

# ***“The Keys to the Kingdom”***

1 John 3:19-24

November 17, 2013

## **Sermon INTRODUCTION:**



**Illustration:** What is the last thing most of us do before leaving home (the very last thing)? Answer: Most of us LOCK the door & secure the house. Next question: Why do you do that? (To keep people out.) Question: How effective are your locks at keeping people out? (Answer: While not “perfect,” most of us would agree (evidenced by the fact that the vast majority have not been broken into...), that “good locks keep bad people out.”

Ok... with that said, after going to great lengths here to establish the confidence we have in our locked doors.....

Let me ask you 2 last questions...

1. Having locked your doors before leaving this morning, aren't you worried you won't be able to get back in when you want to go home?
2. If you're not worried, why not?

Answer: Because you have confidence in your keys!

**T/S:** This morning I pray that you will leave this gathering with a similar confidence & supernatural clarity with "the keys to the kingdom of God."

## **2013: "BE-Coming the Work of God"**

**Mission:** Matthew 28:18-20

**Messiah:** Jesus is "Living Water"

**Multiply:** Disciples make disciples

**Ministry:** 1<sup>st</sup> John ("BE the Church")

## **The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> John**

(1) **Passion:** Glory to God thru the Gospel of Jesus Christ

(2) **Priorities:** Define & Defend

(3) **Pillars:** Truth, Love, Faithful Obedience

(4) **Purposes:**

1. *Promote* "Koinonia"

2. *Prevent* Sin

3. *Protect* vs False Teachers

4. *Provide* Assurance

(5) **Proofs.....**

Today's passage is a continuation & deeper explanation of where we closed last week... **1 John 3:18**

*("Let us not love with word and tongue, but in action and in truth!")*

**NOTE: (sister verse)**

*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? - 2 Cor. 13:5*

**T/S:** Sermon title: "The Keys to the Kingdom"

**PREVIEW:** There are (4) "keys" to the kingdom of God:

**A. Truth**

**B. Love**

**C. Faithful Obedience**

**D. Indwelling Holy Spirit** (empower & evidence)

**18 Let us not love with word & tongue but in action & in truth..... 19** *By this we will know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20* **for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21** *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22* **and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23** *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

**24** *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. – ESV*

## Key #1 = TRUTH

**19** *By this we will know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;*

- The opening of v.19a governs the entire passage...
- John is giving **double assurance**: (per “BE-ing” 3:10-18)
  - You can know you are of the truth
  - You can have confidence when coming to God in prayer
- **“By this”** = vv.10-18
- **“We will KNOW”** is key... “know” is in the future tense...
- “God is telling us that once a specific condition has been met, “we will know that we are of the truth.” - (paraphrase) Akin
- **“of the truth”** is also key...
  - “of” = identifies the source of what is known...
  - “the” = the definite article...

- “the truth” = God’s truth (per Christ’s gospel)
- Quote: “Truth can only characterize the behavior of those whose very character originates in the truth, so that it is by our loving others ‘in truth’ that we know that we ourselves belong to, and are of, the truth.” - John Stott

- ***“and will assure (persuade) our heart before Him”***

- Key = note where the assurance comes from!

- v.20: ***“...God is greater than our heart and He knows everything”***

- Combining the assurance of v.19 with the assertion of v.20 does two things simultaneously:

- a. Assures: “Christ’s ‘always-promises’ covers the Christian’s oops-problems!” - JDP
- b.
- c. Admonishes: God’s Word is saying BOTH...

\*\*\* **Don’t worry...**

AND

\*\*\* **Don’t forget!** (vv.10-18)

- NOTE: the word ***“HEART”***

- Biblical “heart” = the seat of the emotions...

- Singular tense is used to demonstrate “**KOINONIA**”
- See **repetition: 4X** in 1<sup>st</sup> John (ALL in vv.19-21)

Quote via Matthew Henry:

*“The way to arrive at the knowledge of our own truth & uprightness in Christianity, and to secure our inward peace, is to abound in love and in the works of love towards the Christian brethren.”*

**20** *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.*

Expound the following:

**What’s so good about feeling bad?**

and...

**What’s so bad about feeling good?**

**2 Cor. 5:10** = *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Use the example of the thief on the cross to show contrite souls lead to the Spirit's confidence... Again, consider the contrast between the confident Pharisees and the contrite Tax Collector...

With that said...

Here's one of the Bible's timeless truths:

**“To be confident before contrite is to be against Christ.”** - JDP

- “...you are either for Me or against Me...” – Jesus
- “...you are either helping Me to gather, or you are scattering...” – Jesus
- Both phrases from same verse: (Matt. 12:30)

**“Christian contriteness becomes Christ-like confidence.”** - JDP

- Contriteness = genuine, sincere *remorse*
- Christian-Contriteness = genuine, Spirit-empowered *repentance!*

**Condition vs. Cause (obedience)...** Illustration: darkness is the condition under which one can see the stars... Note: darkness is the necessary condition vs. the cause of the stars. So it is with obedience and blessing.

*“If believers persist in sin, implicitly the conscience will make them fearful, depressed, and insecure (see **Psalm 32:1-5 & 38:1-8**). They will then begin to question the genuineness of their profession of faith, on account of their prolonged disobedience. While they cannot lose their salvation (if they are truly “saved”), they can begin to lose their assurance of that salvation due to a plaguing conscience, empowered by a true, Spirit-aided knowledge of the scriptural standards for holiness, will continue to painfully remind them of the blatant discrepancy between what they profess and what they practice.”* - **MacArthur**

Contrast & Clarify: Theology of "assurance"

- Ritualistic (Catholicism) ***doing***
- Responsive (Emotionalism) ***feeling***
- Ricochet (Arminianism) ***staying***
- Radioactive ("new" Hyper-Grace) ***knowing***
- Reformed (Calvinism) ***receiving***

Heart-Steps of the Christian:

**Won't**

**Willing**

**Want-to**

**Walk**

**Worship**

See Jonathan Edwards book:



## "The Experience That Matters"

"The impact of the Holy Spirit through Jonathan Edwards and his colleagues, in igniting a widespread response to the gospel, meant that the assurance of salvation quickly became a major issue. The call to embrace the gospel, obey the Word of God, and persevere in holiness overwhelmed many of the new converts. People questioned whether or not they were doing all they should and whether or not they were truly saved. In response to those concerns, Edwards, in 1746, wrote his classic book "The Experience That Matters" (originally "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections"). **This monumental work argues that the most accurate proof of salvation is the presence in one's life of holy, religious affections – a zealous and biblical inclination toward righteousness, evidenced by practical, good works.** Because Edwards saw the danger that Satan would counterfeit conversions, he was careful to warn his readers that it is possible to have an initial, positive interest in the gospel (like the seeds on shallow soil and weedy ground in Jesus' parable; Matthew 13:1-23) and yet not possess true saving faith. However, when the grace of God is truly planted in a person's heart, it will always result in a changed nature (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), marked by an abiding desire to live a holy life."  
- John MacArthur

**21** *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;*

- "Beloved" (Gk. "Agapetos")

- Term of care, concern, & endearment
- “A clean heart creates confidence in Christ.” – JDP
- Hearing themselves referred to as “beloved” brings warmth & a reminder to worship.

- ***“confidence”***

\* Definition = BOLDNESS

## LIVING EXAMPLE: *Barbra Pierce!*

She’s not “brave” she’s **bold...**

Because she is BLESSED... *and she knows it!*

\* Quote: “it should be remembered that the confidence and boldness expressed in this verse contains nothing of impropriety or brashness. It gives no license to anyone to command God to act; it does not erase the distinction between God’s infinity and our humanity.”

- Burdick

- The Christian’s confidence is found in Christ’s agape. – JDP

Key #2 = FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE

**22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, **because** we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

FOCUS: This verse hinges on ***“and”***

Confidence in the promise of v.22a is found in those who adhere to the condition of 22b. -JDP

- a. ***“keep His command” AND “do the things that are pleasing in His sight”***

## **JPEGS: 10 Commandment Barn**

- b. **John 13:34** = *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*
- c. **Hebrews 12:1-3** = *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** For consider Him who has endured such*

*hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

- Contrast “sins” & “**encumbrances**”
- Parallel “commands” & “things that please”
- NOTE: 2 sides of same coin...
  - \*\*\* Commands vs. Sins
  - \*\*\* Things... vs. Encumbrances
- See refinement... from the letter of the law.... Down to the heart of God!

**Malachi 3:16-18 =**  
**(“confidence in unity”)**

*“Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him **of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.** “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. **Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.**””*

- d. “The guarantee of answered prayer is based on the proper standing of the petitioner (the one praying), which in return gives him confidence to approach God freely and openly.” - Dr. Dan Akin
- e. “from Him” shows that our answered prayers come ultimately from God the Father.

- f. See clearly... the promise of answered prayers is linked undeniably to faithful obedience (to His commands) AND a willingness to please Him (in those areas of liberty & freedom). - JDP (Heb. 12)
- “The things that please Him are those spontaneous acts motivated by love and a desire to honor Him above & beyond the specified commands.” - Akin
  - “The biblical believer desires to please Him and bring glory to Him in all manner of life & obedience (cf. **1 Cor. 10:31** = “**So whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.**”).” - Akin
  - These are the attitudes that bring God’s blessing & promises to fruition.
- g. Important: “because” is conditional vs causal!
- **Quote:** “Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer.” - John Stott
  - Condition vs. Cause (obedience)...  
**Illustration:** darkness is the condition under which one can see the stars... Note: darkness is the necessary condition vs. the cause of the stars. So it is with obedience and blessing. - JDP

- h. The verb tense (progressive presents) of the 2 pre-conditional verbs (“we obey” & “we do”) express an on-going condition...
- i. ***“It is the continual obeying of God’s commands and the striving to please Him that precedes our confidence before God in prayer... Such conduct provides an object, moral reason for the divine response; it does not simply depend upon the subjective ground of a worshiper’s clear conscience.”*** - Dr. Dan Akin
- j. NOTE: In other words, that does not mean that ALL who demonstrate confidence in prayer (or any other environment) have God’s blessing or promise... There are many who are sincerely deceived and/or are actively engaged in the intentional deceit of others – both of which can demonstrate an unfounded, demonically deceptive confidence.

## Key #3 = LOVE

**23** *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

- John now summarizes everything into one umbrella statement with 2 core characteristics...

- a. ***"BELIEF*** in the Son, Jesus Christ"
- b. ***"KOINONIA"*** – an active “love for one another”
- “The two (2) parallel verbs “believe” & “love” work together to form one primary command.”
- “You cannot believe without loving nor love without believing.” - **Lenski**
- “The Christian life demands an essential union between faith and love.” - **Akin**
- “BE-ing is the by-product of believing & loving.” - JDP
- NOTE the importance of each component of this phrase
  - a. “believe” = grace based faith & spiritual surrender
  - b. “name” = the gospel knows only One true God
  - c. “Jesus” = John 14:6
  - d. “Christ” = Hebrew “Messiah”
  - e. To “believe in the name of Jesus Christ” = saved!
  - f. “To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to place one’s faith, one’s trust, in Him and all that He is – the Divine Son, the incarnate Deity, the sinless Human, the Messianic Savior, and all other facets of

His unique nature and personhood. Belief is acceptance of the entirety of Him.” - Akin

- The second facet of the unified command is to “love one another as He commanded us”
  - a. The verb tense is again, “ON-GOING” (true love)
  - b. Generic “on-going” love is not enough... it must be ongoing “just as he commanded us”
    - The “how” is every bit as important as the “what”
    - See John 13:34-35 & 15:12,17
    - Kingdom service & the King’s servants require an alignment of the “why?” and the “how?” before activating the “what.” - JDP
    - “It’s a heart thing! Everything in the kingdom always comes back to the heart.” - JDP

**VIDEO:** Driscoll – “Why Your Church Doesn’t Feel Like Family”

- c. NOTE: “While the command to love one another is individually received, it is universally applied.” - JDP



- d. “To be a child of God is to love one another... Thus, John insists that both faith and love stand as essential tests for the true child of God. Right belief and right action reveal the authenticity of one’s faith.” - Akin

## Key #4 = Indwelling Spirit of God

**24** *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

- v.24 picks up where v.22 left off (keeping God’s commands); while simultaneously setting the stage for what follows in chapter 4.
- Key concept:
  - a. Vertical Koinonia re-emphasized via “abides” (3X)
  - b. Vertical Koinonia linked directly to obedience
  - c. Vertical Koinonia linked directly to consistency
  - d. 3:34 links back to 2:24-28 & John 15:1-6
- **The fourth and most important “key” to the kingdom is the Spirit’s indwelling presence, promise, & power!**
  - a. Truth is a key
  - b. Love is a key
  - c. Faithful obedience is a key



- d. BUT... the Spirit's indwelling unlocks the deadbolt!
- Quote: "The Holy Spirit is the Source from which the certainty of our relationship with God is drawn." - Hiebert
  - "by the Spirit" tells us where the knowledge referenced comes from

It is my Father's "House"

Christ is the "Door"

The Spirit is the "Wind" that guides us in.

The Father enabled

The Son engaged

The Spirit empowers

Ask... “So how confident are you in YOUR ‘keys?’”

Final take away:

A life truly lived out in truth, love, & faithful obedience... empowered by the Holy Spirit can come confidently before Creator God. Think about it... because we are “in Christ” – God the Son... we can come confidently, empowered by the Spirit of God, before God the Father and know Him intimately as “Abba” Daddy God.... – Amen!

**Let’ Pray!**