

# God's Love Changes Us

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, cool. So we are continuing on in our series in 1 John. For those of you who like to read along in your Bibles, we're going to be in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 28. We're going to be going through chapter 3 verse 10. It's a semi-long text, but I think you're going to really enjoy what we talk about today. This is what we're going to be getting into is one of the things in my early 20s when I realized this truth was paradigm shifting for me. It really changed my understanding of what it means to live for Christ and to live in him. And so I'm excited.

I've really been praying that you experience this as well and are blessed by it. So let's start reading 1 John chapter 2 verses 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. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us. Another translation says, see what kind of love the Father has lavished on 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. 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous.

[ 2 : 0 0 ]      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. 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. 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. So we know John, the apostle who wrote this. He is known as the apostle of love, which was a title that I'm really jealous of. I would like to be the apostle of love, especially when I was a teenager. But John is not the apostle of like cheesy puppy love, right? Which was kind of like my deal when I was a teenager. That's really what I was on about. And he's an apostle. He knows the love of God and he has this fatherly love, this fatherly love for the bride of Christ, this fatherly love for the church. And he shows it in the way he writes. There's this care and support and sacrifice and protection that he has for the church. And it just oozes through as we read this wonderful letter. And he's like this good dad because good dads, that's what they want. They want for their children not to be fearful, but to be confident and courageous. They want to be able to move forward into the future and look into the future and stand stable and confident, unwavering, not scared. And so what is he getting at here in this passage? Well, he kind of gets out what makes us anxious and scared. Because really, oftentimes when we have anxiety and we're fearful, it's because, man, one, we don't have control over the future. There's no guarantees that everything is going to be all right as we deem what all right is, right? And so, man, we think of our kids and, man, we would like to guarantee.

We would love to have a guarantee that, hey, everything's going to be okay and try to ensure that, right? But we can't. We can't mitigate it for our kids, right? We can't sit down at the breakfast table before they start the day and just, you know, pull out the psychic hotline or horoscopes and be like, hey, little Billy, you have nothing to worry about. Guess what it says here for you, you know? You are going to meet your soulmate today. That's what the horoscope says. And you're also going to find this lucrative, perfect career. Go out and take control of your destiny. It's going to be okay. That's not what a good dad does, right? No, we don't do that, right? What we do is actually along the way, we teach and we prepare them for what we know that they're going to need, right?

We give them what they need, not what they want. And that's what John is doing here. He knows what's coming and doesn't want them to live in fear. He actually wants to prepare them for the future, for this big moment, actually the biggest moment that's ever going to transpire. And this is what it says in 1 John 2 verses 28. He says, little children, abide in him. Him is talking about Jesus.

Little children, abide in Jesus so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming. And this is what he's saying, man, guys, live like Jesus is about to show up because one day he will. This is his big instruction right from the get-go. Man, abide in Jesus. My little children, I want you to know this. If you can take one thing away from this whole letter, abide in Jesus, that's what it's about. And what does that mean? Well, it really is pretty much what it sounds like, right? It just means to remain in Christ. It means to remain in him, continue in Jesus, continue in the faith, continue belonging to him. Now, if you're here and you're exploring Christianity, this concept might be new. It may even sound a little bit strange, and I totally get that, right? But the basic premise for us, whether you know Christ or don't know Christ, is that when God saves us, he unites us to his son. He unites us to Jesus. And this same writer, the apostle John elsewhere, he gives us this really good picture metaphor. He describes it as us being grafted into a tree. We're a branch that's kind of grafted into a tree. That's what it looks like to abide in Jesus.

This branch, we are being united. We are abiding in something that is greater than us that gives us life and makes us bear fruit. And that is basically what we're going to be talking about today.

[ 6 : 39 ] What it looks like to abide in Jesus. And it's important because, as John points out, Jesus is going to come again one day. And that is a big moment, the biggest moment that we need to be ready for. Because when Jesus appears again, it's a day of judgment. Later on in chapter 4, this same letter, it talks about Jesus' coming being a day of judgment. Now you might say, wait, wait, wait, wait, hold on. I know this Jesus. Jesus doesn't judge. I thought Jesus was the good guy.

I thought he was the nice guy. I thought he was the one that wants to be everyone's friend. And I will say, man, no doubt Jesus is the personification of love and kindness and goodness that we see in the gospel accounts. And we come to know him in the Bible. But he is also a righteous God. He is also the righteous one. And he is coming again one day to judge the world.

Acts 10.42 says this, And he, Jesus, commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. Man, John, I thought you were the apostle of love. What's happened here? This doesn't sound very loving. What's going on? And this sounds pretty harsh, but actually when you think about what love does, love actually loves the truth. It doesn't run away from the truth. It doesn't shy away from the truth. Love loves the truth. I teach my kids when I'm grilling, I'm cooking out or I'm using the grill. I teach them, hey, you need to stay away from the grill.

Don't put your hands on the grill. That's a good truth. They need to learn. I don't keep that from them. Why? Because I don't want them to get hurt. I don't want them to get burned. And keeping them from touching the grill and playing around the grill doesn't make me a bad dad. You know, having those boundaries in place doesn't make me a bad dad. Actually, it makes me a good dad. I'm a responsible dad in that moment. See, I would venture to say to you that if you know the truth and keep quiet, regardless of what the consequences may be, that you really aren't a loving person. Right? So if really what you're doing is you're just loving yourself more than others. If you know something that someone needs to know, because if by not obeying that truth, they could put themselves in danger. Actually, what you're doing is you're just loving yourself.

You know, maybe your motivation is like, oh man, but I really enjoy their friendship. And if I speak up to them, I might lose that friendship and I don't want to do that. Or I want them to just like me and I don't want that to change. And that's not really about you caring for them and that friendship.

[ 9 : 19 ] That's really about you. But John, man, he's this apostle of love and he loves these people in the church. And so he shoots them straight. Jesus is coming again one day and it's going to be a great day for those who abide in Jesus and follow him. And you know what? It's not going to be a great day for those who aren't saved and aren't abiding in Jesus. And so he's imploring them, guys, abide in Jesus. Keep the faith. Be rooted in your relationship with him. He knows that if we do that, we won't run and hide on that day of judgment when Jesus comes. We're not going to shrink away. We're not going to be scared. When I was a kid, my dad would come home like clockwork at 4.30 every single day from work.

And we would be playing at different parts of the house. But as soon as we heard that door open as little kids, we would all run to the door and wrap our arms around our dad. You know, at that age, it was probably around his legs. Daddy's home. Yeah, I was just so excited to see him. His coming was a thing of joy. It was an anticipation that we wanted. Unless I was a naughty boy that day, right?

Which would never happen, Haley can tell you. Sometimes I was naughty. Sometimes I got in trouble. And my mom would often say, probably a lot have heard this, okay, when your dad gets home, he's going to take care of this. I'm going to tell him he's going to take care of this. And so my anticipation for the rest of the day wasn't one of joy and excitement. Actually, I was not looking forward to my dad coming in that moment, right?

Because I knew I was going to be disciplined. I knew I was going to be punished. I knew I was going to get in trouble. And so when he came home, I didn't run to him. I actually shrank back. Why? Because during that time, my actions didn't line up with my dad's expectations for me as his son.

So I knew when he got home, punishment was a coming. 1 John 4.18 says this, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment.

[11:19] Fear has to do with punishment. And whoever fears has not been perfected in love. Guys, fear, if we're afraid, if we're shrinking back, that's what we're believing about God. Fear has to do with punishment.

We're really scared that if God's going to show up, we believe that we're going to be punished. So if confidence for that big day comes from abiding in Jesus, here's the question for us. How do we do that? How do we abide in Jesus? It's one thing to say it. It's another thing to really understand what that means, right? How can we have confidence that we are abiding? And how do we know we're keeping the faith and won't be facing punishment when he comes and when we stand before him? And in the passage we read, John gives us this amazing answer. And here's what I can understand. This is what we're going to be camping at for the rest of the sermon. John gives us two things in the first part of chapter three that we read, the first section of verses and then the second section of verses. And he shows us what grace is. And grace is our understanding of God's undeserved love that he pours out to us, right?

And so this understanding of grace, it's like, I want to give you this picture of a railroad track. And every railroad track has these rails that run parallel to themselves, right? But they're tied together, right? They're held in tension and they're tied together. So grace is like this rail track of these two rails. And one rail is acceptance grace and the other rail is empowering grace. And we need to have our wheels firmly on both and moving along. And when we do that, we will find that we do have confidence for the day of Jesus. So let's start by looking at acceptance grace. What do I mean by acceptance grace? Well, 1 John 3, 29, it says this, if you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. Okay, it's important to note that what John isn't telling us is that practicing righteousness makes us righteous. That's not what he says. It doesn't say that, right? There's a huge difference between practicing righteousness and being righteous, all right? And it's easy to get that wrong because if we approach this thing as like, oh, all I got to do is practice righteousness so I become righteous, really that's not the gospel that we believe. That is moralism, right? It's this thing that, well, I just need to act a certain way. And if I do it over and over again, at some point,

God is going to accept me for what I've done. And if you believe that gospel, at the end of the day, do you really need Jesus to die for your sins? If you can really earn your way into heaven by practicing righteousness, do you really need Jesus to die for your sins? No, of course you don't in that understanding of the gospel, which is a false gospel. And what John is saying is that those who practice righteousness, it doesn't make them righteous. Actually, it's just showing the fruits of being born again, right? He says, everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

That little phrase at the end, has been born of him, that's where we need to run to and rest in. That's a big conditional thing in that whole statement. We have to be born of God. And being born of God is this amazing picture of salvation. That's through faith in Jesus, like Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, he's like, unless you're born a second time, you'll never see the kingdom of heaven, right? Which is kind of a weird thing to say, right? It's like born a second time. And Nicodemus asked the obvious question, like, okay, how do I do that? Do I enter into my mom's womb another time? And then I'm like, rebirth? I was like, I'm not sure how I do that. I don't know if you noticed. I'm a, you know, if I tried to do that, that just wouldn't work out. The physics of that is absolutely impossible, right? So your first birth happened because some point a couple adults got together and got busy, right? That's what happened. But the second birth is a lot different.

[ 15 : 29 ] The second birth, it's a spiritual birth. It's not a physical birth. It's also referred to as regeneration. We know that as regeneration in the Bible, or it's called being born again. These are things that we know and understand and believe in our Christian faith. And that in our second birth, God brings us into life through him, through his work. But in doing that, he brings us into life, and in doing that, he makes us his children. And this is what I love. This is the most beautiful thing in the whole world. 1 John 3, verse 1. See what kind of love the Father, God the Father, has given to us, or lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. And here's my second point. Our confidence comes from knowing that we are God's children. Again, this love is not earned. It says it is given. See what kind of love the

Father has given to us? It's not an earned love. It's a given love. And when we're born of God, when we're saved by him, yes, he declares us righteous and just in Christ, but he also adopts us through Jesus and what he did into his family. We become his sons and his daughters. It's a relational reality.

He makes us his kids. Again, it's not by our efforts, but it's by God's grace, his amazing love. And we now belong to God, not as slaves, not as some like second-class citizens who mope around and try to earn his love, prove that we belong in his family. No, we're his precious kids that he loves.

We're his precious kids that he continues to pour his grace out on over and over and over again. You know, children, all of us, we came into the world through someone's agony and pain. All our moms went through agony and pain for us to be born, right? And we are God's children because Jesus went through agony, the agony of the cross. 1 John 4, 10 says, and this is love, not that we have loved God, but that God, he, he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation or the atoning sacrifice for our sin. That's what love looks like. That's how we understand God's love. It costs God everything to adopt us. He didn't just step back and say, oh, you know what? I want to save some people. I need some more kids in my family. You know, wave a magic wand about it being, you're in, you're in, you're in.

No, before he did that, he had to pay the ultimate price. And I hope what you guys are hearing is that you see that points to the lavish love of God. It wasn't a cheap love that was easy for him to make us his sons and his daughters. It was a love that cost him everything. He sent his only son to die in your place and to die in my place so that through Jesus Christ and faith in him and what he did is sacrifice for us. We can be his kids. That is an amazing thing. He didn't save us because we had special talents, right? I don't know if you guys saw the movie Blades of Glory from way back in the day and it starts out with this concept of this billionaire running around to different orphanages and trying to find out who the superstars in the orphan world were and he pulled them out and he just used them to make millions of millions of dollars off of us as sports superstars. No, it's not like God looked at us and said, oh, you're the good guys. You're the really talented guys. I'm pulling you in because it could benefit me. No, it's more like my friends, the Wellpley's adoption.

[19:17] And they adopted this child and they knew his name. His name was Ezekiel and they fell in love with him and they wanted Ezekiel, this little baby. And so they spent so much money and so much time and so much energy. And sometimes I would be like, gosh, is this really worth it? But if he spoke to them, even though they hadn't received him into their arms yet, for them it totally was. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of dollars spent in the process of adopting him. But you know what?

Because of love, man, it was nothing. And that the day they received Ezekiel into their arms was a day of rejoicing and happiness. And that's more like God's love for us. That's more of the picture of adoption we get. Because Ezekiel, he didn't have any special talents. There was no guarantee or promise that he was going to, you know, be a multi-millionaire that would turn around and bless them with that or repay his debts. Oh, it cost you, you know, \$30,000 to adopt him. Well, let me work that debt off. I could do it. No, it wasn't that at all. They're not expecting that from him. And this is what gives us confidence. God's grace is that he takes us as we are, right? And he makes us his children.

And this confidence doesn't come from our performance, but God's grace and love. And guys, we have to get rooted and grounded in this truth. We have to. Our faith has to be built and established firmly on this, firmly before anything else. We have to remember, we have to quote ourselves, you know what, man, God, you made me your kid. Because you just simply chose to do that. Because you simply wanted to do that. That's it. And not only that, you paid the ultimate price for me because you love me so much. And this acceptance grace, again, it's one of the rails of that track we were talking about. And it's always important to start with acceptance grace. It's always important to have a strong, rooted foundation in God's acceptance grace. I can't stress how important it is. And it's really important to do that first before you move on to the other rail, which is empowering grace. Because when we start with empowering grace, what we do is we end up with moralism. You know? And that was me, guys. Most of my Christianity, until I understood this in my mid-20s, was me thinking that it was all about what I did and

God's empowering grace and having to prove my righteousness. I thought my practicing my righteousness made me righteous and therefore earned my right to stand before God one day. And so, man, I was a mess. I never had peace because of that truth. And you know what? It never made me less sinful either. It just made me less confident. And so, here's the thing. We need to always start with acceptance grace. But it's equally as dangerous if all we do is keep our wheels on that side of the track of grace. That's not a good thing either. See, the danger, if we just stay over in the acceptance grace rail, is that we fall into license, which is basically believing that God accepts us no matter what we do. It doesn't matter what we do. No big deal. God's going to still save us.

You know, kind of the thought is, man, since God is always going to love me, then it really doesn't matter what I do. But actually, it does matter. And that's what we're going to get at here. Well, while God takes us as we are, acceptance grace, he doesn't leave us as we are, empowering grace, right? And 1 John 3 verses 2 to 3 says this, 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. And what John is saying here is that we are living between two fixed points in our walk with God. There's the past-rooted, unwavering reality of our acceptance grace. God took us and made us, took us just as we are and made us his children. That's our position in him. It's unshakable, unmovable, and he's never going to revoke that. But then there's this future grace that's happening, this future point that's happening. God one day is going to perfect us. We actually are going to be sinful. That's not going to happen until the return of Jesus. But then we're God's children now, okay? And what we will be has not yet appeared, which lets us know that there's this period of ongoing transformation that God is at work in between those two points, right? So in one sense, because of acceptance grace, we have a certain family resemblance now, right? And yet, we know that we haven't reached full maturity. We don't have the perfect family resemblance now. You know, when babies are born, there's always an obvious family resemblance. When my son Riley was born, you could tell he was a pincer. He had a big flat nose, and he had chiseled abs. At least one of those things are true. I'll let you decide. So if you look at my son Riley, when you look at my son Riley when I'm not around, you're going to get a good idea of what I look like, right? But however, the resemblance is only going to grow and get clearer as Riley matures into adulthood. And that is what John's talking about. We're God's children now, and we have the family resemblance, and yet we are maturing and becoming more like Jesus. In Romans, it says, man, the Holy Spirit is actually transforming us more and more into the likeness of the Son.

[ 25 : 11 ] There's a transformation that's happening ongoingly in our walk with Jesus. Jesus. And this is what John's getting at. And of course, what we're talking about isn't physical features. You know, we're not going to look like Jesus, like, you know, are we all becoming more and more like a Palestinian kind of person like Jesus was? Well, no, that's not what he means. It's a spiritual transformation. And this is what John gets at in the rest of the passage, verses 4 to 10.

And everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. And you know that he appeared in order to take away sins. And in him, there is no sin. And no one who abides in him keeps on sinning. And no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Excuse me. Everyone who practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil. For the devil has been sinning from the beginning. And the reason the Son of God appears was to destroy the works of the devil. And 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. And 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. And here's the last and final point we're going to look at. Our confidence comes from seeing Jesus-like behavior in our life. Now, John's argument here and what he's been saying from verses 4 to 10 is that since we belong to Jesus and since we are remaining in him, united to him, then actually we should look like him at least a little bit. And what this truth is telling us is that actually what we do in this life does matter. Again, not to earn God's love or to stay in the family, but because we are loved. And what we do flows out of God's love for us and our acceptance by him because we are his children. And it's only by God's grace that we don't make a practice of sinning.

It's only by God's grace. Now, you might think, hold on, time out. Hold on, time out. This really doesn't sound like grace to me anymore. It sounds like works righteousness, right? It sounds like what you're expecting. It sounds like what John is expecting is that I never sin again. How is that a reality? That doesn't give me hope. That doesn't give me joy. No, actually what he's saying in all of this is that we need to fight our sin. That's what he's saying. You don't give into sin. You fight sin.

See, in this life and the longer you're walking with Jesus, it's so easy to become more discouraged with our sin and our failures and just want to give up fighting it. We just want to give up the fight.

We want to tap out. We want to say, I can't do it anymore. But what we need to do is we can't let ourselves off the hook that easy. We need to make sure we aren't justifying our unwillingness to fight sin. And when John wrote this letter, there was some guys in the church that had gotten really clever about this, right? So there's a sense that there was sin and this fight of sin and trying to live for Christ. And they were just like, you know, let's figure out a way. We don't have to do this anymore. We still hold on to all the blessings of God. And so the idea was like, oh, you know what?

[ 28 : 36 ] You know, we're body and soul. And you know, the body is the flesh and all the flesh wants is like passionate, lustful things that are just counter to God. And so, yeah, yeah, yeah. Flesh is evil. You know, stuff of this world is evil. But then over here, God's saving our soul. And our soul is the righteous part of us and the holy part of us. And that's what he's saving. And it's going to go be with him in heaven. And so, you know what? It doesn't matter what we do in the body. Because God really cares about this over here. And so let me just like do my sin world tour. But, you know, I'll still pray some prayer and have faith in God and claim Jesus and everything's going to be copacetic. You know, typically what ended up is Mardi Gras Christianity. It's kind of what rolled out of this. Anything goes. No worry. It's all covered in grace. Now, we could say, yeah, that's not really a teaching that we're endangered of being deceived by today, right? But there are other ways that we can be deceived into giving up the fight against sin. One way we can fall prey is that we start minimizing or redefining what sin is and isn't, right? When I was in my teens, in my early 20s, before God had got a hold of me again. And I believed in God and had this relationship with him. But again, we were kind of like on our sin world tour just doing whatever we wanted.

And we knew, like, you know, we kind of justify what it is. Like, hey, you know, I know some of the stuff I'm doing is wrong. But God understands. Like me and him, we have this like, we have this unique arrangement. We're good. And so we kind of redefined what sin was and made up kind of our own boundaries of what was okay and what was not okay. But 1 John 3, 4 tells us sin is lawlessness, which means we don't get to define sin because sin is breaking God's law, which means God has already defined what sin is and what it isn't. And we know this because he's actually clearly, clearly written this out in the Old Testament. All through there, God said, this is good and this is bad, right? And the law is still helpful for us New Testament Christians. Surprise, surprise.

The law is helpful in this way. The law is helpful for diagnosing sin, okay? The law is never going to heal us of our sin, but man, it's really helpful in diagnosing and saying what it is.



But that's where it falls short. It stops there. You can't obey the law to a point of being righteous before God. All it's going to do is point out where you're sinning. And so you read a passage like this and it seems like it's a lot of impossible demands, right? Don't sin, practice righteousness. If you do sin, you're a child of the devil. If you don't sin, you're a child of God. And you're just like, holy smokes, man, this is like really hard black and white stuff. But here's the thing. It seems really demanding, but guess what? Love comes with demands on us. Every loving relationship has its demands, even our relationship with God. And here's the thing. We all change for the sake of love. We all change for the sake of what we love. When I was single, before I was married, I used to shave my face and leave all the clippings and everything in the sink. Not anymore, right? I got married and found out like Haley wasn't down with that. When I was single, I used to want to be the apostle of love to all the ladies. But when

I got married, I couldn't do that anymore, right? Haley was the only one, right? I was just the apostle of love to my wife. That's all. When I was single, I didn't have kids. I had a ton of freedom with my time and the way I spent my money to do all my hobbies. But because I love my wife and my kids, you know what? I don't do those things as much anymore. I'm not gone all the time doing the things that I want to do, my hobbies for the sake. Hey, got to live free. Don't put any boundaries on me.

[ 32 : 46 ] But I don't do it. I don't feel like it's a curse at all. No. I do it because I want to bless them and I want to love them and I know they need time with me. And I do that regardless if they reciprocate, you know? Now, here's the thing. If we fight sin and practice righteousness, man, we can rejoice.

We can rejoice seeing that, man, this is the evidence of God's empowering grace at work in our lives. Even the smallest little change, the smallest little change. Rejoice in that.

Because it's evidence of God's will. Only by God's grace can you make the smallest little change to practice righteousness. This grace that changes us, that's always changing us, it doesn't come from God as like this impersonal spiritual energy, right? No, it's God's empowering grace by the Holy Spirit who's in us working out the righteousness of Christ. 1 John 3, 9 says, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him. And I believe what he means by that seed is the Holy Spirit.

And he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. And so because of this, we say, we don't say in moralism, I've got this. I can do righteousness. I don't need any help. But we also don't say, this is too hard. I'm just going to give up. Rather, what we say, Jesus did it for me.

And he's working it out in me. That's where we abide in him. That's how we live. Acceptance grace and an empowering grace. There's no boasting in ourselves, only boasting in God and his grace.

[ 34 : 24 ] Our assurance isn't in our efforts. It's our assurance is in Jesus and what he did all the way. God's empowering grace is at work in us to die to sin and live to righteousness.

Titus 2 verses 11 and 12 says this, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce godliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. We live out who we are. We live out who we are. Our doing simply confirms our being. Our doing confirms that we are God's children. It doesn't make us God's children. And we, when we are firmly established in acceptance and empowering grace, we are unshakable. We can have confidence, not in ourselves, but in God who finishes the work that he began. And like a train with both rails, both wheels firmly gripped on the rails, we roll on toward that coming day of the Lord, not with worry, but with exciting anticipation, longing for him to appear and rejoicing when he shows up. So how do we respond? Who are you? Are you a child of God?

Or are you not a child of God? If you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, you're checking out Christianity, I want to hold this out to you today. I want to hold out to you the most amazing gift that you could ever get. And that's the love of the Father. God makes himself known as a benevolent, loving, gracious, merciful Father. He sent his Son, Jesus, to die for your sins so he could adopt you into his family. Man, love sacrifices itself. And God's love is the best love. It was the best sacrifice. He sacrificed his only son and he did that for you. He wants you. He wants you to be his child. He wants you to be his son or his daughter. And here's what you do. You just surrender to him today. You simply say yes. You say yes to God today. Believe that Jesus died so that you could be God's child. If you're here and you're a Christian, if you've, all of us have a different span of time in the journey of faith, but maybe for some of us lately or for a long time, it's just felt unstable, unsure. We haven't had confidence for that final day. And I'm not beating you up about that. We all go through that. That is a normal thing. I go through that where my confidence gets shaken.

And I just have to be reminded that we need to be reminded. My wheels need to be solidly on both of those railway lines of acceptance grace and empowering grace. Man, if where you're at right now is, you know what, Jesse, I've tried my best and I keep failing. I just want to tap out and give up. I can't do this anymore. Maybe that's like where you're at or maybe you've already given up. And I want to tell you today and just remind you today, man, press in to God's accepting grace. Press in to his amazing grace and be reminded that he's your father who loves you, that he sent his son to die for you so you could be his. He calls you by name. He knows you. He loves you. And he's never going to give up on you.

He's never going to write you out of his family. He's never going to cross you out of his will. He's not that kind of dad. He's a dad that's going to pursue you. No matter how far and how fast you try to run from him, he's going to pursue you. And he's going to bring you back to himself.

[ 38 : 12 ] I want to remind you of that today. And from there, it's just about living in the truth and the reality and the experience of the Holy Spirit. We press into him. We don't press into our efforts. We don't press into our strength. We press into our relationship with the Holy Spirit. It's him, God, the Holy Spirit. He gives us the power to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.

But here's a reminder. We have to practice fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We have to do that. And the easiest thing, the simple low-hanging fruit of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, man, is word and prayer. Being in his word. The Holy Spirit speaks through God's word to us if we're willing to listen. And in prayer, we pray to God. And it doesn't mean you have to pray for an hour. You could pray for five minutes. That's amazing. That's God's grace.

Enabling you to do that. You could send up simple prayers to heaven. And you can listen. It's not just a one-way conversation. You speaking to God, you can stop and listen to hear what God may be saying to you.

Just practicals on abiding. Maybe you're here and you're just like, gosh, that's really intimidating. I don't know where to start to do this reading and different stuff like that.

And we've tried to make this easy and give you a place to start. And one of the things we do as a church is community Bible reading. And I'm not saying you have to do that, but I'm just saying, man, if you're not doing anything right now, it's a simple, easy, low-hanging fruit to start. Because it involves reading and listening to God through his word. And it involves responding in prayer. And it's really simple and it's not difficult. And if you're interested in that, we'd love to talk to you more about that. I can.

[ 39 : 54 ] And a lot of people up here can. Or you could go back there at the Next Step table in the back and talk to someone about that. We'd love to help you out through that. And the other way we connect is through community groups. We speak the gospel to one another.

The Holy Spirit uses us, me and you. He uses us to minister to each other the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we need that. And in September, we're going to be starting community groups.

And if you're not in a community group, you could fill out a connection card and write down that you're interested in getting into one. And we'll make sure you get into one, for sure. And then lastly, communion. Communion is one of the ways we're reminded of abiding in Christ.

And how we abide in Christ. Christians, we take communion because it's this beautiful picture that Jesus died for our sins. So that we could abide in him. The bread represents his body that was broken for us.

And the cup that we drink represents his blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. So that we could be children of God. And abide in Christ. And as we take communion today, I just want to say, if you're here and you're a Christian man, we're publicly declaring, Lord, I am continuing to abide in you today.

[ 41 : 10 ] I'm continuing to fellowship with you. I'm continuing to believe and rest in the assurance and the confidence that I am a child of God because of what you have done. And if you're here and you're not a Christian, we want to say to you, this is why we would say communion is for believers.

We hope that you see it. That really doesn't make sense for you to participate in this unless you first put your faith in God. But we do invite you, again, to respond in this moment by putting your faith in Jesus.

So let's take a moment right now to reflect before we come and take communion, to reflect on the goodness of Christ, and just respond whatever God's been putting on your heart of how to respond to him.

And then when you're ready, come and take communion. Amen. Amen.