I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

Your view of scripture is a window in to the state of your soul. Those of you that affirm the Bible, that love the Bible, that read the Bible and hunger for the truth of the Bible and it is a part of your life—that's the mark of the work of the Spirit of God in your life. That enduring love for the scriptures is a mark of true salvation.

Someone who is indifferent to the scriptures, who looks to other things for spiritual truth, appeals to other authorities, even while they affirm the Bible, they appeal to other religious writings as well and say God has also spoken here. No. God has not spoken anywhere other than in the 66 books of the Bible and you can tell the true Christian by his abiding attitude toward the scriptures.

Just by way of personal testimony, one of the surest, earliest signs that I knew that somehow my life had changed when I became a Christian was that this book became alive to me. The Bible just exploded with life. I had read it before and I never understood it. I had no real abiding interest in it at all. I didn't even own a full Bible at the time of my conversion. I would read it once or twice a year maybe when I was feeling guilty about some sin I had committed and say "Well, I'll read a couple of verses and paper over the sin that way." Well that said more about the state of my soul than my attitude toward scripture in those pre-conversion days, it said a whole lot more about the reality of my faith or lack of it than the fact that I claimed to be a Christian.

But boy, when God saved me, when Christ exploded on my heart as He did that day, the abiding result of that was a totally transformed view and a totally transformed love for this book which I previously couldn't have cared less about. All of a sudden, the burning desire all I wanted to know was what did the Bible say, how can I read the Bible, where can I find time to read the Bible, how can I make room for my studies in the midst of all of the time that I wanted to spend reading His word.

I say that only by way of illustration. If you are truly converted, you know something about that, you have something like that in your own testimony, a love for the scriptures that you did not know before, a desire for them. You see, the revelation of scripture is a mark of true conversion, it is central to the fullness of the gospel, there is no gospel apart from the Bible and the truly converted heart knows that, understands that, believes that and loves this word and submits to it, recognizes it as the authority.

That's the first point, the first point of the gospel in miniature is that it points us to the revelation of scripture.

2. The Gospel in Miniature Points You to the Role of the Son

Look at verse 14, there is so much truth packed in to this one verse. It deserves a series of messages all its own. The apostle John says “We have seen and testify...” What is it that you say as an apostle? What is it that you say, speaking from that abiding result of your experience of Christ and His commission of you, oh John—what is it that you say? What is it that you say as you would seek to promote my joy and my holiness and my assurance? Here is what he says:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

God the Father has sent His Son to be the savior of the world, that is the heart beat of apostolic witness.

Now, let’s unpack that and think about it for a little bit. Just think about that phrase, “the savior of the world” for a moment. If God sent Jesus to be the savior of the world, then at a very simple basic level, that means that the world needs saving, that means that the world is lost. Wrapped up in that phrase is the fact that the world is sinful, separated and under the judgment of God, it needs a savior. People in the world need a savior because the totality of society in its paganism and its secularism and in its false religion, the totality of society throughout the world is in rebellion against God and it is under the dominion of the devil, the evil one himself. Look over in chapter 5:19, John says:

We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

The whole world is under the slavery and domination of the devil, under the domination of the evil one, it does not have the power or even the desire to escape from that dominion. They are glad servants of the prince of darkness. They speak out of lies because their father is the father of lies and all in a wretched condition that is just waiting throbbing with the expectation and the need for God to bring judgment upon all of that rebellion against Him.

You want to know how bad it is? How bad the lostness of the world is? No different now than it was 2000 years ago. The world was so rebellious against its creator that Jews and Gentiles collaborated to crucify the Son of God. God comes in to the world, commits not one single sin, tells not one single lie, speaks the truth, manifests His glory, manifests works that no one had ever done before, opening the eyes of men born blind. What did we do with that? What did we as humanity do with that one in our midst? We crucified Him.

No. There is no spark of goodness or spark of divinity throbbing anywhere in humanity—the lights are out, the darkness is complete, the evil that was committed against Christ when the world murdered Jesus is the very same principle that is alive and throbbing today. The world needs a savior, the world is lost. And here is the issue for you and me as part of humanity, speaking about ourselves before our conversion. We were born in to that and we like the environment that we found ourselves in, we liked the darkness. And so the problem is that you and I are a part of that world that is at enmity with God, apart from salvation. It was your sin that violated His holiness. It was your sin that requires punishment, you shared in that world-

wide guilt yourself. You didn't love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. You were indifferent to His word, you shook your fist at heaven and you are going to somehow escape judgment for that? Not on your own you are not, not on your life. No. The whole point when we see the world introduced here in verse 14 is that the world needs a savior because the world is lost and under the impending judgment of God.

In that awful dark spiritual condition, what kind of wonderful words are this? What kind of other worldly language is this? In to a world that rebelled against Him, in to a world that He knew would crucify His own Son, look at verse 14 again:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

This could not be anything that comes from the merit of the world. There is no way that this is a reward for something that the world had done— “They did pretty good there, I'll send Christ.” No. God sending Christ was an act of totally unmerited grace and favor to those that He would show mercy to, in the midst of absolute undeserving, God sent His Son.

Look at 1 John 4:9-10, that context is absolutely essential for you to understand what we mean when we talk about the love of God. Look at verse 9-10:

By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son in to the world so that we might live through Him.

I who deserve judgment and death and hell and darkness and pains of conscience throughout all eternity, suddenly God has broken in and sent His Son so that I might live through Him? You should be saying to yourself “I am totally humbled by that.”

Verse 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.

Let me state it simply here this morning. Salvation was God's idea. Salvation, Jonah says, belongs to the Lord. It was God's idea, it was God's plan, it was God executing salvation on behalf of undeserving men and undeserving women and undeserving children. God in His great love, His measureless, fathomless love sent His Son in to a rebellious world so that men could be saved.

Where is the vocabulary that can adequately describe that? Where is the vocabulary to describe the great, pristine, marvelous character of the grace of God that He would show such mercy, such great, eternal mercy to such greatly undeserving damnable creatures like you and me? Where do you find language to describe that? The Father so loved the world that He sent His Son to be its savior. Galatians 4:4-5 says this:

When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoptions as sons.

Guilty under the law, redeemed from under that and transferred in to sons of the family of God, children of God. This is amazing love, this is amazing grace, this is astonishing wonder to which we can only bow and worship. And this is the truth that you go back to in your lack of joy, your lack of assurance and your struggles for sin, you go right back here and find the sanctifying power in your life.

Now, as an aside, this tells us as we talk about this role of the Son, God sending His Son, designating Him to be the savior of the world, I want you to think for just a moment and to realize that this tells us not only about the love of Christ for us, but it also tells us about the love of the Father for us. Sometimes people think that the Son is merciful, but the Father is somehow reluctant and so it is a good thing that we have Jesus because the Father is hesitant in a way that Jesus is not. That is not true at all. This is all a reflection of the love of the Father as well. There is no separation, there is no space between the love of Christ for us and the love of the Father for us. The Father desired this salvation to be accomplished. The Father loves us in equal measure as God the Son does. Go back again to the gospel of John, chapter 14, couple of passages here in the gospel of John. John 14:23:

Jesus answered and said to him "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

"My Father will love him" Jesus said. Look over at chapter 16:26 where Jesus says:

In that day, you will ask in my name and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf. For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from the Father and have come in to the world, I am leaving the world again and going to the father.

The father loves us as well. And what is the measure of the Father's love? We are about to walk in to a very holy ground here. In part you can measure the Father's love by His willingness to send His Son. In a way that we cannot fully understand, the Father and the Son had enjoyed full and perfect communion together throughout all of eternity before the world even began. In eternity past, they enjoyed a full, intimate, perfect communion. John 1:1 speaks about it as being a face to face communion one with the other:

The Word was with God and the Word was God.

They had a perfect communion together in a way that we can't begin to appreciate and understand. And Jesus alludes to this in John 16:28, look at it again:

...I came forth from the Father and come in to the world, I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.

I was with the Father, I came in to the world and now I am going back. God so loved the world that He sent His Son, sent Him from His right hand and said go in to the world and the Son gladly and willingly submitted to the father's plan. He loves the Son with the perfect love and He loves us with the perfect love. And God the Father sent God the Son to be the savior of the wretched world. Go back to 1 John 4:14 again:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

Look, I want you to forget about yourself for a moment. For some of you, I know that's hard to think that you might do. Think about this from God's perspective. You have to think about this from God's perspective in order to see it properly. From God's perspective, in the counsels of the trinity, they were enjoying this perfect face to face communion and as it were, seeing a rebellious world that deserved their judgment. Let's look at this from God's perspective. And knowing that with full knowledge, knowing that this world will crucify Christ when He went in to the world, God sent Him. God was preparing to do this so His Son could have a bride, I understand that. But the Scriptures also speak about God's love for us, God's love for you as a believer in Christ was what motivated Him to do that. He desired your good, He desired your salvation so much that that which they were under no obligation whatsoever to execute, they did out of love for you and for me. When you hear that and understand it, there should be such a broken humility of love for the Godhead that you can't begin to contain. This is the apostolic testimony, this is the revelation of scriptures speaking to the role of the Son that God sent Him to be the savior of the very undeserving world.

Let's do away with the complaining about our circumstances, let's do away with the grudging bitterness that God has not let your life work out the way that you wanted Him to do. Step back, look at it from His perspective, look at it from the glories of redeeming grace and realize that this God has manifested a quality of love and a kind of love toward you in your undeserving that simply can't be adequately expressed in human words. God loved us and sent His Son, God loved us, sinners, undeserving, wretched, rebels, He loved us and sent His Son—not an angel, not a proxy, God Himself came in to this world in human flesh to die an ignominious death for the sake of your salvation. I bow my head in humble regret of the way that I have at times complained about the ordering of His providence in my life, don't you? In light of what we are talking about, what man can offer complaint in light of his sins? Our sins will disqualify us from complain, but the love of God? What man can offer complaint in light of the love of God, this kind of love that sends a savior for us.

Now just a theological point here. We have addressed this when we talked about 1 John 2:1, so if I say things here that you wonder about, go back to those messages, I can only touch on it now.

Some people think that when we talk about Christ, when the Bible talks about Christ as the savior of the world, they say that what the Bible means by that is that Jesus came in to the world with the desire to save every man without exception, that His purpose was to save every man without exception and the only reason that some people are not saved is because those men refused to believe in Him. Well, that's not what scripture would teach at all. If Christ came in to this earth with the intention to save everyone without exception, He was a miserable failure

because most men, according to Matthew 7, the majority are not going to be saved. And so the question is where did it fail? Was it on man's part or it was because Christ was not powerful enough to do what He wanted to do? Did men frustrate the purpose of the atonement by their unbelief? No, Christ came to save His own, Christ came to save His church, not everyone by the divine prerogative of God, not everyone was included in that saving intention of His.

So what does it mean when we say that Jesus is the savior of the World? Here is what it means, not that He was trying to save everyone because not everyone got saved and God accomplishes His purposes. No, what this means is that Christ is the only savior of the world, He is the only savior the world has. What it means is that He is the savior of those Jews and Gentiles. Although Christ was Jewish, His saving mission expands beyond the Jewish race. And so in today's terms, Whites and Blacks, Asians and Hispanics, no one is excluded by geographic or racial boundaries from the sound of the gospel. No one is excluded by racial identity from being saved by the work of Christ. We preach the same gospel and the same savior to all men without distinction about their racial identity.

Back in the gospel of John again, John, chapter 4, you remember the story of the Samaritan woman at the well and she went back and she testified to her fellow kinsmen, the Samaritans, that mixed race about her interaction with Jesus. And in John 4:40:

When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them and He stayed there two days and many more believed because of His word. (And listen to what they said.) They were saying to the woman "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the savior of the world."

Very significant for that to come off the lips of Samaritans because they were not Jews, they were a mixed race, Jew and Gentile. And, notice that in John 4:9, the Samaritan woman said:

"How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman." For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.

Now all of a sudden, Samaritans are seeing this Jew saying He is the savior of the world. His saving mission extends beyond His own race to people scattered throughout the world—all men without distinction of racial and geographic interests are presented the same savior. In Revelation, chapter 5, as they are worshipping the Lamb, they say:

Worthy are you to take the Book and to break its seals, for you were slain and you purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Every tribe, every tongue, every people, every nation somehow represented in the salvation around the throne of God, but not every man without exception, there will be people in hell. And so He did not save every man who ever lived, He is not the savior of the world in that sense, but He saves men out of every tribe and tongue and nation, the whole world will be represented around the throne of God.

So the role of the Son in this gospel in miniature is to save men from sin. And if you, understanding that role, look at your life and say “I believe that, I receive that, I welcome that, I affirm that. All of my trust reposes in Christ alone for my salvation because that was His role of the savior of the world and I am one of those that He came to save and I trust Him and I believe in Him.” Whatever else is happening in your life, when you can affirm that out of the depths of your heart, your salvation is real no matter what else you see happening. That exclusive trust in the saving Son of God is the mark of true salvation--that is the point of the gospel.

3. The Gospel in Miniature Points You to the Response of Submission

The response of submission is what we see here. The gospel requires a response of faith and submission to the person of the Son as He is revealed in scripture. Look at chapter 4:15. In light of this apostolic declaration that the Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world, how do I become a partaker of that? Verse 15:

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

This is no mere theological confession, this is not just talking about a factual statement, but this is a statement of personal trust in Christ. To confess Him means that you genuinely acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God in obedient submission to Him. “I recognize my sin,” you say to yourself, “I know that I am a sinner, I know that I deserve the judgment of God and I see that the scripture holds up Christ to be the savior of the world. I submit to Him, I receive Him, I want to obey Him.” That’s the response of submission that John is talking about here, it is a genuine acknowledgement, there are no games any more, there is no qualification to your submission to Him, your whole heart has been revolutionized in order to bow the knee to this one.

In Acts chapter 22, we won’t take the time to look there, Paul was describing his own conversion experience on the road to Damascus, and as he is describing it, he says:

When I saw the Lord, I fell down on my knees and I said “What shall I do, Lord?”

That’s the kind of confession that we are talking about here, that kind of unconditional submission to the Lord Jesus Christ that says, “I submit to you, I confess you as the Son of God, as the Son of God you have full authority and in your role as the Son of God you came to be the savior of the world. I bank all of my eternal hope on you and I gladly bend my knees without reservation. The totality of my life, whatever that means, I hand to you.” That’s the response of submission that is being discussed here in verse 15, that personal confession that the savior of the world came to save me in particular. Whoever confesses Jesus like that gives evidence that God dwells in him and he in God. Look at verse 15 again:

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God...

The Son of God in the context that everything that has been discussed here in verse 4, the Son of God whom the Father sent, the Son of God who loved us, the Son of God, the propitiation for our sins, that Son of God is what you are confessing. You are confessing it in the flow of the entire point of John's passage here.

One more point:

4. The Gospel in Miniature Points You to the Result of Sanctification

The gospel transforms us, true salvation transforms us. Look at verse 16 where it says:

We have come to know and we have believed the love which God has for us. God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

One of the transforming results of true salvation is this love that comes out, love for God, love for Christ, love for God's people that we have been talking about for the past few weeks. Here is what I want you to see, to remind you based on what we have been talking about today, that the love of God, when you think about the love of God you must, you must, you must not think about it in terms of whether your current earthly circumstances are favorable or not. You can't think about the love of God in terms of the current circumstances in your life—that messes so many people up. Circumstances go haywire and where is God and why doesn't He love me? That's all wrong, that's so wrong. Look, you were born for trouble like the sparks fly upward from the fire. Trouble and sorrow are going to come to us—this is life. You don't define the love of God horizontally by what you see going on around us. You define the love of God strictly in terms of the cross and when you look at the cross you see the love of God is there without question, undeniably showing forth His intention for good for you and you interpret your circumstances in light of that.

And so what does it mean to dwell in the love of God as he talks about here? What does it mean to abide in the love of God? To abide in the love of God means that (listen to me carefully) to abide in the love of God as he is talking about here means that you find your spiritual rest in the cross. You find your spiritual rest in the fact that God provided His own Son as the sacrifice which would turn His wrath away from your sin. To abide in His love means that all of your thinking, all of your affections are framed by the cross because that's what he was just saying in verse 10, the love of God is found in that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. You consciously remind yourself of the love of God as it is revealed in the saving gospel and you realize that God has loved us not just with the cross, but He has loved us enough to come and indwell us and to abide in us. Look at the end of verse 16:

God is love. The one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

It was not just a historical thing 2000 years ago at the cross, the reality of our salvation is that this holy God has come to abide with us.

And so when genuine conversion happens, love, sanctification, separation from sin flows out of that life. If you see something of that in your life, in the context of confessing Jesus as the savior who came to save you, beloved, the Spirit of God is at work in your life, the Spirit of God has begun a work, the Spirit of God will continue that work, the Spirit of God will perfect that work and therein is the joy of the gospel in miniature. You see these things in yourself, I do, imperfectly and I marvel at it when I see it and I rejoice and you should too if you see these things and affirm them and embrace them.

But for those of you who have never received Christ in this way, I ask you again, Sunday by Sunday, I ask you and I invite you as an ambassador of Christ, repent of your sin and come to this all sufficient savior whose glory is manifested in the gospel as we have seen it here in this passage here this morning.

Let's pray. Father, may those who do not know Christ turn from sin and put their faith in Him and be saved. For those of us that know you, we thank you for your measureless love which you have poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us. We thank you for the gospel and we humble our hearts before the unspeakably great act of generosity of undeserved grace that you shed upon us in Christ. We love you, we submit to you and we trust you. In Jesus' name. Amen.