

Stand Tall

By Don Green

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Bible Text: 1 John 2:24-25
Preached on: Sunday, October 14, 2012

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, good morning once again. I'm so very happy to have you all with us and to be able to come back to our study in the book of 1 John is where we're going to be if you want to turn to the book of 1 John. That beloved hymn that we just sang emphasizes the transcendent realities of being a Christian even in the face of the worst sorrows that life can bring and that is something that we need to come back to again and again. We're all afflicted with that certain disease of soul that we're weighed down by the things that we see and the things that are unseen tend to fall back into the recesses of our minds when the pressures of life and different things are right there in our face. Well, we have to go back and remind ourselves again and again and again exactly what it means to be a Christian, exactly what it means and what are the promises and the glories of belonging to Christ because as we keep those things fresh in our minds, it has a way of making this life appear for what it really is: something that is passing, something that is temporal, something that need not hold a grip on the affections of our heart. And as we come to our passage for this morning, that's exactly what we see here in 1 John 2. Verses 24 and 25 are going to be our text for this morning. 1 John 2:24-25 making the emphatic point, the important point to keep the realities of being in Christ at the forefront of your thinking as you walk through life here on this earth. 1 John 2:24-25, let me read them for us. The Apostle John says,

24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

Now, for those of you that haven't been with us, we've said repeatedly that the overarching theme of the book of 1 John, the Apostle John wrote in order to help Christians achieve spiritual victory in the midst of a hostile world.

Look over at 1 John 5:4 as you see that he says, "whatever is born of God," and a Christian is someone who is born of God, not born of the works of his own hands, "whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." Now, the victory for these first century Christians that they rightfully had title to was being threatened by false teachers who had influenced the life in their body and then had gone away and the Apostle John wrote to expose these false

teachers for who they were: they were liars; they were antichrists and they need not have any affect, they need not have any lingering diminishing effect on the joy of being a Christian in this world. So John is writing to remind them of certain great truths about being a Christian so that they would not be crushed by the opposition of false teachers; not be crushed by the opposition of opposing circumstances and all of those things that we all know by sad personal experience. He says, "You are meant to be a victor over this passing temporal world and the way that you are a victor is to remember the eternal realities that God has deposited in you in our Lord Jesus Christ."

It's not that complicated, it's just that we make it complicated by losing the focus of what God's word says. There is no question about this and you and I particularly in times like these in an election season, we have to come back again and again and again and remember what it means to be a Christian in order to be able to stand in victory, in order to stand tall, as it were, in Christ; to stand tall, to stand firm, to have an undivided loyalty and allegiance to Christ; to stand firm in the midst of shifting sands that the world has us standing on; to stand firm, to stand on the Rock and to remember the glories of what it means to be a Christian. Because in that way, in that way in standing tall, in standing firm in the midst of the shifting sand all around us, we manifest and God testifies through our lives that there is a transcendent value to knowing Christ that this world cannot substitute, cannot replace, and cannot shake.

Beloved, I want you to know and to rest in and to be confident in and to rejoice in the glories of being a Christian. It's just that simple. It's just that simple and the joy stands the test of every possible opposing circumstance that could ever come to pass in your life. Every single one of them is swept up and buried under the great glory and grandeur of being in Christ and belonging to the eternal God knowing that you are strangers and exiles on this earth passing through in order to receive an internal inheritance of glory that surpasses, by far, anything that could happen in this life. We have to have that at the center of our affections in order to live the Christian life that God has called us to live.

Now, there are two things in the passage that we just said that I want to show you that are the keys of maintaining that joy of walking in the midst of that victory that the Scripture describes. It's not the joy, let me just clarify, it's not the joy of an always bubbly, happy, outgoing sort of personality that some people have by disposition and some people don't. It's not a superficial and – listen – it is not a manufactured happiness that you put on as a mask to the outside world while you're dying inside. It is not that. That is not what we're talking about at all. What we're talking about is heart affections that so love Christ, that are so engaged in the glory of being a Christian, that that becomes the dominating, prevailing, motivating factor that shapes your out-view on the entirety of life, the entirety of everything that you ever experience. You view it all through the lens of being a Christian rather than viewing being a Christian through the lens of difficult circumstances. Your starting point is everything.

How do you manifest that? How do you do that? Two points here this morning. First of all, and it's so simple. It's so simple but the simplicity of it is the genius of it in the mind of God. First of all, point 1, how do you manifest that? You continue in God's word. You

continue in God's word. That is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian is that a Christian is someone who loves God's word. A Christian is someone who is faithful to Scripture. Faithfulness to Scripture is a hallmark, it is a defining feature of what it means to be a Christian. Without being faithful to Scripture, you have no claim on knowing Christ at all because Christ has revealed himself in his word in the 66 books of the Bible.

Turn back in the book of Psalms. I want to set a scriptural context for you for this. Back in Psalm 1, notice the defining mark of the righteous man. Psalm 1:1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" Verse 2, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." Notice that continual aspect of the meditation in God's law. It's his delight. It's what he loves. It's what he does. It's what he delights in. It's what he does is that the word of God is central to the defining way that he views all of life. That's why we teach God's word at Truth Community. It's the only thing that matters. God's word is the most important thing in the universe.

It says in verse 3, what will his life be like? "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." We love God's word as Christians, we focus on God's word, we realize that there will be seasons in life, there will be ups and downs, there will be waves that come and go, but we are anchored like a tree by a river into the life-giving source of spiritual life, spiritual understanding that is found in God's word. That's what a Christian does. Oh, beloved, do you understand? Do you see that it was in the Scriptures that salvation was revealed in the first place? Without the Scriptures, we would be utterly and miserably lost. That which would attack the authority of Scripture, that which would undermine the Scripture, that which would take your attention away from God's word is all designed to take you away from your very source of life. It's where the Gospel is revealed. It's where our spiritual growth is revealed. It's where the power of Christian living is found. It's all there in God's word. So to be a Christian means that you have a fundamental, unshakeable, unwavering commitment to this word. That's why martyrs spilled their blood on the pages of this book, it's because this book is more important than life itself and so while most of us aren't going to be asked to shed blood for the sake of this book, we have no less a call of allegiance that says, "I'll stake my life on this book. I'll shape my life by the importance of this book. I'll shape my thinking day by day by what this word says." You continue in God's word.

Now, for another look at it, turn over a little bit to Psalm 119 and let's read Psalm 119 together. No, that's 176 verses. I wouldn't do that to you, although that would be a worthy thing to do sometime. Maybe we'll have a service and we'll just sometime just read through all 176 verses of Psalm 119. I'll think about that sometime. But for now, I'll be content to simply point your attention to Psalm 119:97 where the Psalmist said, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine." Then look at what it says in verse 99 and let me read it and then just make a couple of comments on it. He says, "I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts." Listen, if you are a sincere believer in

Christ, maybe unaccomplished in the realm of theological education or whatever that might be, I want you to look at this passage and find in it your courage, your motivation, your confidence because the Scriptures have the intrinsic power as you devote your mind and attention to them, they have the intrinsic power to give you discernment, to give you joy and understanding that goes beyond what teachers who stand in front could give to you, teachers who do not love the word of God in that same way. The word of God continually gives to the humblest, simplest believers discernment to pierce through the philosophies of the day simply because these Scriptures are inspired by God and God uses his Scripture by the power of his Holy Spirit to illumine our minds, to illumine our understanding, to give us insight that goes beyond our native abilities to do.

And beloved, don't you see, don't you see how that should make you love this word? Love it enough to continue in it. Love it enough to arrange your life around it. Love it enough to spend time in it day by day simply because it is so precious, value beyond rubies and diamonds and the ability to give you insight that goes beyond what a seminary professor who contradicts it could ever do. We have in the word of God a shelter, a fortress, a place where we can run to and have understanding. Never to be put aside for the sake of quiet conversations. Never to be put aside for jokes and stories and all of that and for entertainment. No, nothing can replace the centrality of the word of God in the Christian life and in the church of Jesus Christ.

Maybe that points out part of what we need to understand about what it means to be a Christian as we think about continuing in God's word, is that corporately speaking, the church, again speaking corporately, not so much this church but the purpose of the church is not to entertain the audience. The purpose of the church is to bring the glory of God down as he has revealed it in his word and to manifest that and we exist to serve Christ, to serve his word, not the other way around. The church exists to serve Christ and honor him in the proclamation of his word, not to cater to our own desires. It's all a question of who's preeminent. It's all a question of who reigns; of who should be the one who receives the glory; of whose desires should be furthered when we gather together on a Sunday when we live our lives. It's not about furthering our desires, it's about furthering the will of Christ. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, and as we're faithful to that, then he'll supply all our needs; "all these other things will be added to you," he says.

Look, not everyone is called to teach. Not everyone is called to preach. It's not that we all have to be teachers of God's word. What my prayer for you is, what my prayer for this fellowship is wherever God takes us in the years to come, is that there would be such a love and affection in your heart for the word of God that it almost starts to hurt. I preach these things and I'll tell you, it almost physically hurts me because, as Jeremiah said, "There's a fire in my bones. I've got to let it out." There should just be in the Christian and here's what I'm saying, you don't have to be animated like I get sometimes; I haven't gotten that way yet today, I know, but you know what I'm saying. There should be such a tender affection in your heart for the word of God that its truth is the most precious thing to you; that the fact that God in heaven has revealed himself in this word, that he has made Christ and the forgiveness of your sins known here, that he has made the glory of

heaven known here in this word; that there should be just such a transcendent love and affection for his word that it shapes the way that you live; that you have affections for it that make you want to know it and that make you want to defend it when it's attacked, right? How could we have any other thing? This is our life. This is the umbilical cord that connects us to God. Sever a Christian from the word of God and you might as well sever the umbilical cord from a baby in its mother's womb, the source of life has been removed. That's why we continue in God's word.

Look over at the Gospel of John 8:31-32, "Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.'" Notice how Jesus equates the two: someone who continues in his word is a disciple; a disciple continues in the word. It's not that difficult. It's pretty plain. He says, "If you continue in My word," verse 32, "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." The point there from that passage simply being that Jesus says that continuing in God's word, abiding in God's word, remaining in God's word over the course of time is the mark of a true Christian and, look, I know that so many of you love God's word that way. That's why you're here. There's not much other reason to come to Truth Community but you come because you do love God's word and you want it in your life. Well, just understand that that's the mark of a true Christian. Understand that that's the mark of someone that God has shown mercy to. Not that you're at Truth Community, not that, that's not what I'm saying, it's the fact that he has deposited in your heart a love for God's word. That's what God does to every one of his true children and if you have that abiding mark of the love of God in your heart, understand that God has put the signet ring seal of approval on your life saying, "This is the mark of my true children, they love my word." And I thank God that so many of you are like that and it shows in the way that you talk and the things that you want to ask about and the marks of your congregation. That's the positive side of it.

Go back to 1 John 2. The one who has only had a passing interest in Scripture, the one who flared up when there was a study on Revelation and then never showed up again, never had any interest in it again, never picked up a Bible again, that kind of passing interest in Scripture, someone who can just walk away from the Bible without any regard for it in the future is someone who is showing he was never truly saved to begin with. You know, Jesus talked about seed that would sprout up but wither away because there was no firm root in it. The Bible is filled with this kind of teaching.

Look at verse 24, 1 John 2:24 again. John states it in the positive way, "let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." That apostolic message. The truth of the Gospel. Let that abide in you. "If what you heard from the beginning abides in you," the word means "to remain with you; to continue with you." If that continues on in your life, "you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." That is the mark of truly being in union with Christ. It has to be that way. Christ loves his own word and if you are in union with Christ, if you've been joined together with him, his affections are going to filter through yours and be shown and lived out in the things that you love and care about as well. If Christ has come down, the power of God has come down on your life, you've believed in Christ and the Holy Spirit has invaded your life, as it were, taken up residence, dwelling

in you, then surely the Holy Spirit who wrote this book would manifest as he works out his will in your life, would manifest in you a love for the book that he wrote. That's what it says. So the path of discipleship goes through the word of God; the mark of a true Christian is someone who continues in the word of God.

So let's just step back for a moment and just ask yourself honestly, it doesn't have to be overly introspective or anything: does your life manifest a love for God's word or not? It's really not that difficult a question and I'm not saying anything about daily quiet times or anything like that. We're not looking at the externals, we're talking about the affections of your heart. Do you have a deep rooted love for the Bible? That's the mark of a Christian. No matter what else is happening in your life, that's the mark of a Christian. And one of the things that I think is helpful to think about in these things is to realize that there's an ebb and flow to life. There are times when circumstances or health issues just overwhelm you and you don't have the same kind of time for God's word that you had in your youth perhaps, but the question is: where is the center of gravity in your affections? When the smoke clears away, does your heart go back to God's word? "Oh, finally I'm back to God's word again. Praise God! I have missed it while I was in a coma for three months," or whatever. "I'm back in God's word again. This is the most precious thing." Do you know something about that in your heart affections because that's the mark of a true Christian? And beloved, if you don't, if you don't know that by deep personal heart love and loyalty to God's word, the one prayer that you should be praying is saying, "God, I think something's wrong with me. I think I may not be the Christian that I thought I was because I'm really indifferent to your word at the heart of hearts of things and you know that, Lord. God, you've got to save me in the first instance."

Well, continue in God's word, point 2 for this morning is this: how is it that we stand tall in Christ? We continue in God's word, secondly, you rejoice in Christian life. Let's put it this way and then I'll explain what I mean by that. You rejoice in Christian life. Stated differently, you find joy in the truths about what it means to be a Christian. You find joy in the truth of what it means to be a Christian. You see, if you have been born again, God has truly saved you; you have entered into this newness of life as 2 Corinthians 5 talks about; you're a new creation in Christ, the old things have passed away, behold, new things have come; you have some kind of idea of a new life that has manifested itself in your soul that you didn't know before. Well, if you have something about that in you, understand that there is a doctrinal content to that new life that explains who you are and where you're going and what your priorities of life are and you find joy in that and it's the most important thing in the universe to you. You rejoice in the Christian life. You see, for those who continue in God's word as believers, God has promised what he'll do in our present experience and what he will do for us in the future and it's the most important thing in the universe. Everything else pales in significance by comparison.

Look at chapter 2, verse 25. This is awesome. Verse 25, "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." Now look, when you have a promise from God, you have a certain guarantee from one who can never lie. It's not that God can do absolutely everything. There are certain things that God cannot do. Titus 1:2 says God cannot lie. And one of the things that God has promised with an oath by the unchangeableness of his

certain character is he has promised to Christians eternal life. Now, if we have a promise certified in the word of God from God himself, then we need to know something really important: what exactly is it that he has promised to us? We can't turn the promise into something that he hasn't promised. We need to know exactly what it is that he has promised to give to true Christians.

Now, Scripture does not promise us earthly ease, earthly prosperity, wealth and health. It doesn't promise that to every believer at all times. Even for those of us that aren't even tempted that way to think that way, understand that Scripture doesn't even promise you that all of your loved ones will come to a saving knowledge of Christ. There are Christians that will go through life and not see their loved ones saved. As much and as important as that is to us, as much as we pray for that and seek God's favor upon those in our lives that we love, understand that God hasn't promised that to us. We need clarity about what God has promised so that we would rest our joy and our hope in the things that we certainly know that we possess.

So what is it? Just by way of a little bit of other explanation about that, look, the earthly things you desire may not come to pass, right? Most of you have been around long enough to know what it's like to have serious life hopes dashed, disappointed and to have to deal with the consequences of that. Well, look, listen, your disappointment is not a manifestation of the failure of the promises of God. James 4 says you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. We don't have promises about tomorrow. Jesus said in John 16:33, in this world you have tribulation. There is going to be tribulation, there is going to be sorrow and those realities which you know by experience and which are confirmed by the word of God, those realities of the sorrows of living in this fallen world, should do this for you if nothing else, if you want to take those and turn them into something positive in your life, let them be that which redirects your attention to what God really has promised to his children; to bring spiritual clarity to the way that you think about life because if you think it's about earthly ease, you're going to be disappointed but when you're clear about the promise – oh, this is lovely – when you're clear about the promise, you know what to seek and what to treasure so that you are building your life on the rock of what God has promised in his word rather than the shifting sand of what he has not promised which are more a reflection of earthly desires rather than the promise of God in Scripture.

What is it then when you start to see it that way, the question that starts to overwhelm my mind is: what then is it that he has promised? If this is so great to be a Christian, if it's so wonderful to know Christ and yet you tell me that earthly sorrows may come, that there may be gross disappointments that shake me to the core, what is it then that is supposed to be so transcendently wonderful about being a Christian? I'll tell you and here's a little exercise in Bible interpretation just to help you know how to approach the Scriptures. Go back to chapter 2, verse 25 with me there in 1 John. He says, "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." Well, okay, eternal life, John, great, what does that mean? Well, here's a key to Bible interpretation and to understanding. John doesn't expand on it right there in that verse, does he? He just throws out that little summary statement: he has promised us eternal life. Well look, if he has made a statement like that,

"this is the promise, it's eternal life," then one thing you can know for certain because God intends there to be clarity in your understanding as you read the word of God, is that somewhere else in the context of that book, of that passage, there is going to be an expansion, an understanding, an explanation of what this eternal life means and we're going to stick right within the four corners of the document of 1 John, not going out to other places of Scripture, although that would have its own legitimacy, but we just want to see what John the apostle had in mind as he was writing under the inspiration of the Scriptures when he said, "This is the promise, eternal life." What does he mean by that? What is it that brings transcendent joy, spiritual power, undying allegiance to Christ? What are the promises? What's included in that promise of eternal life that makes us more than conquerors in this world?

I think John probably told us there. Do you know what? He did. I'll give you four things that he says right here in 1 John as you look from beginning to end of the word of God in 1 John. First of all, what does he promise, 1, what does this promise include: it includes the knowledge of God. It includes the knowledge of God. Look at 1 John 1:3. What is it about eternal life? What does eternal life include? What is it that gives transcendent meaning that would reattach our affections from this world to Christ himself in an undying allegiance never to be surrendered? One of them is the knowledge of God. There is a vertical life dimension resting in the very knowledge of God himself, the Creator of heaven and earth; to know him and to know his character based on his infallible word.

Look at chapter 1, verse 3, John says, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that," here's the purpose, "so that you too," you, true believers, so that you as a true believer, "may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship," our shared life, the participation that we share together, "is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete." He says right there at the opening of the statement that one of the aspects for which he wrote to secure joy in the life of a true Christian, is to understand that God in Christ has given you a direct personal knowledge of him based on the revelation found in Scripture. You, as a Christian, know God. Let that sink into your mind for a bit. You know God and your knowledge of him can be ever deepened as you continue to study his ways, his works and his character in the Scriptures. You know, vertically speaking, you personally know the living God.

Now listen, listen, that is more important than anything on earth and so you rejoice in that. "Yeah, life is falling apart all around me, but do you know what? I know God. It is well with my soul because God has made himself known to me in Christ. I have the knowledge of God. I know who God is and he knows me." As the hymn writer said, "I am his and he is mine." I belong to him and he belongs to me. I am his child, he is my Father. He knows my needs before I ask him. And to whatever extent that that doesn't thrill someone's soul is only a reflection that they don't understand it not because it's not the most treasured thing in the universe. We know God. That's grounds to rejoice because that's a knowledge that transcends life.

Secondly, what else is it that we rejoice in in the Christian life? What else is it that we know? That we treasure? That firms up this allegiance? That causes us to stand tall in the Christian life? To stand tall while everything else collapses around us? What is it? Secondly, it's not just the knowledge of God although that would be wonderful, secondly, it's the forgiveness of sin. It's the forgiveness of sin.

Look at chapter 1, verse 7, "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light," God is light it says in verse 5, "in Him there is no darkness at all," "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Look at chapter 2, verse 12, along those same lines, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake." Listen, it could be said rightly, clearly and accurately that someone who has a shallow view of sin is never going to have a deep love for Christ. Jesus says, "He who has been forgiven much loves much." And to understand that and this applies to each one of us, you and me, that we all have broken God's law. James says that if we have broken his law in one place, we have broken them all. We stand before the law of God as guilty transgressors on our own. Guilty transgressors. The weight of a rightly accusing conscience saying, "You are guilty. You have broken God's law." And to feel the weight of that, to feel the weight of an accusing conscience, to feel the weight of the condemning law of God upon your mind is a crushing burden too great to bear. And it applies to everyone, not everyone recognizes it, not everyone confesses it but all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

This is a great condemnation of the entire human race, a condemnation that carries with it in a penalty of eternal damnation, an eternal punishment as the just result of violating the internal law of an eternal God and the weight of that, the fear of that, the guilt and shame that makes you want to turn away, pressing down upon the human mind, in that condition to have the Gospel shine like a beacon of light into the midst of that dark closet, Christ calling us out of it saying, "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Come to me and find the forgiveness of your sins." For those of us who know Christ, who have turned from sin and put our faith in Christ and he has received us and his blood covers us, his righteousness covers us and the guilt that once was credited to our account has been taken away because he had it imputed to himself and now has given you his righteousness to stand faultless before the throne of God, to say as a Christian, "That great spiritual wealth belongs to me personally. My sins are forgiven. Not only am I not guilty before God, he has declared me righteous based on the righteousness of Christ. I have every prerogative to be in heaven that Christ himself does because that's what Christ has given to me as a gift in salvation. The Holy of Holies, I belong there!" So do you if you belong to Christ. That there is no longer the stain of sin on your soul. That all of the wretchedness of your past life which only God knows better than you do and God says, "Do you know what? Your sins and lawless deeds I'll remember them no more. I'm not going to hold them against you. I'm not going to bring them up. I'm not going to bring them into account because I laid them on Christ and I punished him and I raised him from the dead and now you are free." To be a Christian is to possess that personally. To be a Christian is to have the forgiveness of sin; it's to have that as eternal life. That's a gift beyond measure.

The knowledge of God, the forgiveness of sin, thirdly as we rejoice in the Christian life, thirdly: the hope of glory. Think about this: if all that it meant to be a Christian was that we could walk through this life with a true knowledge of God and with an assurance that our sins were forgiven and we went through life with that and then we died and it was over and then we just cease to exist, if that's all that there was to being a Christian, we would still have every reason to be joyful and grateful and thankful to God and go through life singing at the top of our lungs, "Glory to God for such a Savior as mine! Glory to God for his goodness in my life!" Yeah, I'm going to die and that's going to be the end of it but it's still great while it lasts because it would still be so much more than you deserve, right? If that's all that there was, it would be great to be a Christian but do you know what? Whenever my mind goes to this mental realm, the thing that I can't get over, the thing that just sends chills down my spine is the fact that this is just an introduction to what it really means to be a Christian. This is just the narthex. This is just an appetizer before the main course. This is just a foretaste of glory. All of the richness of being a Christian now is simply a foretaste, it is just a down payment on the fulfillment of the great promise that God has really given us that is yet to be ours.

Look at chapter 3, verse 2. You'll see if you're not familiar with this text, you'll see why it's so precious right now. If we died and it ended and it was all over and it went into a non-conscious realm of nonexistence, being a Christian would still be worth it but look at chapter 3, verse 2. Look at the future promises here. Look at the future tenses here. "Beloved, now we are children of God." Isn't that great? We're children of God right now. We belong to his family. What a great, precious possession. "And." And? And? You mean there's more than this? You mean there's more than the present experience of Christ? Is that what you're saying, John, as you write to us? "And it has not appeared as yet what we will be." There is more? There is more to this than what I know right now? What could possibly be better than this, knowing God and having the forgiveness of my sin? "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." A string of single syllable words talking about the glory that has been deposited, the glory that awaits for us that can never be taken away.

Look at what it says there. We know that when he appears. Christ is going to return so that's going to change a lot of things and when he appears, we'll be like him. We are going to be transformed from this defective human clay in which we have our breath and somehow in a way that I don't fully understand, we're going to be made like the perfected resurrected glorious Lord Jesus Christ, that seeing him is going to change us in an instant so that we are going to be like him, perfected and be like that forever. Do you see it? The sorrows of this life yield over to a perfection in internal glory. That's part of the promise of eternal life that John is referring to here. We're going to be like Christ one day. Christ is glorious, we're going to share in his glory. Christ is perfect, we're going to share in his perfection. Christ is in the full presence of God, whatever that's like, we're going to share that with him. We're going to be around his throne. The wounds are still going to be visible. And one day, beloved, one day, one great and glorious day that is going to incinerate any remembrance of this world, one great and glorious day, we are going to look full into his face and see the glory of Christ face to face and then we're just going to

fall down at his feet and worship him and that's not going to be a simple momentary experience being in the glorious presence of the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, that is going to be the unending experience of everyone who knows Christ is to be in that realm of glory, sin cast away forever, the sorrows of this life cast away forever, all remembrance of this life gone for the sake of the transcendent realm of being in the presence of Christ and utterly consumed with the fullness of his glory, utterly consumed with the perfect character of the one who loved us and gave himself up for us. Not just us, he gave himself up for me, first-person singular, you by name. You're going to be in the presence of the one who thought of you on the cross and died to rescue you from the slave market of sin so that you in a totally undeserved way could be with him forever. That's going to be glorious. That's the promise that God has given to us. We will be with him. We will be like him and that will never end. That's the glory of what it means to be a Christian and so as wonderful and as glorious and as undeserved as it is to be a Christian right now, by comparison to what it's going to be, by comparison, this is insignificant. The glory of this life yields to an infinitely greater glory that awaits us just a little bit longer ahead.

Do you love Christ? You should because he's the fourth aspect even of the eternal life. We have said the knowledge of God, the forgiveness of sin, the hope of glory, ultimately eternal life is about having the person of Christ himself. Look over at chapter 5, verse 11, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life." There's our word, right? This is the promise that he made to us, eternal life. What is this eternal life? We're just explaining what the phrase means by the context in which it's used. Verse 11, "the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Drop down to verse 20, chapter 5, verse 20, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." You have the person of Christ.

Here's what I want you to see, beloved, wrapping all of this up: knowledge of God, forgiveness of sin, hope of glory, the person of Christ. What you've got to see is that what God has given us in Christ, what God has given you in your eternal salvation is not passing temporary earthly blessings that are destined to perish with their use. What God has given you in salvation are spiritual blessings that you are meant to treasure from the bottom of your heart. He has given us spiritual blessings. We're not looking for our hope on this earth. We're not tied to what the immediate future might hold in our lives or in the life of our nation. That's not what it's about! You say, "Why are you shouting?" I'm shouting because this is on the verge of being lost in the Christian consciousness today. That's why I'm shouting. It's not about an election. It's not about material blessing. It's not about healing from a particular disease. This is transcendent. This is about an eternal God, not a temporary life. It's about a forgiveness of sin, not the provision of money. It's about Christ, not about us, and for my sake, I think that's worth raising my voice over. You see, when you understand these things, when you believe God at what he said in his word and you treasure it, then you love it. Your allegiance goes to it and when you see it

threatened, you react against is just as if your family member was being threatened by someone. You'd react against that and act to protect it.

So as you assess your spiritual condition today, let me just ask you four simple questions. Do you treasure these spiritual realities? That wasn't one of the questions. That's the overarching theme. No, are you a Christian? Ask yourself these questions: do you love this God? Are your sins forgiven? Do you have a hope of future glory that brightens your soul? Do you love Christ? Do you know him? Do you have him? Can you say, "I am his and he is mine"? That's what it means to be a Christian. That's what it means to be a Christian. These questions lay open your heart. True Christians resonate with those spiritual realities. True Christians say, "This is what it's all about."

If these things are foreign to you, if you look at yourself and you just have to honestly say, "Do you know what? That's not me. You know, I know that's just not what I love in life." Understand this, God has brought you to this point here this morning to understand that, to open your mind to say that your absence of love for these spiritual realities is a mark of the deadness of your spiritual soul and God by the power of his Holy Spirit is calling you out of that deadness and saying, "Come to Christ. Come out of that dead spiritual life. Come to Christ. Leave behind your allegiance to this world. Leave behind your love for sin and repent of all of it and come to Christ in unconditional surrender of the allegiance of your heart and say, 'Everything that you are is what I want to animate my life.'" There is a total transfer of allegiance and if you're here today and you're not a Christian, I am calling you out of the world, out of the realm of those earthly affections to give your life to this wonderful Lord Jesus Christ who is worthy of all preeminent praise.

For those of you that do treasure these realities, let me just give you a closing word of encouragement. Take courage. You can stand tall in the midst of your sorrows and obstacles and I want you to understand something and this is really important to get, is that loving these things, loving Christ like this, standing tall, as it were, on the foundation of the sure word of God, doesn't mean that it comes without sorrows and obstacles and great heart disappointments.

Look at 2 Corinthians 12. Your standing tall for Christ may happen in the midst of tears and weakness. Your weakness is not a sign in your life that it is not real, quite to the contrary. 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul is speaking, Christ had said to him in the midst of this thorn in the flesh that he had, he said in verse 8, "I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me." Verse 9, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." Beloved struggling Christian, understand that your weakness is not a sign that you are failing. Your weakness is simply the stage upon which God is displaying his transcendent strength in your life. Take heart. It's not without tears, it's not without struggles, it's not without sorrows but all of those struggles and sorrows are earthly and the time is going to come where God is going to swallow up all of those sorrows in your life and deliver to you and hand to you the

victory in heaven that Christ promised for you and which he will most certainly fulfill. Praise be to his name.

Let's bow in prayer.

Father, as we come before you mindful of knowing you, mindful of the forgiveness of sin, the hope of glory, the person of Christ, the sweetest note of them all, that Christ belongs to us and we belong to him. Father, I pray for these precious friends, some perhaps who need to come to Christ, Father, may your Spirit work a power in their life and bring them to Christ even now, Lord. Press upon them the urgency that today is the day of salvation. Give them the transparency before you to acknowledge the emptiness of their life, their disregard for your person, their love of self and repent of all of it and lay themselves humbly before the feet of Christ and to receive him for eternal salvation. For those of us that know you, Father, forgive us for being overwhelmed by the trials of this world as though those were the most important things in life. Father, forgive us for treasuring earthly priorities over what our true heart priority is. We just confess before you right now, Father, in the quietness of this moment, that knowing you, having the forgiveness of sin, having a sure hope of glory and knowing Christ himself is the most important thing in our affections and because you have made those things, you have given those things to us in Christ, you have given those things to us in our salvation, we just want to tell you that right now we are content in you. You have given us so far more than we deserve. We honor you. We bless you. We rejoice in you. Father, keep us in these things even as we pledge to you our commitment to continue in them ourselves. And Father, as we do that, bless us and give us grace that we might rejoice forever more. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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