

# Deliverance

By Don Green

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**Bible Verse:** 1 John 3:4-10  
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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, we turn from those reflective hymns to the reflection on God's word and grateful for the opportunity to do that. I've been refreshed by this study in 1 John and I hope that you have been also.

The foundational text, the cornerstone text, you might say, to the letter of 1 John in my judgment is found in 1 John 1:5 where he says, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." It's an expression of the holiness of God. He's a God of truth and he's a God of righteousness and that has implications that John works out throughout the rest of the letter. As he seeks to give us joy and holiness and assurance of our salvation, he is working out how we interpret our spiritual experience in light of the holiness of God. The fact that God is holy means that those who have been born of God will practice some kind of, some measure of righteousness, there will be an increasing conformity of life to the image of Jesus Christ. That's not because of any inherent power in our efforts but it's a reflection of the fact that the Spirit of God comes to reside and abide in true believers and as he does that, he makes the effect of the holiness of God known in our lives and it changes us, it breaks our prior connection with sin in a way that allows the righteousness of God to flourish in our lives and John has been developing that theme of righteousness from the very beginning of the letter. We'll review that in just a moment.

The fact that God is Light is also a reflection that he is a God of truth and therefore for a true Christian, for someone who has really been born of God, there is a manifestation of truth in their heart and in their confession. 1 John 5:1 says that he who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and throughout other aspects of the letter, there are these emphases on the one who confesses the Son belongs to God, the one who denies the Son does not belong to God, and we've seen some of that, we'll see more of it in the days to come, but the fact that God is holy means that he will produce righteousness in his true children, the fact that God is truth means that there will be a confession, a heartfelt belief in the truths revealed in Scripture. Christianity is not simply a matter of religion that conforms us to an external standard of righteousness, it does that but that's a secondary effect of the fact that truth and righteousness come to indwell us in the person of the Holy Spirit. And so it's obvious, then, that the one who claims to know Christ, the one who claims to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within him is going to manifest that in his life in a manifestation of life righteousness and a confession of truth sincerely held, and as well as

the fact that God is love, there will be an aspect of a manifestation of love in the hearts of true believers as well.

So love and truth and righteousness mark those who have been saved by the God who is Light and as we come to understand these things, as we grow in our understanding and our manifestation of them, something happens that fulfills that trifold purpose of John in chapter 1, verse 4; chapter 2, verse 1; and chapter 5, verse 13; we find ourselves growing in joy, holiness and in the assurance of our salvation. And God wants you to know, my friend, he wants you to know that you are truly saved. He's not hiding this. He doesn't want us to live in doubt. He doesn't want us to live in the fear that he saved us once but maybe he'll take it away, you know, maybe he gives us salvation on a string and we kind of grab hold of it but then he jerks it back from us in some kind of game that he delights in playing and frustrating his children with. That's the Roman Catholic view of salvation and it's just a miserable way, it's a miserable way to live, to live with that fear that maybe, you know, maybe in the end I won't actually end up in heaven. Well, the Bible contains the book of 1 John to lead us away from those fears and doubts and into a sense of assurance.

We're in a section where John is developing the themes of righteousness manifesting itself in the life of a true believer. A few messages ago, we looked at chapter 2, verse 29, and it says this, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." And so John introduces this theme of righteousness being the marks of the one who have been truly born again, and as we saw last time, he continues that theme when he talks about the coming of Christ, how we will see him and we will be made like him because we will see him as he is, and after saying that, he comes back to the theme of righteousness, of life personal righteousness, of sanctification in verse 3 when he says this, he says, "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure."

Now friends, listen, there's a couple of aspects of this that I want to help you think about and to understand. One is that true Christians will somehow manifest righteousness in their lives because the one who saved them is himself righteous. If God in the person of the Holy Spirit comes to dwell and abides you, his overpowering presence will necessarily filter its way out in your life and the absence of righteousness therefore is a reason to question your salvation, the absence of a desire especially for righteousness is a reason to question your salvation because it is inconsistent with the nature of God. Now in addition to that reality, there is this aspect also: the reason that Christ came, one of the reasons that he came to save us was that he came to introduce righteousness in our lives, and so the presence of God projects righteousness into the life of a believer and then related to that, closely related to that is the fact that Jesus Christ came to deliver us from sin, to break the power of sin in our lives, and therefore if we are on the receiving end of the saving action of Jesus Christ in our lives, then his purpose in saving us will also show itself. God's character demands that righteousness will flower forth, and the purpose of our salvation to deliver us from sin is also going to show itself in the reality of our lives. So if you understand these vertical dimensions of spiritual truth, the holiness of God, and the purpose of Christ in saving us, then you will see that as a natural effect, as an

undeniable, unavoidable reality there will be a powerful effect in life change, in life righteousness that is produced in the one who has truly been born of God.

So the title for tonight's message is simply one word, it's "Deliverance," and there are two aspects of the deliverance that we want to see from this passage that Christ has done for us in saving us. He has delivered us from the power of sin and he has delivered us from the power of Satan. Those are two crucial aspects to understand of the one great reality of our salvation is that salvation is deliverance, it is a divine deliverance in which Jesus Christ saves us from the penalty and the power of sin, one day to be culminated in heaven where we are delivered from the very presence of sin. So that's what we're going to look at and the theme that we could say of tonight's message is simply this, is that Christians will live righteously because Christ fulfills his purpose in saving us and that is the marks that we are looking for here this evening. So this may be a somewhat shorter message than what I've established over the past six to eight weeks and that's okay, but we're just going to look, first of all, at this first principle that Christ came to deliver us from sin. Christ came to deliver us from sin.

Look at verses 4 through 6 with me where it says,

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Now earlier in the letter John had made plain that Christ came to take away the penalty of our sin. In chapter 1, verse 7, in the last half of that verse he said this, he says, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." And so Christ in his atoning work on the cross in that penal substitutionary death that he offered as a sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God against the sins of his people, Christ took away the penalty of our sin and he did that by absorbing that penalty of wrath in his own body on the cross. He bore our sins as our substitute. He represented us at the cross and he took all of our sin into his body, absorbed the full penalty of God for it, as a result gave up his life to God, committed his soul to God as God poured out the fullness of his wrath upon sinners in the person of his Son. Jesus Christ paid it all. He paid the full penalty of sin and as a result of that, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, the blood of Christ was applied to your account. God attributed that saving power of Christ, that penalty-paying virtue of the blood of Christ was applied to your soul so that the entire slate of your sin was erased, and as a result of that, the Bible says that he has removed your sin from you as far as the east is from the west, and that he will no longer hold your sins against you. That's a wonderful reality about the nature of the way that Christ came to take away sin, the first aspect of it is that he delivered us from the penalty of sin.

Now skipping over the present for a moment and looking into the future, looking into our glorification in heaven which we looked at last time, we see this, we see in verse 2 that Christ, chapter 3, verse 2, we see that Christ will deliver us from the very presence of sin. In verse 2 it says, "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will

see Him just as He is." And so when we see Christ, every vestige of sin that remains in us will be taken away. We will be glorified. We will be made perfect. The temptations to sin will be removed. The remnants of our flesh will be removed from us and we will be like Christ in the perfection of his holiness. So there is this past removal of the penalty of sin, there is the future removal of the presence of sin, and all of this a reflection of that reality that we read about in verse 5.

Look at it again with me. In verse 5 it says, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins." Christ has dealt with sin on behalf of his people. We no longer fear eternal punishment if we are in Christ. We look forward to the fact that we will no longer sin or even be tempted to sin when we are in his presence and we are made like him. This is a great powerful deliverance that he has done for us and that is why he came. My friend, he did not come to make you prosperous. Many many Christians across the centuries have lived in poverty and have lived without much in the way of earthly goods. Christ himself had nowhere to lay his head. He had no bed to call his own, he said in Luke 9, I believe it is. And so it's not about prosperity, it's not about delivering you from your earthly problems because, you know, in 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul had a thorn in his flesh. The Apostle Paul prayed three times, "Lord, deliver me from this problem. Deliver me from this messenger of Satan with which I have been afflicted." And God said to him, "No." He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Christ suffered physically on the cross, Christ suffered persecution at the hands of those who hated him, and if we follow him, we may follow in the steps of suffering, we may follow in the steps of persecution. Why wouldn't we? If our Master did that, well, certainly we as his slaves may well walk in the same path that our Savior trod. And so it's not about giving us prosperity, it's not about delivering us from problems and giving us an easy course of life. That is not why Christ came. Christ came in order to take away sins. He came with a spiritual purpose in mind. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He said, "I come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance." You see, his mission is tied up with the reality of the sin of man, and those of us who have felt the weight of our sin delight in that. We are glad that that is why Christ came. We can endure suffering and difficulties for a time in our life because momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 2 Corinthians 4. So it's not about removing affliction from us, it's about dealing with our problem with sin.

Now we've looked at the opposite ends of the spectrum, we've looked into the past and seen that we've been delivered from the penalty of sin, we look forward into eternity future and see that we are going to be delivered from the very presence of sin, well, what happens to you and me as Christians in between those two wonderful points? This passage is telling us that we're looking at here this evening, is that Christ is also in the process of delivering us from the very practice of sin, the practice of sin in our lives right now; talking about in theological terms the progressive nature of our sanctification as the Spirit of God conforms us to the image of Jesus Christ and that's what John is talking about here. You don't see it so clearly in the English text but the verb tenses are all in the original language in the Greek, are all speaking about an ongoing or a continual, repetitive practice of sin, the habit of sin, and what these verses are telling us is that

Christ came to break the habit, the pattern, the ongoing recurrence of sin and to replace it with an ongoing development of righteousness in our lives.

So he came to deliver us from the practice of sin, even though we experience that deliverance imperfectly, we experience it truly. Look at verse 4 where John says, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." His words here are saying this, that true Christians will not live as though there is no law from God. True Christians will embrace the fact that God's standard of morality applies to them and they hunger after that, they desire that, they pursue it even though they fall short. In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for theirs," and theirs alone, "is the kingdom of heaven." You see, Christ when he saves a man, when he saves a woman, when he saves a sinner, he creates in them a new heart that desires holiness, and so it's not simply that the character of God manifests itself and that is a reason and an explanation for why our lives change and start to grow in holiness, it's not just that the Spirit of God is applying the purpose of Christ in our salvation and God is doing those things and that's very very true, but what you must understand is this, is that when God caused you to be born again, when he created a new man and gave you a new heart in your salvation, he gave you a heart that desires holiness, that desires righteousness, and that embraces his word as the guide and the direction and the standard by which you henceforth live.

Now we all need to grow in that, we recognize that maybe only in seed form at the beginning of our salvation, but as we grow in the word, as we're taught the word, as we read the word, as we study the word, that starts to grow and expand in our understanding and it more and more starts to control our lives. And so we recognize that the word of God, the written word of God, the 66 books of the Bible summarized in the moral law, summarized in the 10 Commandments of God, beloved, all indicating that we recognize the authority of God's word in our lives and we don't live as if there were no authority above us. And so we do not live in a lawless way, we do not practice sin as though there is no standard by which we are to live. God has given us new hearts and those new hearts embrace the law of God even though we realize that we fall short of its perfection.

So John's point here is this. He had said in chapter 3, verse 3, that everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as Christ himself is pure, well, he gives the contrast in verse 4, everyone who practices sin freely and without compunction of conscience is showing that they are lawless, that they are filled with sin, and therefore they are not true Christians no matter what they may say to the contrary. That's John's point and the reason that we know that that must be the conclusion, the only conclusion we could reach is expressed there in verse 5, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin." Verse 6, therefore, "No one who abides in Him sins." This is not saying that a Christian will never ever ever sin and if you have committed a sin then it is proof positive that you've never been saved to begin with. No, that is not what he is teaching and you don't need to know the Greek language to understand that. You can see it for yourself in the English text when you read the letter in its entire context.

Look at chapter 1, verse 8, where John had made this very plain. He said, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." As John speaks here in chapter 3, he is not talking about a sinless perfection, rather he is talking about an unbroken pattern of sin that does nothing to impinge upon the conscience of the one of whom he is speaking. The true Christian will, one, desire not to sin. When he does stumble, he will want to confess his sin, chapter 1, verse 9. And the point is really this, is that his deepest desire is for godliness, for righteousness, for holiness.

My Christian friend, isn't this true about you? I speak to affirm you and to encourage you here this evening. Whatever your struggles with sin may be in your life and, you know, James says that we all stumble in many ways, isn't it true of you that if you could just snap your fingers and make your vulgarity go away, make your tendency for drunkenness or for sexual immorality or lusts or those things, your lying or your gossiping tongue, your angry spirit, isn't it true whatever, however sin manifests itself in your life, my Christian friend, isn't there something in you that if you could just snap your fingers and make it go away you would? That you would prefer righteousness even though you struggle with sin along the way? I know that's true of me. I've got millions of miles to go in my sanctification but, boy, if I could just go from here to there, if I could just go from there, from where I'm at to perfection, I would choose that a thousand times out of a thousand. My Christian friend, according to Scripture and what I believe to be true about you, is that that's true of you too, that more and more you find yourself longing to be holy rather than to continue to fall into sin.

Well, that's the spirit of which John is speaking here is that God creates in us desires for righteousness, they show themselves in the fact that our pattern of sin is broken even though there are isolated thunderstorms maybe, if you want to use a weather analogy, that rain down on us, the pattern, the desire of our life is oriented toward righteousness and not toward the lawlessness of sin. We recognize the authority of God's word. We say with the Psalmist, "Oh, how I love Your law!" And we desire to be that man of Psalm 1 that meditates in the law of God night and day and finds our joy and satisfaction in it. That's what John is talking about and that inner desire that manifests itself in our outward life is an indication of the work of Christ having broken the power of sin in our lives and now helping us overcome it in the practice of our lives.

So God saved you to make you holy. To state it differently: Christ came to deliver you from sin. And we see this in other passages of Scripture. I'm only going to take you to one here this evening, but in Titus 2, I invite you to turn there. We studied Titus some six or seven years ago. Titus 2, beginning in verse 11, says this, Titus 2:11 says this, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." And so what does salvation do? Look at it there in verse 12, "instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." And so you see the purpose of salvation is not simply to keep us from going to hell, there is a purpose that is at work in our

earthly lives conforming us to the righteousness of God and that is the purpose of God in salvation and God accomplishes his purposes in us when he truly saves us.

Now I need to speak directly to some others of you, those of you that nominally claim to be Christians but, you know, the truth of the matter is that you could really not care less about God's word than what you do. You may be outwardly moral but, my friend, is there any desire for the truth of God in you? Do you long for holiness or can you kind of take it or leave it? Can you go days on end without any thought of God? Without any word of praise to Christ? Without any longing for holiness? Without any confession of sin whatsoever? Is your mind preoccupied with the things of this world, the friends of this world? With no real desire for the people of God or the holiness of God or the worship and praise of God, and you can just go like that not just day by day but week by week, month by month? Some of you maybe you've gone, you've been claiming to know Christ and it's been a few years before there's been anything in your heart that shows any true desire for that? My friend, in light of God's own word, on what possible basis do you think that you are really a Christian? How could you know this Christ who came to deliver you from sin if you have no desire and no awareness to be seeking to live righteously? If it's not important to you, how could it possibly be in your heart? How could the spirit of righteousness, the spirit of a holy God dwell within you and you have no desire for holiness and still be a Christian? That does not compute. That's not true. And my friend, maybe in the providence of God you're hearing this message and God would use it to pierce your false sense of security, to convict you of your cold indifferent heart, and open your eyes to the reality that you're not born again at all no matter what you've been saying for the past several years, and you realize that you need to humble yourself before God, confess to him your ungodly life, and your ungodly desires, and your love for the world that has quenched any claim of a desire of love for Christ and ask him to have mercy on you and to save you in the manner that Scripture actually describes, and to deliver you from that delusion that you've been living, perhaps the conscious hypocrisy that you've been living, telling others that you know Christ, coming to church, making it look like you are one of the people of God when inside you know that you're not, or the Spirit of God convicts you that you're not. Friend, let's not let an opportunity pass us by here. This is the day for you to repent deeply and profoundly of your ungodly life and your hypocrisy and to come humbly to this Christ who delights in saving sinners just like you.

You know, it's not just the profligate sinners that he saves, it's not just the sexually immoral, it's not just the drunks, it's not just the gross sinners, do you know what I love about Christ, one thing among 10,000 that I love about Christ is this, is that he came to save hypocrites too. He receives repentant hypocrites as well as all manner of other repentant sinners and so I invite you and I call you, and more importantly Christ through his word tonight is calling you to come out of your hypocrisy, come out of your love for the world, come out from your ungodly friendships and embrace Christ. And it can be as simple, maybe you're confused about where you were, I know on the day of my conversion I was and I came to Christ and I prayed like this, I said words to this effect on the day of my conversion, I knew that I was sinful, I knew that I had been playing the part of a hypocrite, but I had been claiming to be a Christian for years and years, and on

that fateful day ordained by God for my good and his glory, I fell down beside my bed and I prayed words to this effect that I would commend to you in your own words to Christ, I just prayed, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I've thought for all these years that I was a true Christian but I'm not sure but I want to tell You now that I really and truly want You to become my Lord and Savior." And in less informed words than I'm using now, I called on Christ to truly save me and I committed my soul to his hands unreservedly and repentantly, knowing that I was handing over everything about my life to him, and that there was no limit on the claims of his Lordship on my life. I was signing a blank check, as it were, on my life and handing it to Christ and saying, "You fill it out anyway that You want to. Just save me from my sin." Well, that wasn't because of any brilliance on my part, that was a reflection of the work and the grace and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in my heart at that time when he lead me to Christ and he saved me and he pulled me to Christ, he drew me to Christ by his omnipotent power. And my response that I just described was in response to that work of the Spirit of God in my life. Well, my friend, I give you that extended illustration simply to give you a sense of the way that you can call out to God with full assurance that he will receive you well because this is the most important truth in the universe to you right now: Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners among whom I am foremost, you say. He saved the Apostle Paul. Paul said, "The fact that he saved a sinner like me is proof positive that he'll save you too."

So my friend, let your ungodly indifferent life be an indication to you that it's time for you now to call out to Christ while you have time because there's no promise of tomorrow for you. So even as I'm standing here preaching, I'm praying to God for you and for his work in your heart and life. Christ came to deliver us from sin and true Christians will manifest that reality in their lives, and so someone who does not desire holiness has no reason to think that he is a Christian. Someone with desires of holiness, someone who is manifesting an orientation toward righteousness no matter how perfectly is showing the marks of one who's been born again. Well, that leads us to our second point for this evening as we continue on to the text and it's this, it's that Christ came to deliver us from Satan. He came to deliver us from Satan. Now several weeks ago I did a message titled "Who is Satan," and if you didn't hear that message, I'd encourage you to go back and find it in the archives from, you know, the middle of March sometime, but Christ came to deliver us from Satan and here's the important point, is that we practice righteousness as Christians in part also because Jesus Christ has delivered us from Satan and from his power.

Look at verses 7 and 8 with me, 1 John 3:7 and 8 where it says this, "Little children," there's that term of affection that John loves to use for all of his readers,

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 [it takes on an ominous turn now] the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.



Now I want you to see from verses 5 and 8 how those two things fit together. In verse 5 you see a purpose statement, "He appeared in order to take away sins." In verse 8 you see a parallel purpose statement saying, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Now the devil is the author of sin. He was the original rebel against God when he rebelled against God in the heavenly places, and then he lured Adam and Eve into sin in Genesis 3, and now just kind of collapsing a whole lot of biblical truth into 30 seconds here, not only did he tempt man into the fall of humanity, now he oversees a world environment that is hostile to God and that tempts all men, especially Christians, away from righteousness and into sin. This is all under the hand of the devil.

Now not only that, not only that Satan is the author of false religion, of false philosophies, whether it's the arrogant, godless, pipe-smoking, college professor with multiple PhD's to his name that corrupts his students with ungodly philosophies, or if it's simply a carnival barker preacher preaching all kinds of falsehoods on a street corner someplace and showing forth his ignorance of God's word, whatever the case may be, if it's the organized religion of Catholicism or Mormonism or Jehovah's Witnesses, all of that, behind all of that is the author of every lie of Satan himself. And so we see that there are many multiple ways in which Satan deceives us, multiple multiple ways in which he tempts and misleads people away from the truth of the Gospel, and what we must understand is that Satan is a lethal foe to be taken seriously, one who should cause us to cling all the more tightly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to how Jesus Christ described him and you can actually turn in your Bible with me to the Gospel of John 8 in verse 44 we see Jesus speaking about Satan and his profound wickedness. John 8:44 as he spoke to the Jews who were opposing him, he said to them in verse 44, it's a lengthy verse, he said, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." And so Jesus is saying that every lie ultimately finds its origin in Satan; every false philosophy finds its origin ultimately in Satan himself. And so what Jesus or what the Apostle John speaking on behalf of his Lord Jesus is saying here in 1 John 3 is this, is that Jesus Christ came to deliver men from that all-encompassing power and deception and power of Satan. Satan who is the father of lies and the father of false religion, Christ came to deliver us from that. It says earlier in John 8, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free if you continue in My word," he said.

So Jesus came to bring us truth, he himself being the truth, John 14:6, Jesus who is the truth, who brings us the truth came to deliver us from the father of lies, and so we walk in truth, we grow in a confession of true doctrine as an expression of the fact that Christ delivered us from lies and into the truth, and so we grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as 2 Peter 3:18 says. You see, Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Here in chapter 3 he's talking about the different manifestations of sin being a manifestation of the work and the sin of the original murderer, the original ultimate rebel against God, Satan himself. Satan has given birth, as it were, to unlimited

wickedness, unlimited lies, immeasurable sin, and you and I before our conversion, we were under the bondage of his power. We sinned because it was our nature to sin. We were dominated by the devil it says in Ephesians 2:2, we were under the power of the prince of the air. And so why did Christ save us? Well, he came to deliver us not only from our own sin but to deliver us from that realm and that power of Satan that blinded us and enslaved us and kept us from seeing the truth of the Gospel; that kept us in the chains of sin and urged us ever deeper into it. So what we find as we study Scripture is that the unsaved man is in a wretched position, he is wretchedly sinful, wretchedly under the wrath of God, and yet supernaturally wretchedly under the power of Satan himself from which he has no ability to deliver himself or even any awareness of the bondage that he has to this great and wicked and lethal invisible foe.

Well, my friend, what we see here is that Christ is the strongman who has the power to bind Satan, as it were, and deliver us from his power, to break the chains of slavery in which Satan held us, and what John is saying here is that an unrighteous life is a reflection of the domination of Satan in that life. Christ in his loving, graceful, omnipotent power came to deliver us from that blinding power of Satan and as a result of that, because that's why he came, that's what he does in the life of his people, then the power of Satan is also broken in a way that is manifested by the growth in righteousness that the people of God all manifest to one degree or another. And we can say that dogmatically, we can say that surely because that's what God's word says. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might deliver us from the power of Satan, or in the precise language of the Apostle John, the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Now what does that mean? What does that mean for us? Well, let me speak again, we kind of go back and forth talking to unsaved and saved people here, and I say this sympathetically to you but I just have to be direct. I can't sugarcoat these things. There's no indirect way to say these things. My unsaved friend, the pattern of sin in your life and the pattern of deception in your life can only mean this: if you live in unbroken sin unrepentantly, if you are a follower of false philosophies, then you belong to Satan. You are of your father the devil. You're a liar because your father is a liar. You're a hateful person because your father is a hateful person. That's what Jesus said about Satan in John 8, you're of your father the devil and you are not able to change yourself. You can't get out from that prison in which you find yourself. You must be saved. You must cry out to Christ for mercy if perhaps he would deliver you too, but you can't have it both ways, you can't say, "I'm a Christian," and live like the devil. It doesn't work that way. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and he does that in everyone that he truly saves. So by the greater power that he has, Jesus Christ breaks the power of Satan and that overthrow of sin, that overthrow of Satan is intrinsic to every saving work of Jesus Christ.

Look at the book of Colossians, we go back to the Apostle Paul for just a moment, Colossians 1:13 and 14. Keep your finger, as I will, in 1 John and in Colossians 1, it goes Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and then Colossians, you see this as Scripture interprets Scripture. It says in verse 13, Colossians 1:13 it says this, it says that "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom

we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." God has rescued us from the domain of darkness. He has delivered us. That is why Jesus Christ came. And now speaking to my Christian brethren and speaking freely, what I want you to see is this, is that while, yes, Satan is a lethal foe and we must take him seriously, as we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, we can have perfect confidence that we are safe in his hands, that Satan cannot pluck us out of our Savior's hands, that the power that is within us in Christ, the power that is in us is greater than he who is in the world, chapter 4, verse 4 of 1 John. So while Satan is a fearsome lethal foe, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ and we realize we've been delivered from that.

You know, those of you that come out of a charismatic background, it's a joy to be able to tell you this, is that being a Christian does not mean that you live in continual constant fear of what Satan's going to do to you. That's entirely the wrong focus. Rather we focus, we turn our attention, we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, we fill ourselves with him and with his word, and as we do that we realize that he keeps us safe from Satan because he came to destroy the works of Satan and deliver us from the domain of darkness. You don't have to be afraid of the devil in that way. You take him seriously, you don't walk into his territory, so to speak, but as we walk with Christ, as we abide in him we realize that he keeps us safe from the devil because he came to destroy the works of the devil, Colossians 1, he's delivered us from that dark domain. So in the words of Martin Luther, "Though this world with devil's filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear because we will triumph through Christ." And that is the consistent testimony of Scripture.

So my friend, if you love Christ, if you desire to see sin overthrown in your life, then this is a mark that should give you assurance and joy that Christ has delivered you personally by name from that domain of Satan and he has broken and delivered you from the works of the devil. God has planted his nature in you, he has set his love upon you, and therefore you can go forth in peace. Isn't it great, truly, truly magnificent? Isn't it an august reality to be a Christian? Isn't that the most wonderful thing to know that we have a great shepherd of our souls like that? A good shepherd who lay down his life for the sheep? The one who has saved us? Who protects us? Who keeps us? Who guides us in such a way that we can say with the Psalmist in Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

That's the majesty of the truth of which we're speaking. This is what God would have you to know is the reality of your soul, how safe you are in Christ, and what that does is it enables you to serve God in newness of life, ever new, ever renewed, ever strengthened day by day, more oil being poured into the lamp. Verse 9 says,

9 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.

James Montgomery Boice says this about this passage, he says, "The nature of God within the believer is opposed to sin and will not let the believer rest in sin but rather constantly exposes sin and prods him to holiness." The seed of God abides in us as

believers. The Spirit of God indwells us, it says in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 8, and as a result of that, the Spirit of God has an active ministry in our hearts to will and to work for his good pleasure. He works desires, he creates desires for godliness and holiness and righteousness in our lives so that we act in accordance with those desires and pursue it in our lives in response to this prior work of God in us, and because the Spirit of God abides in us and that is his work in us, that's why John can say no one who abides in him continually sins. The Spirit of God won't allow it.

Now he might allow you to go quite a ways into sin, he may allow you to stumble greatly to expose your weakness or to expose your rebellion. You know, he let David go some 18 months in his sin and stubbornness over Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, but eventually the Spirit of God does a work. And let me just say this, that the longer that you continue in sin, the less you are able to claim an assurance of your salvation. You cannot hold sin in one hand stubbornly, unrepentantly, and hold assurance in the other. If you're a true Christian, the Spirit will eventually break that in you, perhaps at the cost of your livelihood, perhaps at the cost of your marriage, perhaps at the cost of many other things that you hold dear but the Spirit of God will do a work in you. My point at this moment is simply that while you are stubbornly unrepentantly continuing in sin or indifference toward God, you are forfeiting your assurance because the mark of the work of the Spirit of God is one who desires righteousness and pursues it.

So my questionable Christian friend, take your pick. Just choose tonight who it is that you want to serve. Do you want to continue in sin and increasingly create the appearance of the reality that you actually belong to Satan? That you're actually a child of the devil and you will one day dwell in that pit of eternal destruction, eternal fire with him and his angels, and that's going to be the outcome of your life all the while that you've been claiming to be a Christian? Is that what you want really? Really? Sin is that important to you that you would forfeit your soul over it? Wow. What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you in light of this text that we've been reading? But perhaps the Spirit of God has come to one like that and comes and says, "Sister," says, "Brother, it's time to repent and to return to the joy and the holiness and assurance to which I originally saved you," and your repentance would be a mark that the work of the Spirit of God in you is real even though you've been plunging deeper into darkness for many weeks or months now. What will it be for you? Show forth, my friend, show forth the reality of your salvation by bringing forth fruit in true repentance as John the Baptist told those who came to him.

So we see these things and John concludes our text with this summary statement, verse 10. It's sobering and it is plain as day. He says,

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious:  
anyone

Anyone, no exceptions, don't excuse yourself here because that would be an eternally fatal mistake. John says,

anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

And that last clause leads into the next section of his letter that we'll look at next time. But we simply see this, basically the world has two families, the family of God and the family of Satan. The family of God is recognized because they are born unto righteousness, they practice righteousness, they love righteousness and they live holy lives to one degree or another. Those who belong to Satan don't. It's really as simple as that.

So my friend, in light of the fact that Christ came to deliver us from sin and the fact that Christ came to deliver us from Satan, in light of those twin realities, I have a simple question for you: whose family do you belong to? Has Christ delivered you?

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank You once again for the clarity of Your word and I pray, Father, for everyone under the sound of my voice, I pray that You would bring the fullness of Your saving and sanctifying power upon them to save those who are not in Christ as we speak, to save them and to deliver them and to transfer them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Your beloved Son. Father, why would I not pray that way when that is why Christ came. I am simply asking You to fulfill the purpose in the coming of Your Son as I pray that way, and so I ask You to honor Your own word in the lives of everyone who is under the sound of my voice. Save them, O God. And for that realm of Christians that are under the sound of my voice tonight, Father, I simply pray that You would sanctify them in body, soul and spirit, that You would sanctify them greatly, completely, that You would work out such a magnificent desire for Christ, a magnificent desire for the word of God, Father, that it would overflow in the outworking of their lives, Father, and that it would result in each individual Christian hearing these things in much greater joy, in much greater holiness, and in much greater assurance of salvation. Again, Father, I pray boldly in the name of Christ and yet I pray humbly simply pointing to Your word and asking for the fulfillment of it in the lives of each one who has heard. And Father, we pray these things for Your glory, for our good, and we pray that as we gather together again soon in the coming days, Father, that we would come together with a great overflow of these things, coming together one week from tonight with all of us overflowing in repentant, humble joy as Your Spirit works out the purposes of Christ in each one of our lives. Father, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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