

Lifeblood: The One Thing You Can't Live Without

The Gospel: How We Know

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The Gospel: How We Know 1 John

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open it with me to the book of 1 John. 1 John, and what we're going to do is I want us to put a bit of a bookend on where we started. The gospel is the lifeblood of our faith. We looked at Matthew 7, and Jesus saying statements like, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord' did we not prophesy in your name and in your name perform many miracles and drive out demons, and I will tell them I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers."

I shared with you the reason we were going into this series is because, what haunts me probably more than anything else as a pastor, is the idea that there may be many people sitting in front of me week by week by week who think they are Christians when they are not; who think their eternity is okay when it is not okay; who are spiritually deceived. We talked, then, about spiritual deception...the reality, the dangerous reality of spiritual deception, that we can think...people will be shocked one day. There will be multitudes of people, "Many will say to me..." Multitudes of people will say to Him, "Lord, Lord. Did we not do all these things?" We will be shocked to find out that Jesus looks in our eye and says, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoer."

The picture there, He's talking about unbelievers. People who thought that they were believers, but they were not believers. So, we began looking at this picture of the gospel. We need to know the gospel, how we've taken the gospel out from under our faith, and we've put Kool-Aid in its place, this lifeblood of who we are.

So, what we've been doing is looking at the gospel. What is the gospel and how does the gospel change us? What does it mean to be born again? How does that affect the way we live? We looked at it last week. Now, I want to put a bit of a bookend on it, as we think about assurance of salvation. Can you have assurance that you have been born again? Can you have assurance that you will go to heaven? Can you be delivered from fear that one day you will stand before Jesus to say, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoer"? Can we know that He's not going to say that?

What I want us to do is look at 1 John. In fact, we're going to look at the whole book of 1 John. Lest you get worried, we're not going to look at every single verse, but I do want us to take a bit of a bird's-eye view. The way 1 John is written is you don't have this logical progression. You don't have John saying, "Well, here's point number one, and then point number two, and then point number three at the end of the book." Instead, you've got certain themes that are dominant and kind of swirl throughout the book. They just kind of rise to the top throughout the book.

So, what I want us to do is I want us to look down and see these few themes that are rising to the top. However, why it's important to look at this whole book is because the context behind it. What was going on is John's writing to a church, a group of Christians who had had a faction of people among them involved in the church, a part of the church...everybody

thought Christians. However, then, they start denying the deity of Christ, and they start denying that God had become man and taken on human flesh in Christ. They started denying the deity and humanity of Christ, the person of Christ. They start teaching false doctrines, and they end of up leaving the church.

If you look, actually, at 1 John 2, he addresses this. He addresses how to understand that. Well, what do you do when people leave the church? People who you thought believed in Christ are saying wrong things about Christ, are teaching false doctrines about Christ? Listen to what John says. He says in 1 John 2:18, *"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now how many antichrists have come. This is how we know it's the last hour."* Now, listen to this. Verse 19, he's talking about this faction of people. He says, *"They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."* In other words, what He's saying is these people never had true faith in Christ. They never belonged to us. Yes, they were part...they were doing different things. They were involved with the church, but they never truly belonged to us.

The Contrast...

Superficial faith is always possible.

So, what you've got in 1 John is you've got a contrast that's set up that's important for us to understand. There's a contrast here, and what this...even just the context behind this book is teaching us number one, superficial faith is always possible. Superficial faith is always possible; that it's possible that people would be involved in church with faith that doesn't lead to salvation, a kind of superficial faith, a spurious faith, a bogus faith, a false faith.

That's the picture we see in John's gospel. We even saw it a couple weeks ago when we were studying John 3. We kind of backed up just a little bit to the end of John 2:23-25 talks about how many people were believing in Jesus, but Jesus did not entrust Himself to them. What we've got in John 2 there is a picture of...it's possible to believe in Jesus but not know Jesus. It's possible to believe in Jesus and have a kind of faith that is a false faith.

John 6:66 says that Jesus said...spoke to the disciples, is what it calls them, that were following Him, more than just the twelve. Crowds of disciples, and it said many of them, many disciples, turned back from Jesus. Same picture in John 8:31-36. He's talking to disciples, and He says, "If you really hold to my teaching, then you are my disciples." There are people in the book of John, the Gospel of John, who are claiming to believe in Jesus or claiming to be followers of Jesus, but they don't even know Jesus. There is a picture there of superficial faith, a faith that is not true, a faith that does not know Jesus, a faith that does not lead to salvation.

Saving faith always perseveres.

The contrast is between a superficial faith and saving faith. The picture of the contrast I want you to see is saving faith always perseveres. Now, I want to make sure that you understand what I mean when I talk about saving faith. We are in no way adding to the faith that we've talked about over the last few weeks. We have seen very clearly in the gospel the picture of the just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh to bear His wrath against sin on the cross, and to show His power over sin in the resurrection, so that all who have faith in Him will be reconciled to God forever.

Faith. It is by faith that we are saved, by grace through faith. So, we're not adding to that. The only reason I use that term is because Scripture is showing us a differentiation between a superficial faith or a false faith, a faith that does not lead to salvation and a faith that does lead to salvation, a faith that is true, that is a rock. So, the picture we need to see is the contrast between the two and realize there were people in the first century...please don't miss this...there were people in the first century who thought they had faith in Jesus that would lead to salvation, but it didn't. They were deceived.

The reality is, in the 21st century, I'm convinced the same is true. I'm convinced there may be multitudes of people involved in churches who do not have a faith that leads to salvation, who will be shocked one day to hear Jesus saying words like He says in Matthew 7. If that's the case, then we need to ask the same question that people in 1 John were asking. They were confused. They were thinking, "Well, how do you know if you've got the real thing? How do you know if you're not going to be this heretic who's denying things the next day? How do you know if you've got the real thing?"

What we have in this book is a book that was written to encourage them, to show them how we can know. In fact, that's what I want to show us. I want to show you the confidence that 1 John is giving us, and we're going to take just a little brief tour. However, I want to show you 1 John chapter...we'll start in 1 John 2. What I want to invite you to do is I want you to circle every time you see the word "know" in the verses we're about to read. K-N-O-W, know. Circle every time you read it.

Look at 1 John 2:3, and we're going to fly through these, so just kind of keep up and keep circling. *"We know that we have come to know him..."* there it is twice. *"...if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not know what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."*

1 John 2:18, what we just read just a second ago. Skip down actually just to verse 19.

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.

Look in verse 29. *"If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him."* 1 John 3:10, *"This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."* Look at 1 John 3:14, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life with him."* Skip over to verse 19. *"This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in its presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."*

Go down to 1 John 4:8. *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* Then, look with me at verse 13: *"We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."* 1 John 5:2, *"This is how we know that we love the children of God:*

by loving God and carrying out his commands." You get to the end of the book, 1 John 5:13, this is basically the theme verse of the entire book of 1 John. He says, *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* Skip over to verse 18. *"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who is born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also the Son of God has also come and has given us understanding, so we may know him who is true."*

The Confidence...

Do you get the point? That's not all of them. There's 26 different times. Apparently, John wants us to know something. Over and over again, "I write this to you so that you may know this, you may know this, now we know this, and we know this, and God knows this, and you know this." Confidence is all over this book. He is writing to a people that they may know they have eternal life.

Assurance of eternal salvation is a reality.

So, here's the truth, and I want us to see from the very beginning, assurance of eternal salvation is a reality. In other words, you can be assured of salvation. You can know that you have eternal life. You can know that. It's not a guessing game. You're not just hoping, kind of wishing that, hopefully, in the end, it's going to end okay. You can know that you have eternal life. Jesus said the same thing in John 6:37. He talked about, "All the Father draws to him, he will bring to himself, and he will keep them until the last day." He says in John 6. Hebrews 6:11 says, "We have a sure hope." So, we can have assurance of our salvation. We can know that we have eternal salvation; know that.

Some of you at this point are thinking, "Yes, he's saying once saved, always saved." Well, before you jump to that one, this is a phrase that's not in Scripture: "Once saved, always saved." I'm going to avoid using that terminology simply because of this: I think that idea, "once saved, always saved," is open to a variety of abuses and misperceptions, most namely, the idea that usually comes in our mind when we think "once saved, always saved" is, "Once I pray this prayer, then I'm always saved forever." It focuses on salvation exclusively as a point where we did something. "Okay, as long as I did that, as long as I checked that box, then I'm always saved. Once I did that, I'm good to go." That's not what Scripture's teaching.

Now, Scripture does teach...we've seen this...that salvation is...starts with a point in time where we are born again, where we go from death to life. That is true in Scripture. However, that begins, we talked about last week, a process whereby we grow in Christ. The fruit of our salvation begins to bear out. There's coming a day when our salvation will be complete. So, this idea of "once saved, always saved" really undercuts the holistic picture of salvation that we have in Scripture. So, instead of saying "once saved, always saved," what I want to put before you is...the truth is, "When saved, always saved." When you're saved, when you're born again, you're born again forever. When you are saved, you are saved forever. Assurance of eternal salvation is a reality. When you are saved, you will never turn away.

That's why John says what he says in 1 John 2. He says, "These guys turned away because they were never saved; they were never saved. They may have had a point where they did this or that, but they were never saved. They were never born again. That's why they turned away. They were never of us."

When you are born again, when you are saved, you are always saved. Now, that begs the question, "Does that mean we have to wait and make sure we get to the end before we can know we're saved?" No. What 1 John is teaching is that you can have assurance of salvation on a day by day basis, a moment by moment basis. However, what's interesting is the assurance of salvation that is pictured here in 1 John may not be exactly what we would think of when it comes to assurance.

False foundations of assurance

I want to show you...and we're just going to walk through these one by one very quickly, but false foundations for assurance. False foundations for assurance. Number one is a moral lifestyle. Because you were good or honest, or nice or a decent person doesn't mean that you're assured of salvation. Reality is, there's a lot of people who are loyal and nice to everyone but God, and who are decent before everyone but God. Many good, moral people who have absolutely no assurance of salvation, and shouldn't have any assurance of salvation. Moral lifestyle.

Second, intellectual knowledge. Intellectual knowledge. You can know all the facts of the gospel and still not have assurance of salvation. It's because you can know all the facts of the gospel and still not be saved. Even the demons believe these things. The demons know these things. Intellectual knowledge, mere intellectual assent is not the key to assurance of salvation. It's a false foundation. Moral lifestyle, intellectual knowledge.

Third, religious involvement. 2 Timothy 3:5 talks about a people who have a form of godliness, but they deny its power. They deny its reality in their lives. Their religion is empty. Ladies and gentlemen, you can spend every single Sunday of your entire life in church and still not have assurance of salvation. Nor should you have it based on church attendance. Not only religious involvement, but next, active ministry. This is why I said it is possible to be a pastor and not know Christ. It is entirely possible to be a pastor of a church in Birmingham, Alabama and not know Christ.

That's the whole picture in Matthew 7. "Many will say to me 'Lord, Lord, did I not do all these things? I'm performing miracles. I'm driving out demons.'" He says, "I never knew you. Away from me you evildoer." It's entirely possible to be a spiritual leader in this faith family. People look to you because of your position as a small group leader, or this or that. It's entirely possible to have...that's not the basis of your assurance of salvation, active ministry.

Next, a guilty conscience. Sometimes people say, "Well, I feel bad when I do wrong, that must mean that I have assurance of salvation." Big deal. Everybody feels bad when they do something wrong. We live in a guilt-ridden culture. Psychology is consumed with how to overcome all the guilt that we feel. This is the kind of Christianity that many of us have aspired to, have embraced this idea that, "I feel guilty, so I've got to do something to try to reform my life, to cover up for this thing." It's become a self-centered, self-saturated Christianity trying to overcome our guilt on our own, and Christ overcomes our guilt for us. That's a whole other sermon.

However, just because you have a guilty conscience doesn't mean you have assurance of salvation. Just because you feel bad when you do something wrong. Next, related to that, is positive thinking. People say, "Well, I think I'm a Christian." Well, big deal there too. If thinking you're a Christian means that you're a Christian..."I think, therefore I am," then there would be no such thing as spiritual deception. As long as you think you're a Christian, then you're okay. No, that's not what Scripture teaches. In fact, Scripture teaches you've

got the adversary who's blinding the minds of unbelievers. The adversary is trying to get...convince people that they are Christians when they're not Christians. Positive thinking is not a strong foundation for assurance. It's false.

Then, last, this is where I want you to follow with me real close: A past decision. A past decision. This is where people will say, "How do you know you're saved? How do you know that you have eternal life?" People will say, "Well I remember. I remember right where I was when I walked down that aisle. I remember right where I was when I prayed that prayer. I remember right where I was when I signed that card. I remember right where I was when I did that."

I'm not saying that if you remember right where you were when that happened in your life, that means you're not saved. However, I am saying this: That is not the basis of your assurance of salvation. Not what you did at that moment, no matter how well you remember it. Ladies and gentlemen, there are people who have walked aisles, signed cards, prayed prayers, been baptized and become members of the church for thirty years, and they never have known Christ; never have known Christ. That's the picture in all of these things. You can do all of these things apart from Christ. Moral lifestyle, be a good, decent person, have knowledge, religion, involved in active ministry, guilty conscience, positive thinking, a past decision...you can do all of those things.

True foundations of assurance

What I want us to see is that Christ is at the core of our assurance in salvation. Christ is at the core of the whole picture. So, what I want to do is I want to throw these false foundations aside, and any hope you have in those foundations, undercut it completely and put in front of you, based on the book of 1 John, three foundations...true foundations of assurance. I want you to know, I'm trying to balance something here. I'm praying through this balance because I know there are people in here who have trusted in Christ for salvation, who've embraced this gospel, who've been born again. The last thing I want to do in talking about assurance, or lack of assurance, is to cause insecurity to come into your heart where there needs to be security.

So, I want to encourage you. At the same time, based on this whole picture we've been talking about, there are likely people, maybe even many people in here in this room who have a spurious faith, a superficial faith; thinks everything is okay when it's not okay. Have never been born again. The last thing I want to encourage you to do is stay in your state. The last thing I want to do in your life is say, "Everything is okay."

I want to say to you, "Everything is not okay." This is too important to leave where it is. Be born again. You must be born again. That's the last thing I want you to feel, security in where you are. So, how do you do both of those? I am praying the Holy Spirit of God will take His Word in 1 John and will apply it to each of your hearts across this room in a way that is true and right; that He will bring security where there is needed security, and He will bring insecurity where there is needed insecurity. I want to encourage you. Over the next couple of moments as we talk about these foundations of assurance, the temptation will be for all of us. When we think about this issue, we think, "Well I know this guy in my life." Or maybe it's somebody in your family, somebody you care about, somebody you know. "I know they made this 'decision' when they were younger, but now their life is, so are they really saved?" We begin to think about other people. That's the worst thing you could do over the next few moments is think about someone else. I want to encourage you to do 2 Corinthians 13:5 and examine yourself. Test yourself to see if you are in the faith. That's what we're doing when we look at this.

So, true foundations for assurance. One side note here, also, before we jump into the first one. This is...this is key. When we're talking about foundations for assurance, we are not talking about how to be saved. We've already addressed that. Already addressed that, born again, John 3. That's what happens in the point of salvation. That's a different question, it's a different question now to say, "How do you know you're saved?" That's a different question. Does that make sense? We're not answering the question, "How are you saved?" We've already answered that. Now, we're asking, "How do you know that you've been saved? How do you know that you have eternal life?" That's a different question. So, when we look at these things, it's not, "Well these are the things I need to do in order to be saved." We've already looked at that. So, don't look at this as check-off boxes to be saved. That's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about the assurance that helps us know that this was real, that we are truly born again. Foundation number one is the present...and you're going to see Christ saturates each one of these; He's the root of each one of these...the present truth of Christ in your life. The present truth of Christ in your life. The picture is, in 1 John...we've already talked about this...you've got a group of people who had turned away from faith in Christ, and they have undercut the core of the gospel by denying the person and the work of Christ. So, what you see is "Spirit of Truth" twice mentioned. 1 John 4:6, I think, in 1 John 5:6, you've got the Spirit of Truth mentioned. Truth testing the spirits; know that which is false spirits and true spirits; false doctrine and true doctrine.

It all revolves around the truth of Christ. What I want to do...and we're thinking about our own lives, we're examining ourselves. In each one of these foundations, I want to put two questions in front of you to think through. Again, we're not checking off boxes. This is not how to be saved, but questions to think through. When we think through these questions, they bring assurance of salvation.

Question number one, and it deals with the truth of Christ here. Question number one is, "Am I believing in Christ alone for my salvation?" I want to show you this in the book of 1 John. Am I believing in Christ alone for my salvation? Look with me at 1 John 5:1. This is where it's clearest: 1 John 5. We're not going to turn to all of these places. At times, I'll just throw out, "It's also here and here and here in 1 John," and you might write those down just so you can go back and look at them. Because these are themes, like I said, they just kind of swirl around throughout the book.

1 John 5:1 says, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."* You catch that? *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."* Verse 13 is the theme verse of the book. *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* Believe in the name of the Son of God. You believe in Christ.

1 John 2:23, *"No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also."* If you deny the Son, you don't have the Father. If you deny Christ, you don't have the Father. Anyone who denies the person and the work of Christ does not have assurance of salvation. Same thing in 1 John 4:15, *"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God."* Here's the picture, focusing here on the objective basis of our salvation, the gospel that we have talked about. It all revolves around Christ, His person and His work. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross, show His power in the resurrection. That's where the gospel...the core crux of the gospel is. It all revolves around Christ.

So, the question we ask ourselves is, "Are you believing in Christ alone for your salvation?"

So, it's what happens when we're born again at that point, but it continues. You don't have that point, and then leave Christ behind. That's what people were claiming to have here in 1 John 2. You're believing in Christ alone for our salvation...alone. It's not Christ plus anything, not Christ plus what you can add to it from here. It's Christ alone for your salvation.

Are you believing in Christ alone for your salvation? If you do not believe in Christ, fully God, fully human, coming and doing the work He did on the cross and the resurrection, if that is not the core of who you are, then you have no basis for assurance of salvation. Are you believing? This is key. He says it very simply. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

Second question flows from that. Am I abiding in Christ alone as my salvation? Am I abiding in Christ alone as my salvation? This is where I want to remind you that the picture of assurance goes beyond mere intellectual knowledge. Even the demons believe Christ is the Son of God. So, it obviously goes beyond that. When it comes to assurance, that's obviously foundational, but also, am I abiding in Christ as my salvation?

Let me show you this in 1 John 1. Look with me in...let's just read the first three verses. Verses 2 and 3 is where we're kind of focused on, but just to get the context. This is how John starts the whole book. He says, *"That which is from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at in our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."* Now, listen to this. This talks about Christ. *"The life appeared; we have seen it and testified to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us."* Listen to this, *"And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."*

He's talking about fellowship. Eternal life is found in fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Go with me over to 1 John 4. It's even clearer in 1 John 4:13. Listen to the way he talks. This is so huge right here. Listen to 1 John 4:13. He's talking about fellowship with the Father and the Son in 1 John 1. 1 John 4:13, *"We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent his Son as the savior to the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God..."* Listen to this, *"...God lives in him and he in God."* Verse 13, *"We live in him and he in us."* Verse 15, *"God lives in him, and he in us."* The picture here is a sharing of life, of fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is eternal life.

Now, I want you to see why this is so huge when it comes to understanding assurance of salvation. The danger...the danger that we have when we think about assurance of salvation, we start asking the question. "How do I know if I'm saved?" What we do is we start thinking...basically our mentality is...we don't put it this way, but this is the way we're thinking. We're thinking, "How can I make sure I've got the right ticket when I get to heaven? How can I make sure I'm going to get past that gate? I just want to make sure I get that done so if I need to pray the prayer, then I'll do that so I got the ticket. I'll do whatever; you tell me what to do; I'll repeat after you and do anything, just give me the ticket."

The problem is what we've done is we've said...and we've talked about this. We've said, "I'll do whatever I need to do in order to get to heaven." From the very beginning, in our understanding of the gospel and assurance of salvation, focused on the gifts of God more than God Himself. "You come to Christ, you get heaven. You come to Christ, you get forgiveness of sins. You come to Christ, you get this, you get this, you get this." No, you come to Christ to get God.

Those who have faith in Him will be reconciled to God. We want God. We need God, and all of these things flow from Him: Heaven, forgiveness. However, the reality is you will not...I will not stand before God in heaven and be entered in if we don't know God. If He doesn't live in you, and you don't live in Him, if you don't share life with Him. The reality is, eternal life is not just something that's going to happen in the future. Eternal life is now. Praise God, eternal life is now. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son now. He lives in us. We live in Him. We abide in Him.

This is...this is so key, because...and it's why I phrased the things the way I phrased them here...the present work of Christ in your life. Yes, our salvation. We are saved based on what Christ did for us at the cross. However, the reality is, Christ didn't do that for us on the cross, and then check out and leave us to live this Christian life on our own. Instead, He shares His life with us moment by moment, day by day. The assurance of salvation comes from sharing life with God. Now, do you see why it's a false foundation for assurance to try to find something you did that made this happen?

No, it's something Christ did when He entered into a relationship with you, and that relationship continues. When somebody asks, "Are you alive?", do you give them your birth date, or do you just say, "What are you thinking? I'm right here in front of you." You don't have to give them your birth date to prove you're alive. You just smile, and you're there.

That's the picture. We're alive in God! He lives in us. We live in Him. This is the assurance of our salvation, not just believing in Christ alone for our salvation, but abiding in Christ as our salvation. However, don't miss it. What this means is you pray the prayer, and you live a life that has nothing to do with fellowship with God, then you have no assurance of salvation, according to Scripture. I'm not making claim...we're not talking about how to be saved, but if there is no life sharing with God, and you are still dead in your sins, then you need to be made alive to God. This is why assurance of salvation asks the question, "Am I abiding in God? Am I sharing life with God? Is He living in me and I living in Him?"

Today, present work of Christ, present truth of Christ...are you believing in Christ alone for your salvation? Are you abiding in Christ as your salvation? That leads to the second foundation of assurance, and it's the work of Christ, the present work of Christ in your life. It's what He is doing in our lives. This is how our assurance is a moment by moment, day by day thing. The present work of Christ in your life.

Now, we talked about working out your salvation last week. All of that conversation is going to be very foundational for understanding this picture, because we talked about how we work on our salvation, Philippians 2:12, based on God's work in us, Philippians 2:13. God works in us, enables us to work out our salvation. It's God working in us. This is why, when we're about to get into this, I'll just go ahead and let you know we are going to...1 John is going to cause us, cause me, as I read 1 John here to think he's talking about works-based salvation. Number one, I'm reading the Bible, and number two, it's not works-based salvation.

Well, let me take that back. In a sense it is, but follow me here. Follow me here. Follow me. Follow me here. Don't check out; please don't check out. Assurance of salvation is not based on your performance for Christ. It's based on Christ's performance in you. There's a significant difference there. Assurance of salvation is not based on your performance for Christ. "Okay, if you do the best you can and get things done over the next thirty years, and you do it right, then you'll probably get in." That's not what Scripture is teaching us here when we look at these verses, and it talks about the things it's going to talk about.

Instead, keep in mind, when we work out our salvation, it's God working in us. Assurance of salvation is based on the work of Christ in us...His performance in us. So, based on that, here's the two questions I want to put in front of you, that 1 John is going to put in front of us. Number one, "Am I obeying what Christ says?" You can already see where this is going to be opened. "Oh no, this is...salvation is based on our obedience." However, I want you to see is obedience is a part of this whole picture of salvation, no question.

Look with me at 1 John 1. Remember, it's the work of Christ...work of Christ...I can't say that enough. It's the work of Christ in us. We work out our salvation; it's His work. However, listen to 1 John 1:5. *"This is the message we have heard from him and declared to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."* Listen to this, 1 John 1:6. *"If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."*

If you are walking in darkness, the picture of the world, when you don't have the light...you claim to know the light, and you're walking in darkness, you are lying. You don't want to lie. He says that it's strong in 1 John 2. Listen to this, verse 3. Listen to this. *"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."* We know that we've come to know Him...you want to know if you know Him? If you obey His commands. The man who says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is the...is a liar, and the truth is not in Him.

You claim to know God. "I prayed a prayer, and I know God." If you don't obey His commands, you're lying. You're lying. You're a liar. You don't know God. It goes on. *"If anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."* If you're not walking like Jesus walked, then you don't have Jesus. That's what he's saying.

Now, as soon as we hear that, "Okay, am I obeying what Christ says?" Immediately, I'm guessing, it should at least, come to our minds the question, "Well, there's a couple of us in this last week who have sinned, and who have not obeyed Christ. So, does that mean that you don't have assurance of salvation?" I mean look over in 1 John 3. Listen to what it says. 1 John 3:9, *"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; and he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."*

So, it begs the question, "Well, if I sinned this last week, then does that mean that I don't have assurance of salvation?" Thankfully, that's not what 1 John is teaching us here. I want to show it to you. He's not talking about holy perfection. He's not talking about holy perfection. In fact, go back to 1 John 1 where he's having this conversation about light and darkness, claiming to know the light while walking in darkness. Listen to what he says in 1 John 1:7: *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and,"* listen to this, *"the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."* Keep going on, 1 John 1:8. *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* If we say we have no sin whatsoever, the truth is not in us. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."*

So, he's acknowledging that sin is still there. 1 John is not teaching us here...John is not telling us that once you are born again, sin is completely gone and you are perfect. That's

not what it's teaching us here. We've talked about that. The goal of our salvation, there's coming a day when sin will be gone. Praise God. What he says is...you see it in 1 John 2:1, *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."* In other words, when we sin and we've been born again, and we're followers of Christ...truly followers of Christ, and we sin, we hate that sin. We see it for what it is, and we don't continue to indulge ourselves in it over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. We don't continue in sin because we're in the light. The light exposes our sin, and we have an Advocate who's forgiven us of our sins.

You look in 1 John 3, what we were reading just a second ago. It's talking about how Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Christ came to overcome that sin. We have Christ in us, and therefore, we don't have to live in that sin anymore. Christ gives us victory over that sin.

I remind you of this, followers of Christ around this room: If there is any inkling in your life of continuing in sin, holding onto a sin that you go back to over and over again, I remind you that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. He's given us victory over sin. He gives you victory. The Adversary will try to convince you that you cannot overcome that. Christ always overcomes sin. He has conquered sin. The present work of Christ in your life is to enable you to obey what He says. Now, that's not holy perfection; instead, it's holy direction. Holy direction.

That's the picture here of not continuing to sin in 1 John 3:5-10. Same thing in 1 John 5:18. 1 John 5:18 reminds us that it's not our works. It talks about, in 5:18, it says that, *"We know that anyone born of God does not continue in sin; the one who was born of God..."* Now, he makes a shift here. It's talking about Christ, *"...the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him."*

Doesn't continue in sin because Christ guards you. Christ protects you. This is where we see...I hope you see the magnitude of this. This is not just some theological discussion, some doctrinal issue for preachers to talk about for awhile and us to go home. This is huge because if we claim to be in God, to be in Christ, and yet, we live our lives like Christ is not there, we live our lives indulging in all the things of this world, but we claim to be forgiven by Christ of all of our sins, going to heaven, but we live indulging in all the sins of this world, then we do violence to the salvation we have claimed. By saying that Jesus is able to handle the ultimate effect of sin, death, but Jesus apparently does not have the power to overcome sin in our lives on a daily basis, and He does.

He does have power to overcome sin in our lives on a daily basis. I have talked to numerous of you over the last few weeks who have, as we've been looking at the gospel and you've looked at some of your struggles with sin, have shared with me how God has given you just great victory through the gospel over sin. It is there. It is there to be found, the work of Christ in your life and the beauty of it is when Christ...listen to this...when Christ empowers you over sin, enables you to obey Him, then that brings assurance of salvation.

The work of Christ in your life: He's reminding you...every time He gives you victory over sin, He's reminding you, "You are mine. You have my power." Do you see the beauty of assurance here? Something we experience on a daily basis. The present work of Christ in our life, not holy perfection but holy direction. You see...don't miss it...you see why, if you are disobeying God, you're disobeying God's commands, you will have little to no assurance. It only makes sense. If you're ignoring the work of Christ in your life, then how can you have the assurance of Christ? We'll get to that later in a minute.

Second question...am I obeying what Christ says, and second, am I loving like Christ loves? Here's where it goes even deeper. 1 John 2:9-11, *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him."*

You go over to 1 John 4, and it talks a lot about love. 1 John 4:7, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever..."* Listen to this, *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* Goes into a description of how we know that God loves us, and how He lives in us. You get to 1 John 4:16. *"We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment..."* Assurance on the day of judgment. *"...because in this world we are like him."* Loving like Him.

Get down to 1 John 4:19, *"We love because he first loved us."* He's put His love in us. *"If anyone says..."* Listen to this, *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone that does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, who he has not seen. [And] he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."* Do you hear what John is saying here? If the love of Christ is not present in your life, then Christ is not present in your life.

His love is evident in the way you love others. You think about loving as Christ loves? Who did Christ come to love? Not the people who were easiest to love, but those who were hardest to love. Anyone in the world can love those whom it's easy to love, those whom they can get things from by showing them love. *"Christ demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* He says, "This is the love that is in you."

So, when you think about...we all know people who are hard to love. The love of God, if it is in us, enables us to love them. This is the picture. We know that we're in God when His love is flowing through us. So, when you are empowered, enabled to love people like Christ loves, it is Christ showing you, "You are mine. You are mine. I'm giving you the power to do this."

You know, there's people in your life that it's hard to love. You know you need Christ to enable you to do that. You can't do that on your own. When you do start to love them, you think, "This is definitely not me." This is the beauty of it. This is assurance. This is the way we lay down our lives for each other in the church. If there's not love, you're not in the church. There's not the love of Christ, there's not Christ. Am I loving like Christ loves? The picture is the work of Christ. When Christ is developing the fruit of His life in us, it brings great assurance. "Christ, I see what you are doing in me, what you are enabling me to do as I obey your commands, and I love like you love."

This is assurance: The present work of Christ in your life. The present truth of Christ in your life, the present work of Christ in your life, and third, the present Spirit of Christ in your life. I mentioned 1 John 4:6 and 1 John 5:6 talk about the Spirit of Truth. 1 John 3:24 talks about how God has given us His Spirit. 1 John 4:13 talks about how God has given us His Spirit. What I want you to see is assurance comes from the Spirit.

There's so...there's so many places we could go on this: Romans 8, the Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children. The Spirit testifies with our Spirit. Ephesians 1, write this one down. Go back and look at this one. Ephesians 1:13-14 says,

"...the Spirit is a deposit in us." Literally, "seals our hearts and guarantees our eternal redemption." The wording there is like a down payment. The Spirit is a down payment in your heart that guarantees that one day, your salvation will be complete. The Spirit is working in you, making you holy, is going to bring your salvation to completion. The Spirit testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children. He's given us His Spirit. Assurance is a gift from the Spirit.

Now, the question is, "How does this happen?" The Spirit testifies with our Spirit. What does that mean? Does that mean I hear a little voice in my ear that says, "You're mine"? No, that's not the way it works. It's not the way...I mean, maybe it does. If that has happened, I think that would be really cool. However, that's really not what Scripture is showing us here. 1 John has shown it in two ways. First, do I listen to the Spirit of God in His Word? This is 1 John 4:4-6. Verse 6 says that, "We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us." Talking about the apostolic teaching here, the apostles' teaching Acts 2:42. "But whoever is not from God does not listen to us."

This is how we recognize the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of falsehood. The Spirit of God speaks to us through His Word, and we listen. The Spirit of God illuminates our minds to understand His Word, and we listen submissively to Him. We listen to His Word, and then second, not only do I listen to the Spirit and His Word, but second, am I led by the Spirit of God in my walk? This is where the Spirit...the Spirit is the indwelling presence of Christ in us.

Takes us back to the end of 1 John 3, and you look at verses 21 through 24, and it talks about...you look at verse 24, it sums it up here. "*Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them.*" How does He live in us? Through the Spirit. This is how we know that He lives in us. We know about the Spirit He gave us. That's what he's saying. So how...this is talking about obeying the commands of God in 1 John 3:21-24. He says, "We obey the commands of God because we know that He is in us, and He is in us by His Spirit."

You look throughout the New Testament, you see the Spirit is teaching us. The Spirit is interceding for us. The Spirit guides us. The Spirit empowers us. The Spirit gives us gifts. The Spirit is doing all of these things. Every good thing we have is because the Spirit of God is in us. Everything. That's the picture: The Spirit is leading us in our walk, and as we walk in step with the Spirit, in step with His Word, then the assurance of salvation just grows and grows and grows.

However, here's the deal. If you neglect the Spirit, if you say to the Spirit of God, you grieve the Spirit, the Scripture talks about, and you do things your own way instead of following the leadership of the Spirit, then you undercut assurance. You undercut assurance. Listen to what...this is a great quote from a Puritan named Thomas Brooks. He said this. "The Spirit is the great revealer of the Father's secrets. He lies in the bosom of the Father. He knows every name that is written in the Book of Life. He is best acquainted with the inward workings of the heart of God toward poor sinners. He is the great comforter, and the only sealer up of souls to the day of redemption."

Then he says this, "If you grieve, by your willful sinning, he that alone can gladden you, then who will make you glad?" What he's saying there...Spirit gives us assurance as a gift; it's the Spirit testifying with our Spirit that we are God's children, that eternal salvation is a reality in our lives. If we grieve the Spirit of God, then we grieve the very one who is intended to comfort us and give us assurance. If we ignore the Spirit of God, we ignore the one who is intended to give us assurance. So, the picture is, the present work of Christ involves the present Spirit of Christ in your life working in you.

Now, you put those together...the present truth of Christ in your life, the present work of Christ in your life, and the present Spirit of Christ in your life...you put them together. You think about those six questions: Am I believing in Christ alone for my salvation? Am I abiding in Christ as my salvation? Am I obeying what Christ says? All of this through the grace of Christ enabling me, He's working, doing within me. Am I obeying what Christ says? Am I loving what Christ loves as Christ loves? Am I listening to His Spirit and the Word? Am I led by the Spirit in my walk?

You put all those together, and all of it's the work of Christ, truth of Christ, Spirit of Christ. It's Christ doing it. Not us trying to earn our way. It's not our performance. It's Christ's performance in us. He's doing these things, and the more we surrender our lives to Him, the more He does these things in us, assurance just grows. It's not that can easily be mistaken and probably will be mistaken by some people today, walking out thinking, "Well that means I need to do these things so that I can earn assurance." No. That means we need to surrender our lives day by day by day, just like we talked about last week, to the indwelling presence of Christ in us, His Spirit who is working out all of these things. Working out our salvation day by day by day, and the more we grow in Him, the more assurance grows. God intends for us to know that we have eternal life. He intends for us to know this.

However, we skew this picture, this biblical picture. It's completely foreign when it comes to assurance of salvation because we have so cheapened the gospel and said, "If you do this routine or this superstition, then you can be assured of heaven regardless of what your life looks like after that." Undercut the whole biblical picture of assurance with the way we have cheaply sold the gospel.

The Conclusion...

Beware of spiritual deception.

The beauty of it is we can have assurance on a moment by moment, day by day basis by the very living presence of Christ in us. As He brings His truth before us, as He works in us, He works in us through His Spirit. So, here's the conclusion I want to bring before you. Number one, I want to encourage you to beware of spiritual deception. Some of you, as I have talked, as God's Word has been read, you have said, "These things are not evident in my life." Maybe it has begun to make you think, "I have been claiming to know God. Do I really know God?" That is a question worth asking.

Again, my goal is not to make you feel insecure if you are secure in your salvation. However, my goal is to make you feel very insecure, based on the Word of God, if your salvation is not secure. Beware of spiritual deception. There's a reality for any one of us in this room, and it is worth wrestling with hour after hour after hour until there is peace in our Spirit, until we are told it is well with our soul, that we know we've been born again.

Be warned concerning spiritual inaction.

Second, be warned concerning spiritual inaction. Now, the question is, and 1 John is just one example. Hebrews? If you want to talk about warnings, Hebrews...it confuses everybody. The picture is we've got these pictures in Scripture that are saying, "If you continue in sin, and claim to know God, you're a liar." Now, people have taken that to say, "Well, that means that you can lose your salvation. Scripture's teaching you you can lose your salvation." We've already established that's not the case. That's not the case. We can

know...all right, these things are given so that you may believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. We can know.

However, what we have 1 John here for, and you saw it in part what he wrote, 1 John 2:1. He said, "*I write this to you so that you will not sin.*" Why does he say these strong words in 1 John 1 and 2? To warn us, to say...it's like a danger sign on the road when you're driving. "Bridge out ahead, don't keep moving forward." As children of God, it's a good thing that God puts warning signs in front of us and says, "Don't continue in sin." He says it very boldly at points. Colossians 1:21-23 says, "We will one day stand before God blameless, without blemish, if we continue in our faith." If we continue in our faith. Hebrews 3:14, "If you...you will complete...you will experience the goal of your salvation if you hold firmly to your faith." If you hold firmly to it. The picture is, God is saying, 1 John 2, "*Those who went out from us were never of us.*" You don't want to go down the road they're on. All those who truly belong to Him, who are born again, won't go down that road.

What He does is He gives us books like 1 John to say, "Avoid that road with everything you've got." It's like poison on the medicine bottle, says, "Don't take this. Don't take this. This sin...if you continue in sin, you are lying. You're showing that you don't belong to Christ. Don't continue in that sin." If there is any inkling in this room, in your life...and we all know our lives...our spiritual lives that ebb and flow, that ebb and flow. If you have wandered, if you've grown apathetic, if you are indulging in the things of this world, you know you belong to Christ, but you find yourself indulging in these things, then run away from them and let His light shine on those things, and cleanse you from those things. You have an Advocate for the Father in Jesus.

Confess your sins. He's faithful and just to forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Heed His warnings. Be warned concerning spiritual inaction. If your life does not reflect the love of Christ, then say, "God, I believe I belong to you, but I don't see your love in my life like it should be there." You know relationships where that may be the case.

Be working and waiting with spiritual anticipation.

So, go to God in light of 1 John and say, "God, create this love in me. Enable me to love." It spurs us on. This is part of our sanctification, our growing in Christ is why we have 1 John. Then, third, based on that, be working...again, working, as God works in you. It's God's grace, God's grace working in you. Be working and waiting with spiritual anticipation. Spiritual anticipation.

I want to show you this, just a couple of books over in Jude. Jude 20, and this is where we'll close out. Jude 20, listen to this. Jude 20...be working and waiting with spiritual anticipation. Do you notice in Scripture when it comes to assurance of salvation...and you think about how we skewed it today. Nowhere in Scripture, nowhere is eternal security or assurance of salvation used as an excuse for spiritual indifference. Nowhere is eternal assurance of salvation used as a reason why we can just coast through the Christian life because everything is going to be okay in the end. It's nowhere in Scripture.

That's what we use it as today. "Well, everything will be okay. I don't have to worry about...yeah, my life is not very pleasing to God, but in the end, it's going to be okay." Nowhere do you see that in Scripture. Nowhere. Instead, you see Paul...Paul is not just on this glider going down the hill. "Oh yeah, everything is all right." Instead, he's saying in 1 Timothy 6, like, "Fight the good fight. Finish the course." 2 Timothy 4, he gets to the end of his life. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race."

He's not just gliding down this downhill ride. He's working through an obstacle course time after time, point after point. He's working. By the work...power of God and in working, and waiting with spiritual anticipation. What do you mean? Look at Jude 20. *"You, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves..."* That's what he's saying. "Keep yourselves." That's the working part. Now, listen to the waiting part. *"Keep yourselves in God's love."* So, keep yourselves there *"as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."* Isn't that a great picture?

You work with the power that God provides, and along the way you trust Him that there's coming a day when He's going to bring your salvation to its full completion. It's the picture in Jude 24. *"To him who is able to keep you from falling..."* This verse, hide this verse in your heart. *"...Keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord...now and forevermore!"*

God is able to keep you from falling. This is the beautiful truth when it comes to assurance of salvation. By His grace...ladies and gentlemen, followers of Christ, those who have trusted in Christ for salvation across this room, be secure because of this. By His grace, He will bring you to eternal life. He will do it.

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