

Final Certainty

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This is a special day in the life of our church. For those of you that are visiting, we are glad you're here. We're at the end of a lengthy exposition that we've done in the book of 1 John. This is our final message in 1 John and it's a little bit bittersweet for me. It's hard, when you preach through a book like this, you kind of develop an affection for it and it's bittersweet to contemplate saying goodbye to it and there's a reason why we went through 1 John at the start of the life of our fellowship. We're a new, fairly new church for those of you that are here. We only started a little over a year ago and we wanted to start and laid a foundation about what a true Christian is and what a true Christian looks like. Before you can gather together as a body in membership in a local church, we need to have a common understanding of what it means to be a Christian and that's what we've done. We've seen what the Scriptures say about true Christianity through the book of 1 John and this is the final message that we'll have on 1 John at least for a while as we come to chapter 5, verses 18 through 21, and I would invite you to turn there.

1 John 5:18-21, our final message in 1 John, and a secular authority on public speaking once said, "When you're going to speak, tell your audience what you are going to say, then say it, and then tell them what you just said." There is a lot of truth to that and when you study the book of 1 John, you realize that that is exactly what he's doing as we enter these last four verses in the book of 1 John. John has said his whole theme here in this book was to show his readers how to find spiritual victory in the midst of a hostile world. He wanted us to know how to live in the midst of a world environment that was hostile to everything that we believe. He says, "Look, don't be surprised when the world hates you. Don't be surprised when you encounter false teachers. Don't be surprised when you wrestle with sin and temptation in your own life. All of these things are threats but in Christ, in Christ, you have all that you need to be able to overcome all of those internal and external threats and live a life that glorifies God." That's what he's given to us in this wonderful book and now he is bringing it to a conclusion. He's bringing it to the climax. He's summarizing everything that he said in the prior five chapters and makes a final call to action.

Look at verses 18 through 21 with me as we read them to set them in our minds as we begin this morning, these blessed words that God inspired the Apostle John to write. We're reading the very word of God as we read this translation here together this morning. Verse 18,

18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 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. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Notice just in a little bit of an overview fashion this climax of knowledge that he says that we have. Verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins." Verse 19, "We know that we are of God." Verse 20, "we know that the Son of God comes." Verse 20, "we know Him who is true." There is this emphasis on certainty in keeping with his theme that Christians can achieve spiritual victory in the midst of a hostile world. And I've got to tell you, to have that theme coming through in the days in which we are living is very encouraging. It's very comforting to know that as the fabric of society seems to be unraveling around us and the things that we as Christians hold dear are regarded very cheaply by the world around us, it's very encouraging to read this triumphant note upon which this book ends; that there is a note of knowledge, a note of certainty, a note of confidence that can mark and is expected to mark and even must mark our lives as Christians. You do not have to be afraid. You do not have to be afraid as you go through life. Either through your personal circumstances, you don't have to face those with fear and as you see society around us doing whatever it's going to do, you don't have to be shaken from your firm confidence about where your hope lies. He says, "We know these things."

Look at it again with me in verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins." Verse 19, "We know that we are of God." We know that we belong to him. We know that he has delivered us out of this present world. As we sang earlier, we can sing with confidence, "I am his and he is mine," and Christ is one day going to triumph over this entire world. When we are with him in that victory, then the temporary setbacks of life will really lose their significance altogether, even death holds no fear for us. Verse 20, "we know the Son of God has come." And so John here is bringing this to a climax. If you've ever been to a fireworks display and you know that the climactic finale is just bursting forth all kinds of great explosions of grandeur which is a celebration of everything that went on before it and just brings it all to a great climax. Well, that's what's going on here in verse 20. John is bringing it all to a conclusion. He's not giving us suggestions or philosophical thoughts. What he is doing is he is giving us affirmations that are beyond dispute that you can build your spiritual life on, that you can build your hope upon with confidence that, watch this, that your hope will not be disappointed in the end. That's the gift of God that we have in this passage here this morning.

We're going to look at two aspects of what he does here for us this morning. We're going to see, first of all, the certain realities of salvation. That's the first point if you're taking notes. We're going to see the certain realities of salvation. Because salvation comes from the mind of God and by the power of God, there are certain things that are necessarily

going to be accomplished and in light of some of the weak teaching that kind of populates the church these days, it's good to come and have a passage that shows us the certainty of it. Look, your salvation never depended on you and it never could have. If your salvation depended on you, if it depended on us, if my salvation depended on me, we might as well close our Bibles and get out the exits that Larry pointed us to earlier and just forget about it because we can't save ourselves. You don't have the capacity. You don't have the power to save your own soul. Thankfully, we don't have to. God has done it and because God has done it, there are certain realities, there are realities that are certain, that are assured that flow from that because salvation flows from his powerful, omnipotent, omniscient hand, not from our weak and feeble efforts. As a Christian as you see your weakness, as you see your frailty, as you stumble along from time to time, you are meant to come back to a passage like this and remind yourselves of the certainties that underlie your salvation and that's what we are going to look at here in this first point, the certain realities of salvation. Remember, John is summarizing everything that's gone through before. He's acting like a trial attorney, you might say, who's presented his entire case before the jury and now he's going to sum it all up, he's going to hit the high themes and deliver the final blow, as it were. He's going to bring it all to a climax and say, "Now that you've done this, here's the verdict. Here's what you do." That's what's going on here in this passage.

The first certain reality of salvation that he reminds us of in verse 18 is the certainty of our sanctification. It is a certain reality that flows from true genuine salvation that holiness is going to be produced in the life of the one who is saved. There is no such thing as a true Christian who does not somehow manifest the power of God in his life, that doesn't somehow manifest a separation from the prior sin that marked his life before he was a Christian. This is certain. This is guaranteed. We know this must be true because it's a holy God who saved us. It's a holy God who saved us for his purposes. He gives us a new nature and therefore we can't live according to the old way that we used to live, the old nature that marked our lives, we live according to the new nature that God imparted to us at salvation.

Look at verse 18, the certainty of our sanctification, the certainty of holiness the comes up in the life of a true Christian. Verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins." Huh, wow. That's a pretty comprehensive statement. How can you know that? How can you know that that's sure? Well, he goes on and says, "but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." Notice this, beloved, as you look at verse 18, there are no exceptions here. Verse 18, we know that no one who is born of God sins. No one who is born of God sins. Now, that comprehensive statement in the original language has the idea that no one who is born of God continues living in an unbroken pattern of sin as if nothing had changed in their lives. When God saves someone, he causes them to be born again. He gives them a new nature and the person who is saved lives according to that new nature in a progressively growing manner of sanctification; a progressively growing manner of separation from sin. The pattern of sin that marks the old man is broken. It's not completely eliminated. Christians still have episodes of sin in their lives. We saw that in 1 John 1. But the pattern of unbroken sin is broken. The sinning with abandon is broken. The sinning that enjoys and revels in the lusts of the flesh and the boastful pride of life is broken. You can't have the same attitude

toward it anymore. There is a deeper part within the soul of the man who is truly saved who rebels against that old way of life. That's what John is referring to here when he says, "no one who is born of God sins."

Beloved, listen to me: you can recognize a true conversion because that person's relationship to sin changes. And don't be confused, don't be confused by those people that you know who made a profession of Christ and their life never changed. Don't say, "Well, that's a contradiction of it." No, what's contradicted there, watch this, what's contradicted is not the biblical nature of salvation, what's contradicted is the person's claim to be a true Christian in the first place. That's the point. You see, a true believer with the true Holy Spirit dwelling within them is going to show forth something of holiness, something of a separation from sin in their lives. It has to be that way because of the very nature of salvation and we are not confused or intimidated away from making that dogmatic declaration simply because some people profess to know Christ and don't change. Well, that's a statement about the falsity of their claim, not a statement about the uncertain nature of salvation. No, no, beloved, when we are dealing with salvation, when we are dealing with the word of God, when we are dealing with the Holy Spirit of God, what he produces in the lives of those that he takes over is certain. It's bound to happen. John is not teaching that a Christian never commits an act of sin. Your own sad experience and mine shows us that that's not the case. What he's saying is that true Christians do not live in an unbroken pattern of sin and we can say that that's certain because salvation changes that man's nature.

Look over at 1 John 3:9. Remember, he's summarizing here in this closing passage in verse 5 and basically everything that he says in these last four verses are things that he's already said earlier in the book and so I just want you to see this and there are other places we could look but chapter 3, verse 9, he says, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Think of it this way, this is kind of a reverse illustration but there is a pull in your life as a true Christian toward righteousness. There is an internal pull toward holiness and away from sin. That is like, this is not a good illustration. I wish I hadn't even started it but I started it, I've got to finish it now or you're going to say, "Well, what was he going to say?" It's like having a car that's out of alignment that's always pulling you to the right. There is this pull. There is this natural pull by your nature that pulls you to righteousness. The pull is not because something is out of alignment in your heart like the car example, that's why it's a bad example, but the pull is in your life because the Holy Spirit is now indwelling you and pulling you toward righteousness and you can't freely go into sin in the same way. Your conscience testifies against it. Providence is arrayed against you as you pursue sin. The Spirit of God works against you as perhaps you're tempted and seek to go that direction. The word of God speaks to your heart. Christians come and confront you and say, "What are you doing with this wickedness?" There are all of these things that are suddenly lined up against you going into sin. You're not free to do it like you used to do.

And beloved, let me say this: I'm very encouraged for all of you as you're here in Truth Community Church and those of you that are a part of our body, listen, understand, we'll

talk about this more in the coming months as we talk about the nature of the church, that one of the spiritual benefits of gathering together and being involved in the body of Christ over time consistently and faithfully, not dropping in and out, you know, once every six weeks or whatever, one of the benefits of consistent involvement in the body of Christ in the local church is that there is this collective sanctifying effect that we have on one another. When people are involved in your life that are walking with the Lord, there is going to be, that's going to narrow the path of sin. It's going to narrow the opportunities for sin simply because there is this overflow of the work of the life of God in the hearts of his people that has a sanctifying effect on all of us. There is safety for you. There is protection for you in consistent faithful involvement in the body of Christ. It protects us from sin. This is part of it. This is part of how God uses us. So it's not simply that God gives us a new nature inside and that generates holiness, that is part of it, but he also takes us and plants us among other believers so that we would have an externally sanctifying effect on one another. As I see you motivated for holiness in your life and hopefully you see me motivated by holiness in my life, that has a synergistic effect that causes us to collectively want to seek holiness more. So when I see you here week by week, I'm really encouraged because I know in the background what's happening is that God uses this as part of the sanctifying effect in your life just because we collectively have all of these relationships together that point us in that direction as iron sharpens iron. You're in a good place when you're gathered together as a Christian with other Christians.

Well, there is more than that too that guarantees our holiness. Look at verse 18 with me again. We know that no one who is born of God sins, "but He who was born of God keeps him," the Son of God, Jesus Christ, keeps us, he holds us in his hand, he keeps us from sin by the exercise of his own power and as he keeps us, he also protects us from the threats and harmful effects of the devil. Look at the end of verse 18. We are in the hands of a brother in heaven who loves us and who protects us and who guides us. We are in the hands of a good shepherd. It says, "He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." Positive and negative. Christ keeps us and he keeps the devil away, as it were. This reference to the devil touching us has the idea of him laying a hold of you with the intent of harming you and what this tells us is that Christ protects us from that kind of adverse attack from the devil. He shields us from that. He protects us. We are in the hands of one who can keep us.

And beloved, do you see what that means? What that means is that while you have the responsibility to pursue holiness in your life and we have the responsibility to strive after Christ, understand this because it is so helpful and encouraging: as you and I seek holiness and pursue holiness in the midst of this hostile environment, we do not do it alone in our own power. The power of Christ is at work seeking to accomplish that same purpose that you are commanded to strive after yourself. He doesn't command it and then step back and watch what happens. He's right in the middle of the battle of it, holding you and keeping the devil from us, keeping us from that harmful influence. And what I want you to see more than anything, the thing that I would have you take away from that is that as a Christian you are in a blessed position in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have spiritual resources at our disposal. We have an omnipotent God watching over us as we walk through this life. We're in a position of strength, a position of blessing. That's the whole

point is that you and I as Christians live out our Christian life in this hostile world from a position of strength, a position of confidence, a position of being able to do what God has called us to do.

Turn over to John 17. Jesus speaks of this aspect of his own ministry. He describes it and he prays for it in John 17:12. Speaking of his interaction with the disciples while he was on earth, he says in John 17:12, "While I was with them," he's praying to the Father in heaven, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name." It was a continual aspect of his ministry in the life of his disciples. "I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled"; a reference to Judas there as the son of perdition. What he did here on earth with the disciples that walked the sod with him is what he does for us as believers as well. He keeps us in his name continually. He guards us so that we do not perish. He's with us. And so, beloved, what you need to see, what should start to dawn on you, what should encourage you, what should start to overwhelm you is to realize you have to look beyond the external things that we see. We walk by faith, not by sight, right? Our life isn't about the things that we see so much. It's not about, in one sense, not even about the things that we see. You have to go from the Scriptures and realize that as a Christian your life is guarded by, is determined by, the direction, the trajectory of your life is fixed by the fact that the Son of God himself keeps you, guards you and protects you continually until you are delivered safe into heaven. Blessed be his name. Do you realize what the Son of God has undertaken on your behalf? Do you realize the vastness of the consequences of this? Do you realize that even when you stumble into sin he hasn't let go of you? He's not going to let go of you? Do you realize the security and the certainty of which this speaks? If you start to taste that, you start to realize, "Wow, wow, my Lord Jesus Christ has blessed me beyond my wildest imagination. He has blessed me far beyond all that I could ask or think."

Beloved, if Christ hadn't saved you, you would be a helpless soul without a spiritual compass simply meandering through life toward a certain destruction with no capacity to save yourself, with no capacity to even understand the danger in which you once existed. But now, now in Christ, now in Christ, he has laid hold of you by his grace, he has laid hold of you by his sovereign will and claimed you for his own, bought you with his own blood, brought you into his family, as it were, and as it were, has his arm around you and says, "I am going to guide you all the way to the end until you are safe in heaven with me at my throne never to be threatened by death, sin, the devil, sorrow ever again." And he says that and he does that for you even when you are feeling the darkest clouds of depression pressing in on you; even when the darkest trials are pressing and hemming you in and squeezing you as if you think you're going to pop because you can't take it anyway. Beloved, step back and rejoice in the greatness of your Lord who is faithful to you, who says, "I will keep you. I will guard you. I will deliver you safe until the end. Fear not, I am with you." That's your Lord Jesus Christ. That's the greatness of the certainty of our salvation. And what I want you to know is that I'm not up here speaking empty philosophies that I've spun out of my own head, I'm saying things that you can see for yourself right out of the word of God.

Look at verse 18, this is a verse that destroys the idea that you can lose your salvation. Chapter 5, verse 18 again, "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him." Christ keeps you. Beloved, even if it doesn't seem this way externally, awaken the faith in Christ that is in your heart and realize the consequence of that is that he is going to keep you and see you through the current valleys that you're walking through. He's going to accomplish the purpose for which he laid hold of you in the beginning. To be sure, you and I are still subject to temptation. To be sure, you and I still sometimes fall. But God establishes the boundaries of those temptations. This is part of his keeping power.

Let me remind you of a verse in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Go ahead and turn over there. We're not in a big hurry here this morning because there is nothing going on afterwards. We only have one service here. That means we can take our time and think through these things to the benefit of our soul. 1 Corinthians 10:13, those of you walking through the valley of the shadow of death, feeling the weight of darkness, it seems, let this be a beacon of light that gives encouragement to your soul. Verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 10, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man," let these words jump off the page now, "and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." Dear Christian in the midst of heavy sorrow, look at this and realize that the way of escape if you don't see it right now, the way of escape is coming. The way out is sure. God is going to be faithful to you and provide the way out of the darkness that currently encompasses you. Lay hold of that and find your hope. Lay hold of that and find your confidence and lay hold of that not because you see how it's going to work out. This is the hardest thing that I've had as a pastor to try to communicate to people whatever many years I've been in ministry. This is the hardest thing to get people to understand. The way forward, the certainty of these things, your hope is not measured by what you can see. Your hope is not measured by your ability to calculate how this is going to work out. It's not measured by you being able to figure out or saying, "Okay, another couple of months and this is going to change." It has nothing to do with what you can see. Sometimes you're not going to see the way ahead from what you can see around you externally. What you lay a hold of, beloved, is the promise of God that says he will provide the way of escape so that you will be able to endure it. He will provide. He is faithful and it's the character of God and the certainty of his faithfulness to his people that is your hope. That's where we fix our hope in these times of darkness. It's certain because the Son of God keeps us and the evil one does not touch us successfully to harm us in the end. He can't because he does not have that permission from the sovereign God who saved you. That's your light in darkness. That is your confidence in Christ.

So, beloved, rather than giving in to despair in the midst of what I know for some of you are very severe trials and temptations right now, rather than giving into those, be strengthened all the more. Let the depth of your trial give you an indication of the even greater faithfulness that God intends to show to you in the end. You may not be feeling it and experiencing it right now but it's certain. We know, John says, that these things are real. We know that the power of Christ enables us to meet every challenge of this life without giving into sin or despair. Christ is your hope, nothing else. And when you start

to see that and understand that, what should start to happen in your mind, in your thinking, in your affections, is an ever-expanding, an ever deepening love and affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. "He's really going to do this for me?" Yes, he is without fail. "He really designed this life so that he could one day deliver me into glory? He saved me by name? He knows the numbers of hairs on my head? He knows when a sparrow falls and he'll certainly keep me? Is that what you're saying?" Yeah. "So if I'm following you here, preacher, if I'm following you here, what you're saying is that I can bank everything on the faithfulness of Christ even if I don't see how it's going to work out? That's what you're saying?" That's what I'm saying. Better yet, better yet, that's what the word of God says. You see, Christ is so great and so loving and so faithful and so certain in his purposes that we can rest everything on him. There are no exceptions to that. Christian, that is the certainty of your salvation. Christ will most certainly sanctify you because it's why he saved you to do that as part of his grander plan to share heaven with you for all of eternity. Wow, is he good? It's okay to nod your head and agree with the goodness of Christ. It's okay to smile once in a while. That's not forbidden here. It's not written into the rules of Legacy Hall, no smiling permitted. We can smile and love each other. It's okay, especially when we are smiling and loving each other in response to what the word of God says about our Christ. He keeps us. The evil one doesn't touch us.

Now, secondly, we're seeing the certain realities of our salvation and we've seen the certainty of our sanctification. Secondly, I want to show you the certainty of our separation. The certainty of our separation. Look at verse 19 with me. Oh, this is so good. It's so encouraging. You know, you just get so discouraged as you watch what the news says and then you remember what God is doing and it all fades away. Verse 19, "We know," here's that certainty again, "We know that we are of God," that God is the source of our spiritual life, is what he's saying. God is the source of this life in Christ that we have. Verse 19, "and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." You see, we know that we belong to God. Even though the whole world is in the power of the devil, we don't belong to that realm. That's what he's saying in verse 19. Oh, beloved, watch it: you have been separated by the power of God, by the act of God, you have been separated from the world. You have been delivered out of it. You have been transferred from the realm of darkness into the realm of his glorious light, Colossians 1.

These are spiritual realities that govern, that determine the outcome of your life here on earth. These are the things in which we base our hope. And what this is saying is that most certainly we know that we belong to the true and living God. The world may be, and is, you know, on a path to destruction, a path that leads to hell, and while they boast and revel in evil and they call good evil and evil good and redefine the whole nature of what truth is, they think they're doing, and all of that realm is going on and it's so ugly and sinful and distasteful to those of us that love Christ. Look, just remember, that realm is not our home and it's not the realm that we even belong to. As a Christian, God has graciously picked you up and taking you out of that even though you were formally a glad participant in that wicked realm. You loved your sin. You believed the lies yourself and God saved you out of that. He's separated us from it. Yeah, the world lies in the power of the evil one but we know that we are of God. We've been separated from it and so, beloved, there is no third realm. There is the realm of the world and there is the realm

of the holy God and only those who have been born again belong to this holy realm of God that is safe and delivered from the instruction that is coming upon that world that lies ahead.

There are quite a few of you in this room, I never presume that everyone here is a Christian. I never presume that. And let me just say to you, those of you that aren't in Christ and just trusting the Holy Spirit to make that plain in your own heart as I say these things, look, you need to flee this world's system that you belong to. You need to flee. You need to come out of it. You need to come out of your own love for sin. You need to turn and repent and come to Christ because only he can save you. This world is headed toward eternal destruction and it's going to be a time of woe and fear and gnashing of teeth that never ends. Oh, I warn you, I caution you, I beg you based on the authority of God's word, you belong to a realm that is going to be judged and you need a Savior. You need deliverance from that. Let the words of what we're talking about here today awaken your heart and come to Christ. He will save you. The same grace that he showed to me and so many others in this room, he'll show it to you too. You should be afraid, you should fear, you should be terrified and frightened by what this realm in which you live, in which you currently love, you should be frightened by what it's leading you to. It's like a river with a strong undercurrent that is most certainly pulling you toward the massive waterfall that will plunge you into destruction. Don't let the surface of the river which outwardly seems peaceful blind you to the undercurrent of where it is leading you to. You've got to get out while there is time. You've got to get out and leave your love for sin behind and come to Christ.

Well, we've seen the certainty of our sanctification, the certainty of our separation from the world. God has really decisively delivered us. We're never going back into that realm, beloved Christians, fellow Christians. We're never going back. The world can't ever suck us back and own us again like it once did because the Son of God keeps us, holds us, has a stronger power, "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world," John said earlier and he's just echoing that theme again. He's holding us and keeping us so that the threat of destruction that is upon the world is never going to singe a hair on your head. These things are certain.

There is a final certainty that John gives us in this passage and it's the certainty of our Savior. The certainty of our Savior. We've seen the certainty of our sanctification, our separation and now the certainty of our Savior. Look at verse 20. Remember, this is the climax. These are the fireworks going off in the grand finale as he finishes everything that he's said. He says in verse 20, "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." I want you to notice something about this particular verse, having just said that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, he now leaves all of that thought behind. The world and the devil is now put in the rearview mirror in what he says here and he's now just looking ahead and it's a complete focus and positive attention on our Lord Jesus Christ that he gives us here. Our certainty comes from the Son of God. We know that the Son of God has come and we know and we understand this, we understand that he didn't just come in general, he

came to rescue us from darkness. That's why he came and he has fulfilled his purpose. He has rescued us and we know these things and he has given us understanding. He has enlightened our minds, he's illuminated our understanding so that we can know these things are true and that they are certain. If you're a Christian, God has given to you the intellectual capacity and the spiritual discernment to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We know these things. We know that he has come. He has given us understanding and this is part of what we are going to talk about on Thursday night about why do we believe the Bible. This is woven into that that's coming on Thursday but we know these things.

Here he's talking about the Son of God and look at what he says about him, "We know the Son of God has come. He has given us understanding. We know him who is true. We know we are in him who is true in his Son Jesus Christ." If you are in Christ, you know the one true God. If you are in Christ, you've been delivered from error. If you're in Christ, listen, this is a whole series of messages in what I'm about to say here: if you are in Christ, you don't have to worry about maybe you've missed the true religion. We're already in the true one and you don't have to worry that maybe there's a truth in Buddhism or Islam or Catholicism or Mormonism or something else and that maybe you're missing something in any of those. Nooooo! No! No! No! This is too important not to be emphatic. If you are in Christ, you have the fullness of truth in him himself. If you are in Christ, there is no other place to look for truth. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." If you are in Christ, rejoice and don't worry about whether you have missed something else that is important. You haven't. Christ is the only one who matters. Christ is the only truth and the fact that there are variations of false religion all around needn't deter you from having a full confidence that, "I know the truth." That's what he's saying in verse 20, look at it again with me. Remember, this is the word of God that we are reading and he says, "We know the Son of God has come. We know him who is true, that him who is the true reality, the one true Savior, the one true God, we know these things. These are certainties."

Now, you might say, "But can you explain verse 20 in its fullness? Explain what that means in all of its fullness?" Well, if I was going to do that, do you know what I'd have to do? I would have to re-preach the prior 40 messages that I did up to this point. This is a summary. This is bringing together and tying together everything that he has said in the prior 103 verses. He is pulling it all together and everything that he said before provides the foundation that he builds upon to make this climactic statement, "We know that the Son of God has come. We know the one genuine God. We know who is true."

And look at this at the end of verse 20. If you ever wonder about the deity of Christ, this is a stunningly clear statement of his deity at the end of verse 20. It says, "we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God." This. He just said, "You're in Christ. This. This," referring to Christ, "This is the true God." It's a ringing statement of his deity. This, referring to what he had just said, this is the true God. Now watch this, watch this, go all the way back to the beginning of the letter, 1 John 1:1, and you start to see the unity of this letter and how he has now come full circle. He is ending up where he began. Oh, I want you to see this. This is cool for so many reasons. It's cool for what it

says about Christ. It's cool for this letter. It's cool for an understanding of how to read the Bible and to interpret it and to not lose sight of everything that went before as you come to the end of the letter. John opened his letter, you're at chapter 1, verse 1, right? He says, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life." A reference to Christ clearly because they heard him, they saw him, they looked at him, they touched him. This is the Apostle John's direct personal eyewitness experience of the Lord Jesus Christ while he is here on earth. That's what he's talking about here. Now watch this, stay with me, "the life was manifested," verse 2, "we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us." You see, it's clearly talking about Christ. He says, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us." So he starts out saying, "I'm going to tell you about Christ," right? "I'm going to tell you about Christ." And then the ensuing five chapters come and he talks about Christ and what it means to be a Christian and he refutes false teachers and their ungodly lifestyles. Now watch this, even though it was almost a year ago that we looked at those verses here at Truth Community, there wasn't that kind of gap in John's thinking. He has come full circle. Now in verse 20, he is bringing it to a climax. He said, "I'm going to tell you about Christ," and now in verse 20 he's saying, "I've told you about Christ." And what is the concluding statement about him, oh John? What's the concluding statement that you write under your Holy Spirit inspired pen? What is it about Christ that you want us to see? Look at the end of verse 20, "this is the true God and eternal life." This is powerful. Everything that he has said in those 104 verses and verse 21 makes 105, everything that he said in these 104 verses, it undergirds this one statement that he wants you to walk away from: Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life. There is no other God. There is no other eternal life. It is in Christ and in Christ alone. He is the true God. The whole letter supports that climax.

Now think with me for just a minute those of you that have been with us, remember that John has been going through refuting false teachers. You know they say that Christ didn't come in the flesh. He has refuted them and now he brings it to a conclusion and says, "What I have told you, what I, the Apostle John uniquely commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, the last living apostle, the last one of a unique non-repeatable group, what I'm telling you is that Jesus Christ is the true God. Don't be confused by the false teachers who have tried to lead you astray. I have given you," the Apostle John says writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "I have given you a certain foundation upon which you can build your hope and find spiritual victory in the midst of a hostile world." That's his concluding statement. This is the true God and eternal life. The Christ of the Bible has no rivals. The Christ of the Bible is unique, alone, supreme and you should view him with the utmost majesty, the utmost reverence and the utmost gratitude. Reverence and gratitude and worship. Hallelujah, what a Savior! What a friend of sinners we have! That is the ringing note that concludes his statements about Christ. That is the certain reality of our salvation.

Now watch this, point 2. I'm going to show you the corresponding responsibility of salvation. The corresponding responsibility of salvation. This is so cool. He spent 104

verses to say this in verse 21. He doesn't give a formal farewell. He doesn't say as the Apostle Paul often did, "Grace and peace be with you. Grace be with you. Amen." Or anything like that. Instead, and when you read this, you know, I've read this so many times and never quite understood. This is so abrupt, verse 21, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." That's just abrupt. What about a note of, "See you later. Or grace and peace." Why such an abrupt...it almost seems odd to end it that way.

Well, first of all, notice how he addresses them. There is a tender affection in his heart as he ends the letter. "Little children," he has called them this multiple times throughout the letter. "Little children," you can see his pastoral affection. He is not long before he's going to part from the scene. He doesn't have much time left with them and he says, "Little children, in this final tender appeal I make to you, in light of everything that I have said about the true God and eternal life, in light of everything that I have explained to you about the work of God in your salvation and the certainty," watch this, "the certainty that he will keep you, the certainty of your victory here on earth, in light of all of that, in light of the greatness of Christ, the greatness of your salvation, the greatness of your future hope, you know, one day you're going to see him and be like him, in light of all of those great, great things, little children, guard yourselves from idols."

Christians lived out their salvation in the midst of pagan religion in the first century. Our situation really isn't all that much different, we're just surrounded by paganism and wickedness just like they were. Literal, physical idols were everywhere. But, beloved, here's what I want you to see: John was not refuting pagan idols in this book, was he? He wasn't talking about stone and wooden idols like the prophets in the Old Testament often did. Watch this, watch this, John had been refuting false teachers who were teaching false views of Christ and laying out false implications of what salvation could mean saying that you can be a believer but not truly love other Christians; that you can be a believer but have a false view of Christ and all of that. And John has systematically decimated their whole system of thought, said, "No, if you know God you'll keep his commandments. If you know God you'll love the brethren, and you can't believe a false Christ and have a true salvation." And he has decimated all of it. He has set forth greatness and he has demolished this false system of philosophy, this incipient gnosticism that was plaguing the church at that time. He has demolished it all. He has accomplished his goal. He is, as it were, standing triumphant over the truth that he has proclaimed and defended and vanquished the enemies and now he's got to close and he leaves them with this thought, "As I lay my pen down, the letter is done, I have no more to say. I have shown you the true God and eternal life. Now that I've done that, little children, guard yourselves from idols. Undertake the responsibility not to slip into false teaching. Protect and guard yourselves from that which will come back and try to attack what I have just shown you, what I have just told you. Guard yourself from that. Protect yourself from that. Be true to Christ and test the spirits." Remember 1 John 4:1, test the spirits to see whether they are from God? The false teachers weren't going to stop their efforts simply because John had laid down his pen but John had said everything that was necessary so that Christians could protect themselves when the false teachers turned up their attacks again. He said everything that was necessary, everything that we need for life in godliness is found in the Scriptures. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for

teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequately equipped for every good work."

"Little children, guard yourselves from idols." What does that mean? What was he saying? What does it mean for us today? Here's what it means: it means that you and I guard ourselves against those things that undermine the truth about Christ. It means that we see the great eternal surpassing infinite value of Christ. As John has laid it out for us, the true God and eternal life, we see the great value of that and we accept and we appropriate the corresponding responsibility just as that has been entrusted to us that we will protect that truth with our very lives and with every fiber of strength that we have in our being. We'll devote our lives, we'll devote this fellowship to protecting that which has been entrusted to us. We are going to guard ourselves against idols. You see, once this has been laid out before you as a true Christian, once all of that is laid out before you and you so love Christ who did this for you, you so love the truth that saved your soul, there is a corresponding responsibility that you feel and that you have that says, "I'm going to defend that. I'm going to proclaim that. I'm going to protect it to the best of my ability as long as God gives me breath. My life belongs to protecting and proclaiming this great truth that has been given to us."

That's why we started with 1 John at Truth Community Fellowship. We wanted to see, we wanted to remember why we exist, why this place is in northern Kentucky. Do you know why we are in northern Kentucky? Do you know why Truth Community Fellowship exists? It's to proclaim and to protect the name and the fame of Jesus Christ and we believe that that's done through teaching his word, not through loud music, not through entertaining the people who come, we just proclaim the word. That's our responsibility. That's our privilege, to give our lives, to give this fellowship over to what John says here, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Proclaim it and protect it until the Lord calls you home and in the process of protecting his name, we get to love each other and enjoy life together and go through good times and bad times together. Wow. What I want you to see is that great blessing has been bestowed upon us. Great blessing both individually and collectively to not live our lives for ourselves, to not turn Christ into a means to get what I want in an earthly life, but for us to give ourselves back to him, as it were. "Yes, Lord, you are the true God. Yes, Lord, you are the eternal life. Yes, Lord, we embrace the responsibility to protect it and we thank you for the blessing that you have given to us to share in your salvation."

Days are going to come, a few weeks, a few months where we'll talk about membership and leadership and all of those things but what I want you to see if you're a regular here at Truth Community Fellowship, this is what we are about and if you're a visitor and this is what you love, then come and join us. It's all about Christ and we love him. We proclaim him by teaching his word to God's people.

Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we just pray for your grace that you would guard us against those things that would undermine truth and undermine the certainty of salvation. Father, we rest our

eternal souls on what you have said. We rest our destiny on the certainty of what you have said and, Lord, we rest our hope there with absolutely no fear that it will have been in vain. We rest our hope in Christ with the certain expectation that you will bring us safe to heaven and that it will be far more wonderful than we ever dreamed in our highest days and aspirations here on earth. We know that you haven't exhausted your goodness, your greatness and your grace to us in this life, that eternity is just going to be the unfolding of even greater things than we had ever asked or thought and so we of all people are confident, hopeful, joyful here today, our God. We love you. We love you, Christ. We love you, the true God and the eternal life. You are our victory. You are our hope in this hostile world. Father, I know that for some walking through very difficult times haunted by the past or injured by those that have betrayed them, Father, I pray for your abundant grace upon their lives, that these words of life would come upon their wounded hearts and refresh them and comfort them and encourage them and give them the strength to go forward in confidence and even joy, our God, because our confidence and joy is rooted in Christ, not in this life. As we move forward as a fellowship, as we have completed this book and look forward to what you have for us in the future from your word, Father, we pray that what lies behind would simply be a foretaste, an appetizer in a greater banquet yet to come as we devote ourselves to your word in this place which belongs to you. We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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