

Captain Richard Philips nearly lost his life. The former captain of the Maersk Alabama cargo ship was held hostage by Somali pirates in April 2009. The pirates boarded the ship and eventually take him prisoner. The film "Captain Philips" tells the story. Early in the movie, the captain drilled his crew on preventive measures against pirates. There were multiple locked doors from one deck to another. They had a fire hose pattern that would spray out into the ocean to prevent the pirates from getting near. And they had an action plan in place should the pirates board.

The Captain has the crew go through the pirate prevention drill. Everyone had a job to do; securing doors; notifying the navy; sounding the alarm or getting the hoses ready. But in the movie, nobody wanted to do the drill. They reluctantly went to their posts and half-heartedly carried out their responsibilities. The captain times them and gives some encouragement. But the next morning he wants them to do it again so they get better. They hesitate and grumble a little. "Why do we have to do this drill?" They casually stroll to their posts when all of sudden, their radar picks up two small objects approaching the ship. They identify them as pirates coming to hijack them. The alarm sounds. When the news spread that pirates were coming, what do you think happened to the crew's motivation factor? It went through the roof. From casually complacent, they suddenly devote all their energies to ensuring the ship is as pirate ready as it can be. There was no more asking "why do we have to do this drill" when its usefulness became a matter of life and death. We might ask a similar question about our walk with Christ.

Why do we have to walk closely with Jesus now? We've got many years to live. Jesus doesn't seem to be coming back anytime soon. We've got a lot going on in our lives. We're busy. We're involved in many good things. We'll get around to walking closely with Jesus when we have more time; when things settle down; when this semester is over; when the kids are older; when we're done with school; when we retire.

But what if your time is up this month? What if Jesus' returns in December? What if the path you're travelling leads you away from Jesus? In John's writings, he says Christians need to abide in Christ. He gives us Jesus' command to abide in Him in John 15. In John's first letter he repeats the command or references this need over and over again.

Abiding in Christ means to walk closely with Him; depend on Him for life, strength, direction and hope. **We abide in Christ when we continue in a daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer,**

**obedience and joy.** Do we have to worry about this now? In today's passage from his first letter **John shows**

**Christians why we must abide in Christ.** He will uncover why abiding in Christ is much more than the practices of a good citizen. He will show why abiding in Christ is not an optional activity for the Christian. It's a matter of life and death just like the crew practicing that drill turned out to be a matter of life and death. Today, I want you to see three reasons why we must abide in Christ now and then show you some areas of our lives that might need to change so we can abide in Him. Finally, I'll give you an opportunity to respond to God and His Word.

### **1 John 2:28-3:10 ESV**

[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. [29] If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

[3:1] See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [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. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

[4] Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. [5] You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. [7] Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. [8] Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. [10] By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

### **Why must Christians abide in Christ?**

**Reason #1 – So that when Jesus returns, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame.** Christians need to abide in Christ so we will have confidence at Jesus' coming. John uses the word "parousia" for coming. It referred to the personal visit of a King or Emperor. So the King was coming. Jesus is coming. This expectation that Jesus will physically return to earth was part of the overall message from the beginning.

When is Jesus' coming? Well, last week we saw John declare that it's the last hour because many antichrists have come. We live in the last hour before the Antichrist comes. Then Jesus returns and will strike down Satan and the Anti-Christ. Then He will oversee the Day of Judgment.

Many will fear when this day comes. Those who rejected Jesus or disbelieved in God's existence or denied Jesus' identity as God the Son, will suddenly realize their error. They will face His righteous judgment. But for those who abide in Christ now, that day can bring joy. It will not be a time to look for a rock to crawl under or a cave in which

to hide. Those who abide in Christ will have “confidence;” to speak out loud when lots of others are around. It is the confidence that things will turn out well and that the coming of the all-powerful king is something to look forward to.

It will be like going into a storm with confidence because you have all the right gear to get through it. It will be like facing a very difficult written test, but with anticipation because there you are well prepared. It will be like running up a steep hill in a race. But with months of preparation in training and running, you look forward to the hill.

When Jesus returns with power and glory, He will dazzle the world like nothing it has ever seen. His blazing holiness, shining purity and unquestioned authority will drive many to hide their faces from Him. But those who abided in Christ will look at our Lord face to face. We will see Him as He is. We will not shrink back in shame.

In CS Lewis’ book, the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the character Edmund gets seduced by the white witch. He betrays his own brother and sisters. Eventually he is rescued and must face the Lion Aslan, who serves as the Christ figure through the Chronicles. Edmund hangs his head in shame. He had not up to that point been on Aslan’s side. He had dabbled with the white witch and her power. But then he’d seen her brutality and evil. Aslan speaks seriously to Edmund who then comes to his brother and sisters for reconciliation.

If we don’t abide in Christ, we may face a conversation with Jesus like Edmund had with Aslan. I don’t want to shrink back from Jesus when I first see Him. I don’t want to regret that I planned on getting serious about my faith 2 weeks after his return. I want to look at Him with courage – not because of what I have done but because of what he empowered me to do. I want to look upon the king who didn’t just stay in heaven and shout words of encouragement. I want to look upon the king who came down beside me in the battles of life, defeated my greatest enemies and gave me the strength to finish the journey. I want to please my king. So to look forward to that day with confidence, I/you/we need to abide in Him now. But there’s another reason why we must abide in Christ.

**Reason #2 - We are God’s children. (3:1-3)** If you abide in Christ, you are God’s son or God’s daughter. How did this happen? God gave us an inhuman kind of love. Chapter 3, verse 1 - “See what kind of love the Father has given us!” This kind of love is unlike any other love. It’s the lavishing love of a delighted father who desires to shower his children with gifts and encouragement. Some of us can relate to this kind of love if we had loving fathers. But to many readers in that day, this was an unusual love, Fathers didn’t show a lot of love to their children in the Greek/Roman

culture. The father could decide if the baby lived or died. The father was distant and often away. He left care of the little ones to the mother and her maids. But this Father gave us a unique kind of love.

He didn't give us this love so we could just gain the title "child of God." Get that on a business card – child of God – anyone can print a business card claiming something, but are they really what they claim? He actually made us his children. He adopted us. He brought us into His family. "See what kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; *and that is what we are!*" We are already God's children. That's why the world doesn't know us. It doesn't understand or get God. So that's why people from the world may react strangely when they meet one of God's kids serious about following Christ.

Yet being God's children on earth at this time is not the limit of our close relationship with Him. We have not arrived at the end of the journey with God by coming to Christ. Look at 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." Somehow, when Jesus comes back we will be changed instantly. Right now, we struggle with sin, sometimes believe lies or errors, suffer with weakness and physical imperfection, and struggle to remain filled with the Spirit. But then we will morally without sin, intellectually without falsehood or error, physically without weakness or imperfections and filled continually with the Spirit. How this change actually works, John does not say. There is a mystery of how this will all happen. But it is an incredible hope and something to look forward to infinitely more than even Christmas morning or a wedding day or baby's arrival.

So since we're God's kids, we need to purify ourselves before we meet Him says verse 3. We do that by abiding in Christ. We continue in that daily personal relationship with Jesus through trust, prayer, obedience and joy. When we walk closely with Him He works in our lives and hearts to root out sin and change our character to become more and more like him. Then when he returns we will not shrink back as one who is unprepared for Jesus' arrival. We will look forward to the completion of His purifying work in our lives.

We need to abide in Christ so we will have confidence when Jesus comes back. We need to abide in Christ because we are right now God's kids.

**Reason #3 - We must abide in Christ because that's what God's kids do. (3:4-10)** God's children walk with Him. Like Father, like son or daughter. Like older brother Jesus, like younger brother or sister. John weaves our need to

abide in Christ through a contrast between those who practice sin and those who practice righteousness in verses 4-10. He begins by unmasking sin for what it really is. Verse 4. "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness." It seems that those who left the churches John wrote to claimed they were without sin even though their lives went against God's holy law. It seems that they claimed that it didn't really matter how you lived. As long as you had the right knowledge or understanding, you were of the true faith. But John unmasks this deception. Everyone who practices sinning practices lawlessness. This is not where God's people want to be. Those who practice lawlessness actually sin against God. Sin defies the almighty God and His moral law. If someone claims to be a Christian and a child of God, why would they defy their Father?

Besides that, Jesus' came to take away sins in verse 5. You might have read how John the Baptist introduced Jesus – Behold, the lamb of God *who takes away the sin of the world*. One reason Jesus came was to abolish sins. God demonstrated his opposition to sin with Jesus' appearing. And Jesus Himself was without sin. He never sinned in his human flesh even though he faced all kinds of temptations.

So no one who abides in Jesus, the sinless Savior, sins according to verse 6. The one who sins reveals that he doesn't see or know Christ. It's just the natural course of things for God's kids. Instead of practicing sinning and lawlessness, God's kids who abide in Jesus do not sin.

But how can this be? There are Christians in this room right now who take seriously the call to abide in Christ who sinned this past week. So how can John say this especially when he said back in 1:10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us." Our Bible translations try to address this dilemma by translating 3:6 like this: "No one who abides in him *keeps on sinning*." So those who abide in Christ don't sin as a habit. They don't live in sin or a lifestyle of sin. They may stumble occasionally but they don't keep on sinning. There is some truth in that.

But it's not what John wrote. He wrote "No one who abides in him sins." It reminds us a little of 2:1 – "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." Is John preaching the possibility of sinless perfection here? I don't believe he is. But we should not take that as huge relief. I think John is trying to get his readers to see that sin has no place in God's family. We don't sin here. We don't tolerate sin in this family. He might make these stark statements to prevent them from doing what we might want to do – justify our sin; stay in our sin; trust Jesus for forgiveness but never intend to leave that pet sin behind.

John emphasizes that sin and the Christian are utterly incompatible. To sin is to deny Christ and to reveal we're not walking with Him. Christ is a sinless person and his saving work is fundamentally opposed to it.

So don't be deceived, John says in verse 7. Don't buy it when people say "it's really no big deal if you sin." Living righteously reveals righteousness not just talking about righteousness. In the Bible, someone is righteous if they live an upright, honorable and right life in God's eyes. Jesus lived the perfectly righteous life. Remember back in 2:1 John said "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. God's children depend on Jesus to live righteous lives.

And if in your heart or mind, you're hearing thoughts like sin really is not important, we might be revealing whose we are. Verse 8 - *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.* Those involved in sin in an ongoing way are *of the devil*. That doesn't mean this only refers to Satanists. Those who sin are of the devil in the sense of doing what he does, sin. Or they are of the devil in that they respond to the devil's whispers. Just as a Christian lives under the influence of God living in us, so sinners live under the influence of the devil.

The devil sinned from the beginning – when he tempted the first couple; and tempted Cain to murder his brother. The devil works to undo God's work by turning people aside from doing God's will. He tempts to invite people to sin. He labors to hinder God's work. He deceives, oppresses and harms people and the church. He accuses people before God. Morally, he entices people to sin. Physically, he inflicts disease. Intellectually, he seduces into error. He assaults our soul, body and mind.

But Jesus appeared to destroy his works. Second half of verse 8 – *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* The devil sins. The Son of God saves. Through Jesus' coming and atoning work, Jesus dealt with the problem of human sin and destroyed the work of the devil. So we must not be led astray by those who claim sinful behavior does not matter. Those who sin are of the devil. Those who live righteously are of Christ.

John draws this all to a conclusion in verses 9 and 10. When I took a course on 1<sup>st</sup> John last Spring, the scholar teaching us said "1 John 3:9 is the most shocking verse of this letter." *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.* " But the ESV translation

has done the same thing it did in verse 6. The text literally says “No one born of God sins . . . and he cannot sin because he has been born of God.”

So what is John doing here? Well, notice that he calls believers “born of God.” Today, we determine sonship by DNA testing. In the ancient world if your father was a farmer, you became a farmer. Not only did you become a farmer, you learned farming from your father. So who you were was demonstrated by what you do. So if you are a son or daughter of God, you become like God. You learn about how to live life from your Father God. Since the Father does not sin, the sons and daughters do not sin.

This means sins is inadmissible, inexcusable and intolerable. John puts it together this way to expose sin as shocking and reprehensible for God’s children. It’s not done here. But when you do, you have the Gospel. Though we’ll never be completely free from sin until eternity, John exhorts his readers and us to the ideal.

Whose you are is identified by your actions. Those born of God do not sin. So whose sons are those who do sin? Verse 10 – “By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God nor is the one who does not love his brother.” Why must we abide in Christ? Verse 4-10 show us that’s just what God’s kids do.

We must also abide in Christ so that we will have confidence when Christ returns and because God loved us with this unique Fatherly love. But it’s a lot easier to say this than do it.

### **What might need to change to encourage us to a more active and consistent abiding in Christ?**

**Our perspective** – We need to look at life from a more eternal and less immediate driven perspective. We don’t just live for today. Jesus is coming. We need to be purified. We want to look forward to his return with confidence. So think for eternity not just today.

**Our understanding of our identity** – You’re not only the child of your biological parents. You are a child of God now that has been shown lavish love of God. You are not just called God’s kid, you are God’s kid now. Like a child who sees the great character, love and blessing of a good Father, as God’s child, we want to honor Him. We want to respond to all the love shown us. we want to receive His approval.

**Our attitude towards your sin** needs to move from casual and complacent to urgent and grievous. We must encourage one another to not tolerate sin but move towards more holiness.

**Our priorities** may need to move from “I’ll give God time if I can squeeze Him in to I’ll give Him what’s first.” I understand that this can be difficult – with little ones around where you’re functioning on fumes; with multiple exams and papers due; with pressures at work; with debilitation of illness; with the emotion of losing a loved one. But in all of these, instead of just trying to push through them in our own strength until we can get time alone with God, bring Christ into them. “Lord, give me your strength to provide this child with the care and attention they need today. Give me supernatural strength to hold my temper and make wise decisions.”

“Lord – guide me in this meeting; guard the words of my mouth; give me strength to glorify you in whatever today brings. Spirit, help me to live one day at a time. On this bed of sickness, I turn to you for help. Abide with me through these long hours. Enable me to pray.”

By abiding in Christ, you’re preparing to meet Jesus’ with confidence. You’re acting out who you really are; God’s child. You’re doing what God’s kids do. Keep going. Keep doing the unseen and unnoticed that contribute to abiding in Him. Keep praying. Your Father sees and hears and responds and will see you through.

If the Holy Spirit revealed to you that you do not abide in Christ; that you actually make a practice of sinning – He calls you to turn to Jesus. Renounce that way of living. Renounce depending on yourself. Turn to Christ – trust Him completely for forgiveness – begin the walk of abiding in Him.