

The Certainty of Truth

Building a Christian Mind

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I invite you to turn to the book of 1 John 5 as we continue our series, "Building a Christian Mind," which is kind of a combination of several micro-series into one mega-series, helping us to think through the fundamental matters of Christian thought, of truth, and having a mind that operates properly in this fallen and wicked world. There's no question that we need this, it's just a question of whether, if I can be so blunt and direct, you will respond to it, and I pray and trust that you will, and I'm encouraged by the many that have said that they are benefiting from this series.

I'm going to read at the end of chapter 5, verses 18 through 21. 1 John 5:18 to 21, and beginning a brief series that I've titled "How to Know that Truth Exists." How do we know that there is such a thing as absolute truth that is transcendent over men, transcendent over time, that applies throughout all of the ages to all men everywhere, regardless of their race or geography or all of those matters? We need to know that. We need to be able to answer that question and understand that deeply. So we're going to look at that today and next week, Lord willing. And so we're going to look at verses 18 through 21 and as we do, as I read this text, and I'll point this out later, take special note of the phrase, "we know." "We know" as we go through the text here together this morning, beginning in verse 18.

18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are from God, and 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. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Now, I suppose we could start at this point, is that you really cannot understand the Bible at all unless you have an appreciation for the absolute nature of transcendent truth, that truth actually exists and that it not only exists, but that it can be known, it can be understood, and that we are to understand it. God created us in his image, which means, among other things, that he gave us a rational mind which is sufficient to comprehend the truth that he has revealed. The knowledge and the understanding and the arrival at truth is

possible because there is a God of truth and he has created us in his image with a mind capable of receiving truth, and he has revealed truth in a way that addresses our minds and that we are to understand. And so that is the starting point of human knowledge, and I'll build on that hopefully more next week. We cannot know truth, or better stated, the starting point for knowing and understanding absolute truth is by recognizing that there is a God of truth who is there in the universe and who is not silent. He has revealed himself. He has made himself known. And those things that we have just said are matters of great and far-reaching consequence.

Now you cannot understand the Bible apart from an embracing of the principle of absolute truth. Now that is countercultural, that is a minority opinion in our current day and age because in our day and age people are conditioned, they are taught, and they love to think subjectively, not objectively. They feel and therefore they believe based on their shifting feelings. And of course they have no established convictions because feelings come and go. They rise and fall like the waves of the sea. They come in, they go out like the tides of the sea. And so it's no wonder that people wander about in a moral abyss without any clarity, without any sense of direction, and just going from thing to thing, from event to event, from idea to idea, without anything to anchor their lives. It's a sad way to exist and, my friends, this is not how God created us to exist, how to live. Jesus prayed that we would know God, the true God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. That we would know.

Now what does it mean to know? Well, I want to give you a bunch of synonyms and a bunch of perspectives on knowledge just to give you a sense of what we're talking about because we live and we swim in an environment, we swim in water of subjectivity and even a hatred for the idea of truth. If you say that there is truth, and even more if you say, "I actually know the truth and I can tell you the truth," you are set aside as a bigot and ridiculed as somebody that's arrogant and all of that. Beloved, understand that arrogance is not found in knowing the truth and insisting upon the truth. That is not arrogance. What is arrogant is to say that the God who is the God of truth, who has revealed truth in his word, in his creation, in Christ, in conscience, in conversion, that that God who has made himself known in so many ways, that a God like that cannot be known and his truth cannot be known. That's arrogance to speak against God, to speak against his truth, and to make obscure that which he has made clear. That's arrogant. That's rebellious. And so we do not accept the terms that the world would give to dictate the terms of conversation; we submit to the revelation of God and act accordingly.

What does it mean to know the truth? Well, we see this word "we know" many times in the text that we just read. Think about it this way, and I just want to give you a sense of what we're trying to drive at when we say to know something, to know that truth exists. Just give you a few different phrases to think about it. Clear perception, have a clear perception of what God has made known, what God has revealed, what truth is. To understand it, to have conviction about it that is unshifting. To be sure, to be confident about knowledge and what we understand the word of God. To not accept contradictions against these things. All of those matters give us a sense of what it means to know, that there's clarity, that there is conviction, that there is a sureness about these things that is

settled into our minds so that we do not move from that, that we stand there and we not only stand, we assert it, we defend it against attacks, and that there are certain things, and again, this is just so contrary to the spirit of our age, that God intends for us through his revelation, God intends for us to study, to understand, and to come to convictions about what he has said in his word and what he has revealed in his world in such a way that they are not subject to negotiation. It is not subject to change. As Luther said, "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me, amen." I stand on this and I will not move, that's what we mean by knowledge in these things.

Scripture gives us a really good picture of what God is intending to build into us through his word if you'll turn to Ephesians 4. This is an illustration, a picture of knowledge, of maturity, of spiritual maturity, and this is the whole purpose of biblical ministry is to build people into these kinds of pictures that we see in Ephesians 4. And beloved, let me just say this, and I say this by way of sympathy and encouragement to you. If the things that I've just said are foreign to you, I'm glad you're here. If what I've described is different from the way that things are inside your soul, you know that you're tossed back and forth and it's hard to know what's true and, you know, what am I supposed to do with my life and what do I believe, beloved, God doesn't intend for you to live in the darkness of that uncertainty. The darkness of that uncertainty comes from the Prince of Darkness himself. God is light and in him there is no sin at all, in him there is understanding, as we read in 1 John. And you can see this picture of stability and established understanding in Ephesians 4.

Let's look at verse 11. God gave certain men over the course of the history of his revelation and has given men to the church, to build us up and to help us understand so that, so that, here's the point, so that we would become a particular kind of person, a particular kind of man, a particular kind of woman. And what he's done in verse 11 is he's done this, "he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." Do you see that word knowledge again? That's why we're talking about building a Christian mind and have been for 12 months. It's because it's biblically important. This is not an incidental matter that we could have dispensed with so we could have done something else. No, this is central to everything and so in verse 13, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Now, beloved, all I'm using this text for here this morning is to just give you a sense of the establishment that truth is meant to have on us and Paul, in rapid succession, gives us a number of metaphors, a number of pictures for us to see what that is like. So in verse 14, he says, we're not meant to be children. What marks children except their changeable

nature and the fact that they're small and they're immature and they need to grow up in the course of natural life, they grow from children to being adults. Paul says in a spiritual matter, in spiritual matters you're not to be children but you're to grow up and to be an adult and to know why you exist and why you believe and what you believe and how you believe. He goes from that metaphor to the shifting nature of the waves of the sea and the waves that toss boats to and fro and there's nothing established. One moment it's here, one moment it's there, and the mere force of nature moves things around. We're not to be like that. We're not to be so easily moved, so easily changed. He uses the wind to describe it, the wind that blows things in different places. And all of this, he attributes the shiftiness and the instability of it all to human cunning, to craftiness, to deceit.

Now, beloved, if we're not going to be like that, the whole point that Paul is making is that it is truth that establishes us into that kind of maturity that God intends, and so what God has done, again, over the course of his blessing to his people, is that he sent first, he sent apostles to lay the foundation of New Testament revelation. He had prophets in the Old Testament. He had evangelists. He gives shepherds and teachers the idea of pastors there. He gives to his people these men who help them understand the truth and what we are to do is to not rebel against that, to resist that, but to be appreciative of the fact that God, over the centuries, has given men to us who can help us understand his truth so that we can grow up and be what he intended us to be.

Now, that's the purpose of the church and that's the purpose of ministries to develop men and women that are like that. The church is not here to entertain you. The church is not here to be your social club. You know, I'm not talking about legitimate fellowship, but the church has a far greater purpose than just mere human social activity. In Colossians 1, the Apostle Paul said, "We proclaim Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ, for this I toil struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." And so, that's the goal and the goal to that kind of spiritual maturity and spiritual stability is through the knowledge of what God has revealed in his creation and in his word.

Now I realize that the script has been completely flipped and that the people who are committed to the things that we're talking about here this morning are considered arrogant, boastful, whatever, and by contrast, those that do not live and believe that way are so tolerant and peaceable and we all just want to get along. But beloved, that's not reality. That's not true. And the truth of the matter is that the wishy-washy nature of the society in which we live and the spirit that has overtaken the evangelical church, it actually does the exact opposite. It actually makes people hard-hearted. It makes them unteachable because when you reject authority and when you reject absolute truth, then you are your own authority and no one has the right to speak any kind of thing into your life. No one has the right to speak truth into your life because, after all, you're the authority, what you feel is what's real, and so it actually makes people unreceptive, unresponsive and sadly, that unresponsiveness is too often a condition of spiritual death because they've never been born again. No one can tell them anything.

Now listen, beloved, I'm speaking sympathetically. I'm speaking clearly to you because I love you, because I care about you, because this is what Scripture, this is the direction that Scripture points us to. What you need to understand as you hold, and thank God that you do, as you hold an open Bible in your hands and on your lap and as you're looking at it, wanting to understand Scripture, that's why most of you are here, because you want to know the truth, that's why you've come from other places, it's because you're thirsty. You want to hear. You want to know. Well, God bless you. Here's what I want you to see and to understand is that there is a fundamental presupposition of Scripture that is utterly against the spirit of the age and the spirit that I've been describing and declaiming against here already this morning. The fundamental presupposition of Scripture is that God exists and that truth exists and God can be known and truth can be known. He created us in his image. I'm repeating myself because it's so important. He created us in his image so that we would know him and that we would know the truth that he's revealed. You cannot understand Scripture apart from that. If the idea is that no one can know the truth, if the idea is that truth is unattainable and that we're not smart enough, and I haven't even mentioned the presence of the Holy Spirit who helps us understand all of these things, God made us in his image and he sent Christ and he provided the Holy Spirit all with a goal so that we would know, that we would understand and that we would grow. We would know and we would grow in it. Truth exists and as you go back to 1 John 5:18, you'll see that this passage is incoherent, indeed, the entire Bible is incoherent apart from the presuppositions that I've been laying out to you for the past year and reviewing here this morning.

So let's look at 1 John 5:18 to 21 here this morning, and I've titled today's message, "The Certainty of Truth." The certainty of truth. It is sure. It is reliable. You can count on it. It is real. It is objective. It is outside you. Truth existed before you were born. It exists now. It will continue on after you have died. It's transcendent, and Scripture everywhere assumes that principle so that what I want to do here today is just take you through this passage quickly and show you two certainties of truth and then a corresponding responsibility.

First of all, our first point for this morning, let's look at the certain realities of salvation. The certain realities of salvation. Now, John opened this letter with a certain reality about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John knew Christ. He was with Christ during his earthly ministry. He was a direct personal eyewitness of the realities to which he now testifies and he opens on that premise. "This was real, I saw it, and I experienced it, and now I'm speaking from that direct personal knowledge." So look at chapter 1, verse 1, where he says, "That which was from the beginning," I'll give you a moment to turn there. Chapter 1, verse 1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." Look at what he says. We heard it with our ears. We saw it with our eyes. We touched it with our hands. This is real. This is not abstract philosophy. This is not theoretical speculation like the Gnostics did back then and that people do today in the name of philosophy courses that only confuse everything. John's saying this is all real. Direct eyewitness speaking to you here and speaking so that this is something that would be shared by those who read what he has to say.

Verse 2, "the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us--that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Look at what he's saying here, beloved. He's saying, "I'm certain of these things because of my personal experience with Christ." Now, he says, "I'm writing these things so that you can have a like certainty in fellowship with me, that we would share this fellowship, this certainty about Christ, this knowledge of him, this truth about him." He's writing for the whole purpose of making that a shared experience with even with those who have not seen and believed.

Now, that may sound like an insuperable barrier. Isn't the direct eyewitness in a better position than we are 2,000 years removed? Uh-uh. No, quite to the contrary. Go to John 20, where you can see this point. You, beloved, you do not have to see Christ with your own eyes and hear his human voice with your own ears in order to have a like certainty that the Apostle John had. That's not the way that God designed this to work at all. Remember how Jesus interacted with Thomas at the end of chapter 20 in the gospel of John 20. You remember Thomas was reluctant to believe. He hadn't seen it with his own eyes and he insisted that unless he saw Christ and put his hand on his body that he wasn't ever going to believe. He was adamant about that point. Verse 25 he said, "the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.' Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" Now beloved, watch what happens in these next three verses because it's so critical for you to understand that truth is attainable to you and you can have the same certainty of knowledge that the Apostle John described as he wrote his letter. That's what Christ intends for his people to have. So, verse 27, he said to Thomas, who said, "I must have physical proof," he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side." Thomas, don't disbelieve, but believe. "Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'" Finally, Thomas believed. Finally, the Spirit had opened his eyes. Finally, the reality dawned on him in an unchangeable way, and he went from that boat being tossed about wave to wave to being a mature man established, rooted in the faith. "You are my Lord. I submit to you. You are my God. I worship you."

Now watch what Jesus says and think through the implications of what Jesus' subsequent words are for us today. "Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" You do not have to see in order to believe. We walk by faith, not by sight and we know these things through what God has revealed in his word. These are the realities of our Lord. These are the realities of our salvation and we are meant to know them, to be certain about them, to be convicted about them, to be unmovable about them. That's what it means to have a Christian mind. And so we look at the certain realities of salvation and we see that the Apostle John opens and sets the whole context for the letter on the certainty of what he

has seen so that he could recreate that same certainty in you even though you have not seen and have not had the same experiences that he did.

So when we come to these final four verses in 1 John, we are seeing the closing summary of everything that John has said and you can spend 20 messages going through 1 John, you can spend 40 messages going through 1 John, and in order to get and understand the fullness and detail of everything that he said, I don't want to do that. I just want to hit the high points for you here today and consider his closing summary. And here's what you need to see, my friends, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and those of you that are still standing on the outside of Christ, somewhat looking in with your nose pressed against the window, trying to straddle the fence. So sad. Trying to straddle the fence and simply going in the route of Thomas and just saying, "My Lord and my God." Everything essential to your salvation depends upon the existence of absolute truth that is not subject to change based on the opinions of men. Everything depends on it and so let's look at that.

Let's look first of all at what John talks about, the certainty of our sanctification. As Christians, the certainty of our sanctification. As John is writing here in verse 18, he emphasizes that holiness will always mark the true Christian, that there is no such thing as a true Christian who is utterly indifferent to God, indifferent to his truth, indifferent to righteousness. There is no such Christian like that because it is a contradiction in terms. And so he says in verse 18, "We know that everyone who has been born of God," born of God, one whom the Spirit has imparted new life to. Born of God, that one that God has opened his eyes to Christ, to his work on the cross, and has led him to repentance and faith in Jesus for their eternal salvation. Everyone that's been born again like that has a new nature. The old man has passed away, behold, new things has come, and the one that is like that, verse 18, "everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning." He does not keep on sinning. John allows no exceptions. He says no one who is born of God, no one who is born of God keeps on sinning. God changes the relationship of his people to sin. He breaks the power of sin in their lives. He imparts a new nature to them so that they desire new things of righteousness rather than the old ways of sin and that's why God has the power to break us from sinful habits, to break us from sinful patterns of thought, to deliver us from wrong-headed philosophies, from false religion, from the thinking of the world, and to be changed into someone new who thinks God's thoughts after him. It's because salvation is a supernatural act by God where he acts on the soul of an individual, gives them new life, and changes them into someone new.

Have you, my friend, have you been born again like that? Do you know something of having a breaking with the old life and new things, all things have become new? Do you know something like that? Is it your heart desire to enter into those things more fully, to know them more clearly because this is what it is to be a Christian. Now John is not teaching that a Christian never commits an act of sin. He's saying that true Christians who have been born again don't live in an unbroken pattern of sin. A Christian desires righteousness as the overall mark of his life. This is a certainty, he says, and he can say that it's a certainty, he can be dogmatic without allowing for possible exceptions of someone who walks an aisle, makes a profession, and then just continues living the same

old way that he always had. John says that's not conversion. That's not a true Christian. And how can we be so dogmatic about that? It's because salvation is an act of God. It's something that God does to accomplish his purposes. Not simply an act of the human will. Salvation changes the man's nature. God makes us new. He adopts us into his family. He imparts and the Holy Spirit and dwells us, and as a result of that, we then live according to that new nature that God created in us when we were born again.

Beloved, what I want you to see for this morning is that all of those things that I just described, and if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you've heard these things a lot, hopefully, you believe them, you accept them, what you need to see today, that the reality of the new birth, the reality of the new man in Christ, the reality of the change that that produces, it all presupposes that there is truth to what we say. Truth unchanged, truth unchanging. And though the centuries come and go, though you go through different seasons in life, the truth has not changed, and it is that that we anchor everything that we assert about Christian salvation. If these things were not fixed, if these things were not true, if these things were not absolute, we could not talk in such terms, and we talk in these terms only because Scripture does. And so the reality that truth exists undergirds everything that we say about Christian salvation. If you sacrifice the principle of truth, we might as well turn off the lights right now and everybody get out and go home because we're wasting our time if truth does not exist.

Now, why is it certain also that true salvation will lead to a broken relationship with sin? The person of Christ is central to that. Look again at verse 18 with me, "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but," instead of that false reality here's a true reality, a spiritual reality that is seen by faith, a blessed reality, "he who was born of God," a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, "he who was born of God protects him," that is, he keeps the one that he saves. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Christ saves us, then Christ protects us. Christ keeps us so that we can never be lost once we've truly been born again. Christ keeps us so that we do not fall back into our former way of life. Colossians 1 says he delivered us from the domain of Satan and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. You've been taken out from the lordship of Satan and delivered into the Lordship of Christ. The power of controlling sin has been broken and now the Spirit indwells you. These are certainties about the Christian life.

Turn toward the back of your Bible just a couple of pages, to the book of Jude and the benediction that we often use here at Truth Community Church, and look at what it says that illuminates this for us in verse Jude 24 and 25. "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Now, people come, join our church. When I say join, what I mean by that is, you know, start attending, having come from other versions of Christianity, if I can put it that way. You know, and I know that some of you grew up in environments where you were told again and again and again that if you didn't keep on obeying that you would lose your salvation, and I know that that has been an oppressive weight on your mind and it's something that your

soul can never get out from under except by the power of absolute unchanging truth. My friend, if Jesus Christ has saved you, he intends to keep you. He didn't save you part-time. He didn't go to the cross just to make salvation possible and leave it up to your self-effort to get over the goal line, so to speak. He saved you to keep you. He saved you because he set his eternal love upon you and in his eternal love, he sought your well-being, not just for a short period of time, not just for earthly benefits, but for all of eternity. The love of Christ as he spread out his hands and yielded himself to crucifixion, the love of Christ as he hung there and bore your sins in his body on the cross, the love of Christ where he chose you out from among others in humanity, that you might be before the foundation of the world, that you would belong to him, that he died for you at the cross, that the Spirit caused you to be born again at some point in the past and now indwells you, understand that the whole point of that was that because he chose to save you, because he did save you at the cross, he's keeping you now and there is no possibility that anything would ever separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 8:38 and 39.

Now look, beloved, everything that we hold dear and every ounce of security and assurance that we have depends upon those things being true and it depends on those things being unchanging and not subject to the whims and opinion of men. All of these great certainties of our salvation depend on them being transcendentally true, eternally true, not subject to change or variation. And your hope Your confidence, your assurance, your peace in all of these things is found not in your ability and in your effort to try to somehow keep up your salvation, which if you've tried that for any length of time, you know what a miserable weight that is to try to do. It's not by laying hold of a stronger effort of your own will. It's by faith, believing the truth, by faith, laying hold of Christ, of his unchanging love, of his promise that he will never leave you nor ever forsake you, Hebrews 13, and resting in that. And you are able to rest in that only because it is true. And it is true, meaning it is absolutely true that truth exists independent of you. Truth exists as God exists. God has made it known. We believe and we live in response to him.

Now, that's exactly the takeaway that John wants us to have in his gospel and in his letter. Go back to John 20 with me. John 20. And again, for our purposes today, we're kind of doing parallel tracks of what we're trying to communicate. There's the substance of the reality of Christian salvation, which is fundamental, alongside that, I want you to see that it all depends upon the existence of truth. Now that John would have you settled and comforted in your Christian experience as an ongoing basis, not as a fluctuating thing based on whether you just ate a good meal, whether you have good health or not, these are the things that sustain you on your deathbed. These are the things, these are the things as you're staring down the pit of death conscious that you're drawing your last breath and saying your goodbyes to your loved ones, these are the things that sustain you in that moment. These are the things that will carry you on angels' wings across the river and into glory. And that's the way it's meant to be. Not a life of uncertainty, not a life of continued sin.

Look at John 20:30. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that," here's the purpose of it

all, "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ," he's the Messiah, God's anointed one, the one who's able to deliver you completely from your sins, "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." And you are meant to know that you have this life, go back to 1 John 5, that the blessing of God, the purpose of God for his children is that we would know these things and that we would live in the confidence and the overflow of joy that comes from knowing that we are in the family of God and that we are safe throughout all of eternity. And if you knew how much I was restraining myself from tangents, you would congratulate me.

1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." This is true. If you are in Christ, you are meant to know that it is true and to have confidence, to have assurance that this is real for you so that you could live with a sense of joy and certainty going forward, free from doubt, free from the assaults of Satan, confident in Christ, resting, as it were, with your head on his chest as John did at the Last Supper, resting with your head on his chest and saying, "Lord, I am confident in you. I take your faithfulness as the pillow for the head of my soul, and I rest in you." Everything about that blessed picture depends on absolute, unchanging truth. So in verse 14 we read, "this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us." So that you may know, so that you may believe, so that you may be confident, he hears us.

And so, what Christ does when he saves us is he keeps us so that we do not fall back into our former way of life. Jesus said, "No one can pluck them out of my hand," John 10. "No one can take them out of my hand." Once he lays his hand on someone, saves them, and brings them, as it were, speaking metaphorically here, once he saved you and brought you to his chest, in his hand, nobody can go and pry his fingers open and take you away. The very thought of it's absurd. The very fact that anyone thinks that that's possible is a sign of unbiblical, ungodly thinking and a complete lack of appreciation for the love of Christ which compelled him to come to earth in order to save us. Satan cannot grab us, he cannot harm us, because Christ protects us.

Look at verse 18, 1 John 5:18, "he who was born of God protects him, and," joined together with that reality of the protection of Christ, the positive protection of Christ is joined with this negative denial, "the evil one does not touch him." Satan cannot pluck you out of the hand of Christ and if you are a true Christian, your heart should be bursting with joy and gratitude at that reality. Whatever else is happening in life, whatever other sorrows are buffeting your soul, step beyond all of that and look at the reality that Christ has saved you, Christ loves you, Christ keeps you, and Satan cannot touch you and jerk you out of the hand of Christ. And that depends not upon your power to keep yourself, it depends on the promise and power of Christ, which he declared in advance that he will keep his own even to the end. Now, we're still subject to temptation. We still go through adversities. But the Lord keeps us. He strengthens us so that we do not falter ultimately and finally falling away. All of these certainties about our salvation, beloved, grounded in the fact that there is fixed, unmovable, absolute truth which we can know because God has made us in his image, he has given us his Spirit, his word is clear, it can be

understood, and that delivers us from all of the uncertainty and ungodliness of the present age in which we live. The certainty of sanctification is rooted in Christ and in his truth.

Now, that's one certainty of our salvation, the certainty of our sanctification, and along with that, let's just look at 1 John 5:19 and the reality of our separation. These are all the certain realities of our salvation. Christ sanctifies us and now we are separated from this world. Verse 19 John says, "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." Note the conflict. Note the two realms. There is God and there is the world over which is the evil one. We belong to this realm of God, the Apostle John says. The world is outside and is in the power of the evil one.

Now earlier, and I'm so glad you're here today. I hope that these things from God's word are a great encouragement to you. Look at 1 John 3:1 in this context. We have been delivered from the world. We have been delivered from the world and delivered into the love of God. We have been delivered from spiritual death into spiritual life so that in 1 John 3:1, we read, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." We belong to the family of God. God has spiritual children over which he is Father and if you are a Christian, you belong to his family. What a wonderful thought in this world of just innumerable fractured families, abused children, confusion, heartache, heartbreak, so many vulnerable girls not even knowing who their father is, wanting a sense of family, and because of the sin and selfishness of those that gave biological birth to them, it's all withheld from them, to find here a better family, a better Father, a lasting family, the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and we are. "The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." Scripture tells us to think about ourselves as belonging to the family of God. He has removed us from the world and delivered us into new life in Christ and by contrast, the world is helplessly in the bloody hands of Satan himself. Those outside of Christ are trapped in the realm of Satan, following the prince of the power of the air, and beloved, if you are a Christian, you have been born again and you are set free from all of that slavery. You are delivered from it all. All of the darkness now light instead. All of the hatred now love instead.

Look at chapter 3 verse 14 and actually looking at verse 13, we're apart from the world, we're against the world, and it's not just in its philosophies, but in its very essence, and so it's not surprising that there are certain consequences for that. Verse 13, 1 John 3, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." Don't be surprised if your family hates you. Don't be surprised if your friends reject you. Don't be surprised when people that you thought were Christians diverge. Don't be surprised by that. Just go back to the realities of truth in your salvation. Verse 14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers." We've passed out of death into life. Those who have been born again, alive, secure, they know. Those outside of Christ, slaves of Satan, false religion, rebellion, foolishness. All of these realities, beloved, if it seems like I'm belaboring a point, it's because this is in some ways the most important point of them all, all of these realities rooted in absolute truth. And beloved, here's the beauty of it, here's the wonder of it, this body of understanding, this clarity of conviction is attainable for each one of you who are in Christ. These realities are the subject of attainable, fixed

understanding, mature belief, grown-up faith because transcendent truth actually exists and God has ordered the universe, he has ordered the human mind, he has ordered his revelation so that these things can be received and understood and believed. It's the certainty of truth.

Now, just in the brief time that we have remaining, let me show you our second point here today, the certainty of our Savior. The certainty of our Savior. I'm going to do my best to go through this quickly. The Son of God came in order to deliver us into all of those blessed realities that we've been talking about here today, to rescue us from spiritual darkness and to deliver us into these eternal absolute blessings of which we've been speaking. Look at 1 John 5:20. 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding." Let's stop there for a moment. He's imparted illumination. He has helped us grasp the truth and substance of what has been revealed so that you can discern true reality, the way things really are as God himself sees them. He gives us discernment to grow in the knowledge of him. Now, beloved, understand this, all of that is utterly incoherent and inconceivable under a postmodern philosophy of truth. If truth is subjective, if truth is just what you make it up to be, if it's based on feelings, if there's nothing absolute, none of what John says in 1 John 5 can come to pass and be a reality. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say truth is determined by what I feel and I believe the Bible. You've got to let one of them go. There's got to be a final, absolute, transcendent standard, and it can't possibly be the way that any man feels about something. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." He's the truth. Not your mind. Not your feelings. Not Oprah, thank God. Jesus Christ, the truth, and beloved, if you're in Christ, you know the true God. If you're not in Christ, you're lost, you do not know God, and yet an invitation is still held out to you to come, to know him, to receive him, to yield to him.

And so everything that John has written supports this great climax. Look at the end of verse 20, this great climax. Everything from chapter 1 verse 1 was pointing to this climax at the end of verse 20. He's given us understanding so that, 1) "we may know him who is true"; second, "we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." The reality of absolute truth, the reality of knowing that God exists, the reality that knowing the Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is Lord, it all points you into this spiritual climax, this spiritual summit, this top of spiritual Mount Everest, that you can know that you are saved, you can know that you are going to heaven when you die, you can know the true God and that you yourself have eternal life. Everything points to this. And all of that glory is sacrificed, a dagger is plunged into the heart of the sacrifice when you sacrifice the principle of absolute truth. You can't have any of this with the spirit of the age.

So Jesus Christ is the true God, to know him is to have life, to reject the concept of absolute truth is to reject him utterly and finally. Now, thirdly, we spent most of our time looking at the certain realities of salvation. We just glanced at the certain reality of our Savior. What's this mean for us going forward as Christians? The corresponding responsibility of salvation, point number 3, the corresponding responsibility. John, as he closes this letter, I love this. I've loved the letter of 1 John for a very, very long time. He

doesn't give a formal farewell like we do. You know, every one of you, when you end a conversation here after the service tonight, today, and it's all fine, you'll say something like, "I'll see you later, goodbye," and what have you, all of those niceties of social discourse in the 21st century. That's great. Do that. But just understand that that's not how John ended the letter. John said all of these things and, you know, there could have been, I suppose, an inspired way for him to say, you know, "I commend you to the grace of God, goodbye." He doesn't do anything like that. It's so abrupt. It's so abrupt. It's so different from the way that we relate and yet it's so telling, it's so instructive for what we are to do with all of this. Look at verse 21, he says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Here's what he's doing here, and here's how it applies to everything that we've said here today. John says, "In light of all of these things that you have read in my letter, in light of all of the things that have been said," and by extension and application, in light of everything that we've heard from God's word here this morning today, October 8, 2023, what do we do with this? Beloved, we obey it. We obey it. We respond to this. John commands, issues a command, said, "Little children, in light of all of these things, you keep yourselves from idols."

Now, in that day and age, in the first century, literal physical idols were everywhere. You read anything about the archaeology, say, for example, the cities in western Asian Minor, you know, that western edge of modern-day Turkey, and it's just filled with idolatry and temples and the worship of the emperor and the worship of all of these false deities. That stuff was everywhere and permeated the culture in a way that's different from our culture. Our culture is permeated not with physical idolatry, but with mental idolatry that rejects truth, rejects God, rejects his word, rejects Christ. Christians in the first century were living out their salvation in the midst of that kind of pagan religion. We today are living it out, we have the same responsibility in response to the same truth, it's just a different manifestation of the deception of Satan. We live it out in a philosophical environment that denies truth and attacks everything about God and his revelation. What you are to do is to keep yourself away from that kind of thinking, recognize it, repent of it where it controls you, discern it, dismiss it, and commit your life and affections to what God has revealed in the truth because what God has given us in the word is the truth. It is the true Christ. And so you guard against that false teaching which denies truth, which denies Christ. You test the spirits and you know what is true so that you can grow up and be a mature Christian like you're supposed to be. We're not supposed to be confused, sniveling cowards in the midst of the world that we live in. We're not to be so earthly-minded that we're more worried about local government than we are about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven and his revealed truth, and being people of the Beatitudes. You won't hear that in political conferences.

And so today, what this means for us is that you guard yourself against those things that undermine truth, you guard yourself against those things that undermine the certainty of salvation, and you rest your eternal destiny on these certainties about Christ, the recognition of true salvation, and you walk in joy and assurance because of what God has spoken. We come to Christ, the true God who is eternal life, and as you live that way, beloved, you will find spiritual victory in this hostile world.

Let's pray together.

God, may it be so for each one of us, may we be simultaneously sobered and greatly encouraged by these things that we have heard from your word today. Father, our lives are passing and we don't know what our lives will be like tomorrow. Help those who are outside of Christ not to put off repentance and faith but to respond today, respond in this hour, respond now in repentance and faith toward Jesus Christ because today is the day of salvation and deliver them from the presumption that there might be a tomorrow. There might not be. And Father, for those of us to whom you've given the truth, grant us grace to believe it and to live by it, yes. Grant us courage and grace to speak it within the circle of our influence, Father, because some of these faces that we see today, one day will wake up and they'll be gone. Father, we pray for those that have lost loved ones. We pray that you would minister your grace to them. And for those that have lost loved ones, that have gone into a Christ-less eternity, help them to see beyond the fate of their loved one to the need of their own eternal soul. For the family of my dear friend Ray, Father, I pray that they would come to a saving knowledge of Christ, even after his passing. We commit all of these things to you, in Jesus' name, amen.

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