

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

1 John 5:1-5

Intro: The First Epistle of John is a letter in which certain themes are repeated throughout the epistle. Last week I point out to you the various times the Apostle John mentioned *perfect love*. Today we come again to the subject of *overcoming*. We have the word three times in verses 4 and 5 of chapter 5. (Read.)

The first occurrence of the word is in chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. (Read.) Both of these verses speak of how the “young men” had “overcome the Wicked One.” Here overcoming is related to strength, and that strength is attributed to the Word of God. Look again at verse 14.

The we come to the word again in chapter 4, verse 4. (Read.) I think you can see that again we have the idea of overcoming attributed to *strength*. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” The Devil is the one who “is in the world.” The One Who is in believers is not identified here, but the reference to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit with believers is mentioned in the last statement of chapter 3, and so it would seem that the Apostle John was speaking of the Holy Spirit when he said, “because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” So the believers were victorious, not because they were greater in power than the evil spirits who motivated the false prophets, but because the Holy Spirit is greater in wisdom and power than the Devil who is behind the teachings of the false prophets. So again we see the victory of the people of God.

In our text for today we have our last references to *overcoming* and *victory*: twice in 5:4 and once in verse 5. Actually in verse 4 we have *overcoming* mentioned three times because the word “victory” has the same root as the word “overcometh.” The verb is νικάω; the noun is νίκη. The verb is the same one that is translated in all of the seven letters our Lord sent to the seven churches of Asia which we find in Rev. 2, 3.

So the idea is that of *overcoming*, of being *victorious over an enemy because of superior power*. In chapter 2 the superior power comes from the Word of God. In chapter 4 the superior power comes from the Holy Spirit. Here in chapter 5 our superior power, the ability to overcome the enemy, to be victorious, is due to our faith (as stated in verse 4). These are very important verses for us, too, because we are engaged in the same battles today that faced the people of God in the first century.

But let us work up to these verses on overcoming because they come at the end of the text which I have chosen for today. However, there is one fact that we must face at the beginning, and it is a fact which is not being recognized by many Christians, or professing Christians, today. Perhaps I would be closer to the truth to say that the world is not recognized as an enemy by *most* professing Christians. That is apparent not only because of the almost total lack of separation that there is between the church and the world today, but because the world has invaded the church with its music, its methods of doing business, its interest in entertainment, its promotion of pastors and Christian workers as celebrities, and the churches tendency to equate “success” with the numbers of people who attend and the amount of money that it takes in. So let me state as we begin that:

I. THE WORLD IS THE CHRISTIAN’S ENEMY.

The world is *not the only enemy that we have*, but it is an enemy nevertheless! From the time of Adam’s sin the world has been an enemy, and it always will be. What do I have in mind when I say that? What is the world that the Apostle John was talking about in this passage?

It is what the Apostle Paul called in Col. 1:13, “the power of darkness.” Listen as I read that verse for you. Speaking of God, the apostle said,
Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

And Paul described this world in Eph. 2:2 when he described how we all lived before we were saved. Listen again to what he said:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The Devil is called in 2 Cor. 4:4, “the god of this world,” and then he went on to say that the Devil as “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.”

People who are not Christians think that they are free to do whatever they want to do. That is the agenda of the liberal politicians. They think that we ought to be free to do anything we want to do when all of the time they are in hopeless bondage to the Devil and his ways, but they don’t know that they are! So, of course, they are not only willing to live the way the Devil wants them to live, but they are ferocious in their defense of what they do in supposed freedom, not knowing that it is their

bondage! The prevailing idea among worldly people is that they don't want to correct things that are obviously sinful and abominable in God's sight, such as adultery and homosexuality and drunkenness and dishonesty. They want to be able to continue with their wicked ways, but not suffer any consequences for what they are doing.

The Apostle John has already warned us in 1 John about the world. Look back at chapter 2, and verse 15, as I read it for you. (Read 1 John 2:15-17.)

Look also at 3:1 and 3:13. This last verse should remind us of what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples when He was on His way to Calvary. The Lord's words are recorded for us in John 15:18-19:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

One more verse, the verse which Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones felt was the key verse of this epistle: 1 John 5:19:

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

The world is often divided by different people in many ways. It can be divided racially, or sexually, or by ages, or by social status, and in many other ways. But the most important way is the way in which God divides the human race. His division is 1) those who know Him, and 2) those who do not know Him. Or to state it another way, 1) those who have been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) those who have not been saved by trusting in Christ. Still a third way: 1) those who are the children of God, and 2) those who are not the children of God. Or a third way, those are in the world but not of the world (God's people), and those who are in the world and of the world (those who are not the people of God).

This does not mean that everybody who is a part of this world is as bad as it is possible for him or her to be, but it does mean that if you do not know the Lord as your Savior so that you live like God wants you to live, then you live the way the world lives, without God, doing your own thing. It is very important that we all understand these two categories of humanity.

Now let me point out something that we all know by experience, but it needs to be said, and this is my second point:

II. OUR CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD IS BOTH FIERCE AND CONSTANT.

We are constantly faced with temptations which the world places before us. Persecution can so easily come our way. We are tempted constantly to do the wrong things, to say the wrong things, to go to the wrong places, to associate with the wrong people, even to think the wrong thoughts. The Devil has great authority in this world, and he will do all that he can to drag us down. And even though we are the children of God, yet we have our old nature still with us which is responsive to the ways of the world.

One thing is certain: If we only had our own strength to see us through, none of us would survive. That is the reason we need to know how to overcome in this world, how we can be victorious over such a formidable enemy.

But before we look into that, let us see the Apostle John's description of the only kind of a person who can expect to be victorious over sin in this world. And this is what we have in the first three verses of our text.

Let me call this third point:

III. THE VICTOR DESCRIBED (1 John 5:1-3).

Here the Apostle John joined together the main points that he had emphasized throughout the epistle. He was describing a person who is "born of God" because he would say, as he did in the first part of verse 4 that "whatsoever [or we would say today, *whosoever*] is born of God overcometh the world." Do you want to know if you have been "born of God"? Well, here is the test. The Apostle John gives us four ways to identify one who has been "born of God"! However, before we take the test, let us make sure that we understand what the Apostle John meant by this expression, "born of God."

We are all acquainted with the idea of being born. All of us were born into this world. It was by our conception and birth that we have life, physical life, life which will end when we die. But while the Lord Jesus was here on earth He spoke about being "born again." This obviously

meant that there is such a thing as being born a second time after we have been born the first time. But this second birth is one in which people are “born of God.” It is a birth by which God gives us His life, and He becomes our heavenly Father. And, in contrast with our physical life, this life we can have from God is eternal. It will never end. It continues on even after physical death.

The Apostle John, in writing his Gospel, spoke of this supernatural birth in words which most of you are familiar with, words which we find in John 1:11-13. Let me read them to you:

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe on his name:**

13 **Which were born,** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God.**

We didn’t have anything to do with our first birth, and we don’t have anything to do with the new birth. It is a work of God in our souls by which He gives His life to us, eternal life, divine life.

So when we describe a Christian, or one who is truly a child of God, we are describing the evidence that can be seen in his or her life that the person we are talking about really has eternal life.

Now let us look at the evidence. Always the first thing to look for is what a person who claims to be a Christian believes about Jesus Christ.

A. He believes that “Jesus is the Christ” (1 John 5:1).

To believe that “Jesus is the Christ” means that he believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Son of God in human flesh, and that He is the One Who was promised in the OT Scriptures Who would come to give His life to save sinners from their sins. A true Christian will not believe in the humanity of Jesus, but deny His Deity. Nor does a true Christian believe that Jesus provided for most of our salvation, but that we have to provide what is left. A true Christian believes that “Jesus is the Christ,” that He is the Savior, and that He alone saves us eternally from our sins.

Is that what you believe?

Let us go on to the second point which is emphasized in more than one verse:

B. A true Christian loves God (1 John 5:1m, 2m, 3a).

Before we are “born of God,” we had no place in our lives for God. We weren’t concerned about pleasing Him. We might have a troubled conscience when we did things that we knew were wrong, but by nature there was nothing in us that would make us seek God, or that would cause us to love God, or want to please God. But one of the first evidences that we have been “born of God” is that suddenly we find ourselves loving God, and wanting to please Him, and interested in learning more about Him. This will always be present in the heart of one who is truly “born of God.” He will show that He loves God.

Do you love God? Does your life show that you do?

But let me point out a third characteristic of one who has been “born of God”:

C. A true Christian loves other Christians (1 John 5:1b).

This is what we learned in 1 John 3:14. Those who aren’t “born of God” have no pleasure in being with those who are “born of God.” But after a person has experienced the new birth, then he has more pleasure and satisfaction in being with the Lord’s people than he does in being with anyone else. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that a person who enjoys being with the people of the world more than he does in being with the Lord’s people--it is very unlikely that such a person has been “born of God.” In the twentieth century we have gotten very lax and permissive in dealing with divine truth, but with the Apostle John things were either black or white. He firmly believed that it was impossible for a person to be born again and yet not love the Lord’s people.

Where do you stand on this? Can you pass this test?

The last point in the test is this:

D. A true Christian show his love the for by keeping the commandments of the Lord (1 John 5:2-3).

Let us take a lesson from the Apostle Paul on this point. You will remember that when Paul, then Saul of Tarsus, was stricken on his way to Damascus, the Lord spoke first and said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And Saul responded, “Who art thou, Lord?”

(“Lord” in that question is probably the equivalent of, “Sir.”) And the Lord responded by saying, “I am Jesus...” And then Paul asked (and this time I am sure that “Lord” meant “Lord”), “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Cf. Acts 9:4-6. A true believer may not always ask that question, but that will always be in his heart: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

We can never repay the Lord for all that He has done for us, but there is one way that we can show the Lord that we love Him, and it is the biggest and best way: *We show that we love the Lord by our obedience to the commandments of His Word.* The Christian life is not what we think it ought to be; it is what the Lord says that it is in His Word. So a real Christian will never want to be separated from the Bible. He, or she, will be continually reading it to learn what it is that the Lord wants him to do.

Do you pass the test? If you do, thank God for what He has done in your life. If you failed the test, call upon God to make you His child, and to grant you saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

BUT HAVING SAID ALL OF THIS, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT MANY WHO CLAIM TO KNOW THE LORD ARE LIVING TODAY DEFEATED THROUGH THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD AND THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD. AND SO I COME TO MY LAST POINT.

IV. THE WAY OF VICTORY (1 John 5:4-5).

Listen to the Apostle John’s words as he spoke not only by divine revelation, but from personal experience. How many, many times the Apostle John had been faced by the foe throughout his long life, and had found out that “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” And he adds that the only person who has such faith is the one who believes that “Jesus is the Son of God.”

What did the Apostle John mean when he said as one of our hymns says, “Faith is the victory!” He meant that we gain victory over the world not by fighting it, nor by secluding ourselves from it, but that our victory over the world is through *trusting God*. But where do we get such faith? It certainly is not in us, nor can it originate with us, even though it is exercised by us.

Let me ask you another question before I answer the question I have just raised. Where did you get the faith that you have in Jesus Christ which is

evidence of your salvation? The answer is: It was a gift from God. Cf. Eph. 2:8-9.

Well, then, where does your faith come by which you can have victory over the world with its temptations and trials and tribulations? Two verses give us our answer:

1) Rom. 10:17,

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

2) Heb. 12:1-4,

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Concl: Our faith always comes from the same place, or better, from the same Person. It comes from God. But it comes through the Word, and as we continue to look at Christ in the Word, and put our trust in Him--not in ourselves, and not even in Christ and in ourselves, but in Christ alone. And the more we learn to trust Him for our guidance and for our strength, the greater will be our victory, not only over the world, but also over the Devil and over our own flesh. May God grant that we will experience greater and greater victories in His Name, and may we always remember that all of the glory belongs to Him.

Remember Phil. 2:12-13:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

1 John 5:6-10

— **Intro:** Last week we considered in the first verses of this chapter, *Overcoming the World*. I think that we all know that when we speak of overcoming the world, we are also concerned with the other two enemies which we face constantly. And I am thinking, of course, about *the Devil* and *the flesh*. The three together, *the world*, *the flesh*, and *the Devil*, form a trilogy of evil, and none of us is immune to the trouble that they are capable of causing us every day that we live. So it is imperative that we be ready to face the temptations that come to us from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And if we are to be able to do that, we must know from Scripture how we are to stand against these enemies.

According to 1 John 5:4, only those who are born of God can have any hope of victory over the world. But the specific means of our victory is *our faith!* But this should lead us to ask, “Faith in what, or faith in whom?”

— It certainly can’t be faith in ourselves, or there would be no need for us to be born again. To be born again means that we have eternal life, divine life. The Apostle John will say that when we get to verse 12 of this chapter. (Read.) We know that we can only fail if we are trusting in ourselves.

No, it can’t be that we trust in ourselves. It has to mean that we must trust in God. But since the Apostle John has declared that there is such an intimate relationship between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, we can’t trust in God without trusting also in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 1 of this chapter tells us that to be born of God we must believe that “Jesus is the Christ.” (Read.) It is expressed in a slightly different way, but the meaning is the same. The one who overcomes the world is “he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”

— Now I would be surprised if any of us has a question regarding the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I would also be surprised if any of us has doubts regarding whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, that is, the Messiah. *But what is our proof?* This appears to be the point that the Apostle John was considering in the passage before us today. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, if He is not really the Messiah, then it is pointless to talk about *faith* because faith in God is not possible without Christ.

Perhaps on this point it will help us to remember what the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church about our Lord. Let me read to you that passage that I am thinking about. You will find it in 1 Corinthians 3, verses 10 and 11:

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

What did the Apostle Paul mean by these words?

He meant that Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith. There is no other foundation. This means that if for any reason, or in any way, Jesus is not the Son of God, if He is not the true Messiah, the Christ, then we have no foundation at all for our faith. This, in turn, means that those preachers who think they are preaching the Gospel, and leading people to God while they deny the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, and deny that He was and is the long-awaited Messiah, have no foundation for what they are teaching. So you and I should stay as far away from them as we can possibly get.

How do we know that Jesus of Nazareth was, and is, the Son of God? How do we know that He is the true Messiah and that no one else can possibly qualify as having a right to claim both of these titles: Son of God, and Messiah?

In our SS classes just now we are studying the Gospel of John. Those who have been teaching us have reminded us of the main purpose the Apostle John had in writing that book. It is stated in the last two verses of John, chapter 20. This is what those verses say about John's purpose in writing his Gospel:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

If a person has doubts about the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, or about whether or not He was the Messiah, he or she needs to read the Gospel of John. The Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John to establish the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was "the Christ, the Son of God." He wrote to prove that Jesus was not only Man, but that He was also God, and that all

of the passages in the OT which speak of the promised Messiah, were speaking of Him! If Jesus of Nazareth were not that Person, then we would all be better off to forget about Him. But, thank God, He is God's Son with the very same nature as God, and He is the One about Whose coming the OT prophets spoke. *But how do we prove this?* We, as I have said, can read the Gospel of John. But is there another way? Yes! This is what the Apostle John was doing in the text that is before us today.

However, our task is not a simple one. It is generally agreed by expositors of this epistle, that the verses of our text are the most difficult verses in the epistle. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, whom many of us know through his writings, said that they might be the most difficult verses in the whole Bible. I don't know if that is the case because there are many difficult verses in the Bible, but we all have to agree that these are difficult verses. There have been different interpretations given to them. However, the good thing is that most evangelical expositors come to the same conclusion that the Apostle John was seeking to establish. Let me explain what I believe is the meaning of this passage, and I trust that I have understood the meaning which John had, and which the Holy Spirit had.

Our text, 1 John 5:6-10, gives us the proof that Jesus of Nazareth is "the Christ," and that He truly was "the Son of God." This is like a court scene. At this point in his epistle he is calling witnesses to support his own testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Let me give you the three points that I am going to use for my message today:

- 1) The Witness of the Spirit (1 John 5:6).
- 2) A Threefold Witness (1 John 5:7-8).
- 3) The Choices We Have (1 John 5:9-10).

I. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT (1 John 5:6).

I take this heading from the last statement of verse 6. (Read.) But the question that we must answer is, Where is the witness, or testimony, of the Spirit to be found? It seems that many expositors have failed to answer that question. But probably most of you know where we can find the testimony of the Spirit. It is not in some special revelation that God gives us. We have not received some audible message from heaven. The testimony of the Spirit is to be found in the Word of God. According to the words of the Lord Jesus in John, chapters 14 and 16, the Holy Spirit has been given to us to guide us into all truth, the truth of Scripture. And

there it is that He takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us. The Bible, from its beginning to the end, is the Spirit's testimony that Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary, was when He was born was the Son of God as He had been from all eternity, and that He continues to be the same today, and for all eternity to come. Those who read the Bible cannot come to any other conclusion. If people come to the conclusion that Jesus was not God, and that He was not the Messiah, they did not get those ideas from the Scriptures. The Scriptures, all of which were written under the direction of the Holy Spirit, will bring us to no other conclusion. And there is no question about that!

But now we come to one of the difficulties in the passage. What did the Apostle John have in mind when he wrote that our Lord came "by water and blood"? This is one point in this passage where expositors have differed in their interpretation. But before we get to that, let me call attention to the word "came."

This word is used in the NT of the first coming of our Lord to indicate that *He came on a mission! He came with a purpose to fulfill*. Let me give you some Scriptures to prove that.

In John 6:38 we read these words:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

In the latter part of John 8:42 we read, "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And so in our text the Apostle John used that word, "came," knowing full well the meaning that it had.

So our Lord came from the Father on a divine mission, and He "came by water and blood."

Some see in this a reference to the "blood and water: which came out of our Lord's body when a soldier pierced His side while He was hanging on the Cross. But aside from the fact that the words are mentioned in the reverse order in John 19:34, it is difficult to see how that incident would have anything to do with showing that our Lord was the Christ, the Son of God.

Another idea that some have is that the "water" speaks of our Lord's physical birth, and that the "blood" speaks of His death. Undoubtedly the "blood" refers to His death, but "water," if it could mean His physical

birth would emphasize our Lord's humanity, not His Deity. And so this does not seem to be a likely meaning.

But what if the "water" were to refer to the baptism of our Lord, and the "blood" were to refer to His death? What happened when the Lord was baptized? John had been preaching of the Messiah, and saying of Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). But then John continued with these words:

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God (John 1:30-34).

Matthew's account of the baptism of our Lord helps us to understand why John the Baptist would say, as the Apostle John reported in John 1:34, that our Lord was "the Son of God." It was because, as Matthew reported, that after the Lord was baptized, the Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am wellpleased" (Matt. 3:17).

So it was at our Lord's baptism that we have these positive statements that our Lord was indeed the Son of God! And the picture in his baptism was of His substitutionary death--the Lord took John's place, and John had the Lord's place.

Actually, in all of the passages I have given you, we have the united testimony of all three Members of the Godhead, but they form, in a unique way, the testimony of the Spirit because He has preserved this testimony for us in the Word. But now let us go on to:

II. A THREEFOLD WITNESS (1 John 5:7-8).

Here, as many of you know, we have a textual problem. In many of the Greek MSS we find just the first part of verse 7 and the last part of verse

8. So it would seem that the best reading would be:

For there are three that bear record..., the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

So from the words in verse 7, "in heaven," down to and including the words "in earth" in verse 8, we may have an addition that someone put in when some MSS were made. We don't have any of the originals now, and so scholars have studied the various copies to give us what appears to be the most authoritative text.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones has a very helpful section in his commentary on the problem that we have here. I am not quoting him directly, but giving the gist of what he had to say. There are two kinds of critics who deal with the Scriptures: textual critics and higher critics. *Textual Criticism* is good because it aims at seeking to determine the original text from the study of all of the MSS that are available. This is a legitimate study, and is very profitable for all of us. But that is not true of *Higher Criticism*. The purpose of Higher Criticism is to destroy the teachings of Scripture. In the case before us today it seems to be the opinion of the greatest number of textual critics that the latter part of verse 7 and the first part of verse 8 were not a part of the original text. But, for our encouragement, we can see that it is true that the united testimony of the Father, the Word (our Lord Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit, is that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God.

Speaking of three witnesses, it is good to remember the principle which the Lord established with His people during the days of Moses. It is recorded for us in Deut. 19:15, the latter part of the verse:

...at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

So here we have three: "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." We could include the testimony of many more. Probably the most notable was the confession of Peter when the Lord asked His disciples what they believed about Him. Peter responded in the words of his memorable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). We also have the words of Nathanael when the Lord found him. He said to the Lord, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

The evidence is overwhelming that our Lord came, as the Apostle John described His coming in 1 John 4:9-10:

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that

God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Now all of this brings us to:

III. THE CHOICES WE HAVE (1 John 5:9-10).

We have only two: we either believe the testimony, and accept it, or we refuse it, and turn away from it.

But the Apostle John did not coldly state it that way; he coupled what he had to say with an appeal for the acceptance of the message concerning Christ. He said, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." We need to be impressed with the fact that the Scriptures, apart from which we would know nothing about Christ and the Gospel, are *the testimony of God!* We believe men even though there is always the possibility that some may be lying to us. But this is the testimony of God. He has never been known to lie! In fact, Paul said in Titus 1:2 that He "cannot lie"! In fact, as the writer of the book of Hebrews has told us, God has given both His promise and backed it up with His oath, these two immutable things "in which it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18).

And so remember this: What I have been saying about the Lord Jesus Christ today, is not just my opinion (although I believe every word of it), nor is it primarily the testimony of the Apostle John (although it is clear that he believed it with all of his heart. No, what we have been considering today is "the testimony of God."

But what about those who reject "the testimony of God"? Not to believe God is no minor thing. It is to make "him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." How terrible it is to add this sin to all of our other sins! Probably most people will be very hesitant about calling God a liar if they were to stand face to face with Him. But that is exactly when people do when, having heard the testimony of God, they refuse to believe what God has said about His son.

Concl: Where do you stand with the Lord today? Believing the record means more than saying that you believe it is true; it means that you are also trusting in the Lord for your salvation. God has given His witness. May God give you the grace to trust Christ as your Savior now.

THE WITNESS OF GOD

1 John 5:11-13

Intro: One of the disturbing things about our generation is the tendency on the part of many to *question any authority*. Perhaps you have seen that bumper sticker on cars: QUESTION AUTHORITY. Those who don't say it, yet feel that way in their hearts. It is a natural characteristic of the human heart, and so it is as old as the Garden of Eden--older than that when you remember that there was rebellion against God in heaven before there was rebellion in the Garden of Eden. So, really, the first authority to be questioned was God's authority over man

Our generation has not changed at all in that. People are like the Jews were in their attitude toward the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth. They said, in effect, like the servants of the nobleman in the parable told by our Lord, "We will not have this man to rule over us" (Luke 19:14). And when people reject the authority of God in their lives, it is only a matter of time, and usually not a very long time until every other authority is questioned and rejected.

All of us as children have questioned the authority of our parents. You can see this in very young children. If they don't get what they want, and when they want it, they let everybody around them know about it. And the rejection of parental authority has become one of the greatest problems we have in our country today. And then comes rebellion against the authority of teachers, and rejection against the authority of police officers. And this is followed by rejection against government in all areas. People who are rebellious feel that no one has the right to tell them to do anything. Wives refuse to be submissive to their husbands, and this is where many children learn rebellion for themselves.

This is one reason that people do not like the Bible. The Bible is a book of great authority, of divine authority. And this is one reason why people do not like to go to church; they don't want to hear what God has to say in His Word about what we need, and about what we should be, and what we should do.

All of the writers of Scripture believed firmly in the authority of God over man. We have been learning about that in some of our memory verses this winter. One such verse is Daniel 4:35. I don't know if all of you who have been memorizing verses know it, but they are the words of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. This is what he said:

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Last week I spoke to you from 1 John 5:6-10 about *The Witness of the Holy Spirit*. It had to do with His testimony concerning Christ, and primarily it was His testimony concerning Christ which we have in the Word. It was a testimony of His Deity, but also of His true humanity. It was the Spirit's testimony that our Lord was *the Christ, the Messiah, the long-awaited Redeemer Who had been promised throughout the years when the Old Testament was written*.

It is wonderful, and I am sure the plan of God, that we are going through the Gospel of John in our Sunday School lessons at the same time we are going through 1 John in our morning services. It was just a week ago that we had the fifth chapter where the Apostle John gave various testimonies concerning Christ. The Lord made the claim for Himself, but He did not make a big point of that. Instead He spoke of the testimony which John the Baptist gave concerning Him. And then he went on to speak of the testimony of the works that the Father had given Him to do--the miracles which He performed, and the teaching He gave which carried a powerful testimony. And then He said that the Father Himself had given testimony as to Who He was. Twice the Father had spoken from heaven, and said, "This is my beloved Son." And then the Lord said that the Scriptures carried their own testimony concerning Who He was.

As most of you know, I am teaching a series now in our Tuesday Bible Class on *Christ in the Old Testament*. The whole Bible from start to finish is full of Christ, and leaves no doubt but that He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

And then when you think of the writers of Scripture, and that they were writing out of their hearts concerning the Deity of our Lord, the testimony is really overwhelming. But today I want to consider with you what the Apostle John had to say about the testimony of the Father concerning His Son. And so let me call it:

I. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD (1 John 5:11-12).

All of the testimonies that I have referred to are *testimonies of authority!* They all would hold up in court. They are not like the testimonies that

were given when the Lord was tried when He was here on earth. His enemies brought *false witnesses* to testify against Him. But these are *true witnesses*, and yet none can surpass the testimony of God Himself.

— In verse 10 of our chapter the Apostle John made the charge that those who refuse to believe God, make Him a liar because they do not believe the testimony, the witness, the record which God has given of His Son. But the testimony to which the Apostle John was referring at this point in his epistle, was His testimony concerning His Son and the whole truth of salvation.

Now look very carefully with me at verse 11. It is:

A. A twofold testimony (1 John 5:11).

The first has to do with a gift which God has given. And we may truthfully speak of it as:

1. The gift of eternal life (v. 11a).

— Here is the authoritative message concerning salvation. Whether people believe it or not, does not change the message. It is true, and it carries with it the full authority of God. If we do not believe it, the loss is ours, but it does not change the truthfulness of God's testimony.

What does it mean to be saved? It means the possession of eternal life. God has given it. It is a gift. You can't buy it because no amount of money could purchase it. All of the combined wealth of men throughout the whole earth would not be sufficient to purchase salvation. It would not even make an acceptable down payment.

This eternal life is a gift that no one asked for. That is one feature of it that is so amazing. God, moved by the love and compassion in His heart for guilty, hell-bound sinners, decided before there ever was an angel, or a man, or a world, that He would provide salvation for sinners *as a gift!* And how thankful we can be that it is a gift, because no person would be saved if it were not a gift.

— But just because it comes as a gift to us, and must be received by faith, that does not mean that it did not cost anything. It cost God the death of His only begotten Son. And it cost the Son suffering such as no man nor angel has experienced--EVER! As I have said before, we can understand

the crown of thorns, the spitting, the tearing out of His hair, the spitting and the mockery. We can understand the nails through His hands and His feet, and the sword through His side, but we cannot understand the suffering that made the blood ooze out of the pores of His skin, nor what it meant that His soul was made an offering for our sin. We cannot understand the agony which made Him cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Our salvation comes as a free gift to us, but the cost to God and to Christ and to the Holy Spirit cannot be calculated.

And the fact that it is a gift means that it can be offered to all. If salvation were on any other basis, great masses of people would be excluded. But no one has an excuse when it is offered freely to all. And God's promise is that whoever comes to Him will not be cast out. None will be rejected.

But what does it mean that it is "eternal life"?

This does not mean that God simply extends our lives out for all eternity. Everyone is going to live somewhere for eternity. We know that our physical life comes to an end when we die, but God promises us the prospect of life eternal! This means that we partake of His life. And this brings me to my second point under *the testimony of God*. A very vital part of God's testimony, His infallible testimony, is that He has told us where we receive this gift of eternal life.

2. "This life is in His Son" (v. 11b).

You don't get it by joining some church. You could join every church in the world, but if that is all you had, you would have nothing! You don't get it by going through a lot of rituals and ceremonies. It is not the result of observing certain religious days throughout the year. I have already said that you can't buy it. Nor can you earn it by good works. *There is only one place it can be found, and that is in Jesus Christ.* "This life is in His Son."

People don't like that, but that doesn't make any difference to God. If you and I do not go to God through Christ, we don't go to God. As our Lord said, He is "the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by" Him!

This is the divine message concerning salvation. It eliminates any and every other way of salvation. It is not Mohammed, but Christ. It is not Buddha, but Christ. It is not by the teachings of the New Age, but Christ.

And it is extremely important that when people talk to you about Jesus, or about the Christ, that they say exactly what the Scriptures say about Him. Any other way is a false way. Only through Christ can we have eternal life. And it is Christ as our life within us Who makes us acceptable to God. What sinners need is Christ! To be without Christ is to be without hope!

Now all of this is so extremely important that in verse 12 we have:

B. A restatement of the truth of salvation (1 John 5:12).

John, the Apostle, did not want any of his readers to miss the truth. If you have Christ, you have life; if you do not have Christ, there may be many wonderful things that people can say about you, but neither you nor they can say that you have life. Only Christ has done what was necessary in order for God to erase the charges against us because of our sins. It cost Him His life. It required the greatest humiliation for Him. But He did it. He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead because He had fully accomplished everything necessary for the salvation of all who have ever, or will ever, come to Him. If you have Him you have life; if you don't have Him, you fall under the eternal judgment of Almighty God. You don't need anything in order to be lost forever, but you need Christ in order to be saved from your sins.

This is all completely in harmony with what our Lord Himself said. The message could not be any clearer than it is in what is probably the best known verse in all of the New Testament:

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:16-19).

What do you have to do to be lost, to be spiritually dead and under the judgment of God? Nothing. What must you do to be saved? The Apostle Paul said very truthfully, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Finally, we come to the last verse of our text for today, and the verse which more than any other in the epistle tells us why the Apostle John wrote this delightful epistle.

II. THE APOSTLE JOHN’S STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (1 John 5:13).

The Apostle John did not write this epistle as a treatise on the Gospel, although we have seen much of the Gospel in these five chapter. No, he wrote to those of us who know the Lord, he wrote to those of us who *have the Son!* But why?

That we may know that we have eternal life--for one reason. There is no reason for any believer in Christ to have any uncertainty about his or her salvation. We can know that we have eternal life, and the tests are given to us in this epistle. And I want to give another message on how we can know that we are saved.

But be sure that you notice carefully the words that the Apostle John used. The Holy Spirit guided him in the very words he was to use. And it is very clear that the Apostle John wanted all of us to know that salvation is a present possession. We don’t get it when we die. We don’t get it when we pass some kind of a judgment when we get to heaven. Salvation is ours NOW! What a glorious truth this is!

But the second reason is this: “That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” If you are using one of the more recent translations except for the New King James, you find that this last statement of the verse is missing because it is not in some MSS. But does it have a place here? I believe it does, and the NKJV brings out the meaning of the statement even more clearly than the original KJV. In the NKJV it reads like this: “That you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” You see, the fact that you are really trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior is seen in the fact that you continue to believe. The person who does not continue to believe, never has believed. And so the longer a true Christian knows the Lord, the greater will His conviction be that Jesus Christ is really the Son of God.

Concl: I hope we will all take these verses to heart. I can’t think of anything worse than to go out of this life thinking that you are a

Christian because you have always gone to church, or because you have always claimed to believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Do you really know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you love Him? Do you desire to learn more about Him, and do you know what it is to live in fellowship with Him? Can you see where He has made some real changes in your life? Do you love righteousness, and hate iniquity? I am sure that there are many in our churches today who claim to be Christians, but who do not know anything about life in Christ. I hope that there are none at Trinity Bible Church. But if there are, I trust that the Lord will awaken whoever you might be to your need to call upon the Lord, forsaking all else and everyone else, trusting in Him and Him alone as your Savior.

May God make us a people who know that we are saved, and that one evidence will be that we continue to believe in the Lord, we continue to trust in Him, and we always will!

And remember that we have all of this on the highest possible authority--the authority of God Himself. To reject His testimony, even to neglect it, is to be guilty of rebellion against God, and to charge Him with being a liar. Instead, may we take our stand on what the Apostle Paul said, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

HOW CAN I KNOW I AM SAVED?

1 John 5:13

Intro: Several times during the past Sundays as we have been going through this epistle, have we had the opportunity to speak about assurance--the assurance of salvation, the certainty that we know Christ as our Savior and that we have eternal life. Nobody could accuse the Bible of being a book of uncertainties. It is clear and positive and powerful in the declaration of all of the truth it presents. The writers of Scripture were very confident about what they had to say. They were bold and positive in what they had to say. And the reason they could be so sure about what they had to say was because they were dealing with the truth which had been revealed to them by God.

For the most part people today have eliminated this kind of teaching from their minds. Truth is now supposed to be relative, not absolute. We hear all of the time that what is true to one person is not necessarily true to another person. And so instead of having our lives built upon a solid foundation, people are like ships at sea, caught in a storm, being tossed in every direction, full of fears and without any real hope.

How refreshing it is to turn to the Word of God and to discover this note of certainty, of assurance, of conviction, and faith regarding the matters which are of the greatest importance in life now and forever.

The Apostle Paul was such a man of conviction. Listen to these words which he wrote to Timothy. They are found in the latter part of 2 Timothy 1:12:

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

He knew the Lord and had absolute confidence in the Lord's power to keep him throughout life and into eternity.

The Apostle Peter said about his own life and teaching that he had "not followed cunningly devised fables," as though someone had tried to deceive him, and now he was trying to deceive others. He said that he was an eyewitness of the majesty of the Lord--and he was when he, James, and John saw the Lord in His glory on the mount of transfiguration. But then Peter added this about the Scriptures:

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,

until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

All through Scripture we have this note of absolute confidence because those who wrote knew that they were writing the truth which God has sovereignly made known to them.

Now there is no place in your life or mine that we want to be more certain about than in that which has to do with our relationship with God. If we are wrong in this area, we will suffer the consequences both now and for all eternity. That is one reason the Apostle John used some form of the verb *know* almost forty times in this epistle. And in our text for today we have his own statement as to why he wrote this epistle. Let me read these familiar words to you again. (Read 1 John 5:13.)

When he said, “These things,” he was looking back over all that he had written. He specifically mentioned those whom he had in mind as he wrote: “You that believe on the name of the Son of God.” And then we said what was his twofold purpose:

- 1) “That ye may know that ye have eternal life.”
- 2) “That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

He indicated two things here about saving faith:

- 1) Its object was the Son of God.
- 2) It is a faith which continues. It may not always be strong, but it will always be there. That is why in many MSS we have that last statement given: “And that ye may [continue to] believe on the name of the Son of God.” A true believer not only believes in Christ as the Son of God, but he continues to believe, to trust, in Christ.

The part of the verse that I am particularly interested in today is the two words with which the verse begins: “These things.” In the Greek the two words are one: Ταῦτα. If we are thinking as we read, we will ask ourselves, “What things?” And the only way to answer that question is to go back over the epistle to find the “things” which enable us to know beyond any doubt that we have eternal life, or, to state it another way, that we are truly saved. The Apostle John believed that if we are saved, we should know that we are. There need be no guess-work about this. It is not spiritual pride which enables us to say that we *know* that we are saved; it is

a false humility to think that we can't know that we are saved when the Bible says that we can. And we say it not with any confidence in ourselves, but our confidence is in the Lord.

Going back to the beginning of the epistle the Apostle John stated at the beginning what his concern was. Let me read verses 3 and 4 of chapter 1 so that we can all be reminded of his purpose as he stated it there. (Read 1 John 1:3-4.)

He was writing that we might enjoy the fellowship that he enjoyed "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." What an amazing thing it is that you and I can claim such a relationship with God and with His Son that we can claim to be in fellowship with Them. But that is exactly what it means to be a Christian, to be a child of God. We have a personal, intimate relationship with the Members of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is also included in this fellowship because 1 John 3:24 tells us that the Holy Spirit has been given to us. But we can't have fellowship with the Members of the Godhead if we don't have eternal life. If we don't have eternal life, we won't even want to have fellowship with God. So if we are to have fellowship, we must have eternal life, and if we are to know that we have eternal life, then we need to know the signs of life which the Apostle John has pointed out to us in this epistle. *What are they?*

Before I point them out, let me remind you that the Apostle John declares two things about God. In 1 John 1:5 we are told that "God is light." In 1 John 4:8 and 16 we are told two times that "God is love." "God is light" means that He is absolutely holy. "God is love" means that this is the very nature of God. God is the One Who gives definition to the word *love*. If you want to know what love is, then study God; get acquainted with Him.

It is important to note these two statements because then we will not be surprised to learn what "these things" are which show us that we have eternal life.

In looking for "these things," we are going to consider in the time that remains, the following:

- 1) Sin.
- 2) Obedience.
- 3) Love. And under this we have to speak of:
 - a) The people of God.
 - b) The world.
 - c) God Himself.

4) Jesus Christ.

We have seen in our studies that the Apostle did not consider a subject, and then go on to other things, never to mention that one thing again. No, he mentioned them, and then before long he was back writing about that same thing again. His purpose seems to have been that he wanted to emphasize each point to impress them upon the hearts of his readers.

Let us now look at the first of “these things”:

I. SIN.

I won’t try to mention everything that the Apostle John had to say about each of these subjects, but just enough to get his emphasis on each point well in our minds.

The person who is not a Christian does not like to talk about *sin*. He may admit that he has weaknesses and failures, but he does not like the word *sin* because sin brings God into the picture. “God is light,” and so He has no sin, and has never been guilty of sin. Sin is any departure, or anything that is inconsistent with the character of God. So we can’t claim to have fellowship with God if we are living in sin. In fact, the Apostle John said in 1:6 that if we claim to have fellowship with God, and are living in sin, we are lying. In 3:9 he said that a person who is born of God cannot continue on living in sin. Believers certainly do sin, but a believers attitude toward sin has undergone a complete change. He hates to sin, and when he does, he confesses it. His conscience has become sensitive to the things that are not pleasing to God. A true child of God calls sin, sin, and he seeks the grace of God to keep him from sinning.

So one of the first signs that a person has eternal life is that his attitude toward sin has changed. He knows that he is a sinner, but that God has saved him from his sin and wants to keep him from sinning. If a person says that he has no sin, it is a clear sign that he is not born again. He is deceiving himself and the truth is not in him.

Our second word is:

II. OBEDIENCE.

Look at 1 John 2:3-6. (Read.)

Where do we find the commandments of the Lord Jesus? We find them

all through the Word of God. So this means that a true child of God will have an immediate interest in the Bible. If a person makes a profession of faith in Christ, but is not interested in reading the Bible, nor in going where he can hear the Bible taught, you can be sure that things are not the way they should be in the life of a true Christian. And a true Christian will not be satisfied just to read and learn, but he will want to obey the truth. He will soon learn that obeying the commandments of the Lord is what the Lord uses to change us more and more to be like the Lord Jesus is, which is the goal of salvation. People often have the idea that the Christian life is just trying to do the best that you can. But it is far different from that. It is seeking to do and to be what God wants, and so the Bible begins to exercise a deep influence in the way a true Christian lives.

Our third word is:

III. LOVE.

As I indicated a moment ago, the Apostle John considered love in different directions--some positively, and one in particular, negatively. That is, he stated what we are to love, and what we are not to love. He began by pointing out that we are to:

A. Love the brethren.

That is, we are to love the people who know the Lord. In fact, the Apostle John said in 3:14 that this is one major way that we can know that we "have passed from death unto life."

In practical terms this means that if a person continues to prefer his old friends who do not know the Lord to new friends who do know the Lord, it is because he is still without spiritual life. As 3:14 says, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

We all know, or should know, that people who do not know the Lord Jesus as Savior, do not want to go to church if the church is a place where the Word of God is taught and where true Christians attend. There are many churches that are not much more than a social gathering, and where the Word of God is not really taught. Non-Christians can be perfectly comfortable in an environment like that, but that is not true of churches where people really know the Lord, and where the Word of God is taught.

We all have friends and neighbors who are not Christians. And many of

— them are good people. They seek to be helpful, and want to obey the laws of the land, but we are aware that there is one area where we are not in agreement with each other. We all need to ask ourselves if our best friends know the Lord, or if they do not. Usually when a person becomes a Christian, his, or her, old friends will drop him because a Christian can't go on living like he did before he became a Christian.

We may not be drawn to all Christians in the same way, but for a true Christian there will definitely be an attraction to others who know the Lord. If that is not there, the professing Christian may not really be saved.

But John spoke of love in another direction, this time, negatively.

B. "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15-17).

— These verses, and verses like Rom. 12:1-2, and 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, are verses which need to be written on the heart of every child of God. Years ago I remember Dr. Mitchell saying that the world has become *churchy*, and the church has become *worldly*. And that trend has continued until today it is hard to tell the difference. You can go into many churches and find the same theatrics that you find in the theater, or the nightclub. The emphasis has shifted from teaching to entertaining.

But what about our lives throughout the week? Which exercises the greater influence upon us, the world or the Word of God? TV and our magazines are designed to make us want more and more, and to make us dissatisfied with what we have, so we will buy more and more. We all have so much more than our parents and grandparents had, but it seems that we are never satisfied. The world in which we live is an enemy to godly living, and a person who does not see the need to change from what he used to be is probably the same that he always has been, and is really not a child of God after all. This is a problem all of us have to face for ourselves. Let us not set our affection on things on the earth, but on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. What a difference there would be in the world if we as the Lord's people really refused to go along with the ways of the world, and set our sights instead on doing that which is pleasing to the Lord. Before any of us make that next purchase we need to ask ourselves if what we are about to do is the will of God.

— But both of these two points which the Apostle John made in connection with love, would be made right if this third point I am about to make were as it should be in our lives. This is truly a major point, and probably one

that needs our immediate attention. I am speaking now of:

C. Loving God.

We all know, or should know, that when the Lord was asked what was the great commandment in the Law, meaning *the greatest*, He said this:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment (Matt. 22:37-38).

On the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no greater commandment. Note what the Apostle John said in 1 John 4:19-20. (Read.)

Let me ask myself and all of you today, how much do we love the Lord God? Is it with all of our heart, and with all of our soul, and with all of our mind, and, as one Gospel adds, with all of our strength. Do you love to learn about the Lord? Do you love to have fellowship with Him? Do you love to pray? And do you love His family? How big a place has the Lord had in our lives this past week? Do we trust Him when things go wrong just because we know that there is no one who loves us like He does? If we really know God, and love Him, we are going to love His people, and we are not going to waste our love on the world. Don't forget this point that I am making today. This is the key to everything else in the Apostle John's first epistle.

But now let me conclude with a final word about:

IV. JESUS CHRIST.

We can't truthfully call ourselves Christians if we have questions in our minds about the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the end of the first century the Devil had people doubting if Jesus were really the Son of God, and doubting if He were the true Messiah. People even were doubting His true humanity. If Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, and if He were not the promised Messiah, and if He were not God manifest in human flesh, then we are still in our sins. If what the false teachers were saying about Jesus of Nazareth was true, then we do not have a Savior. A person cannot have false ideas about Christ, and still be a child of God. Deny Christ, and you are stating in words loud and clear, that you do not have eternal life! But if you believe He is the Son of God, and that He was the promised Messiah, and that He was a true human being, although without sin, then you have eternal life. And just as He has saved you from your sins, so you will continue on through life believing the truth about Jesus, and continuing to

trust Him every day to meet your needs and to guide you in His ways. The message of the Apostle John is very clear.

Concl: We have been considering today what the Apostle John had in mind when in 1 John 5:13 he said, “These things...” How do these truths impress you? Do you say a hearty “amen,” or are you inclined to question what he had to say. If you can’t say “amen” to what the Apostle John has written, then there is a very strong possibility that you are not saved. But if you are in agreement, as weak as you might feel your faith is, yet these are the signs which the Apostle John has given us of the presence of spiritual life.

You know, doctors speak of our vital signs--indicators to them that we have physical life. Think of “these things” which the Apostle John has written as the *vital signs* of spiritual life. If you have them, you are alive in Christ; if not, you are still dead in your trespasses and sins. If the signs are not in your life, then let me plead with you to seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him to save you from your sins through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE COURAGE TO PRAY

1 John 5:14-15

— **Intro:** Today in our studies in the first epistle of John, we come to one of the great prayer texts of Scripture. These two verses have provided great encouragement for the people of God ever since it was written. And I know that I can say that one of the great blessings that young Christians have received from reading the Scriptures, has been the discovery of these two verses in the Word of God. I will never forget the impression that these verses made on me in my younger days. Lucille reminded me yesterday these were the first verses, or about the first verses, she heard me speak on when we were university students.

The experience of the Apostle Paul just after he was saved, shows us that prayer is one activity that every child of God is inclined to become involved in following his new birth. When the Lord appeared in a vision to tell Ananias to go to find Saul of Tarsus, He told Ananias the name of the street where he would find Saul, and the house where he was staying, "the house of Judas," but then the Lord added this: "Behold, he prayeth." See Acts 9:11b.

— Prayer has been a characteristic of the Lord's people throughout history. Prayer has been divinely ordained as the way God has planned for us to enjoy fellowship with Himself. True Christians pray! Sadly, it is often true that we do not pray as much as we should, nor as often as we should, but prayer is very important to those who are truly the Lord's people.

The Bible gives us many accounts of answers to prayer. And we never tire of reading about how God has worked in answer to prayer. Biographies of men and women of God whom the Lord has used in past days, record for us how they prayed and how God answered their prayers. I hope you are acquainted with the life of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, as well as the life of George Mueller who built orphanages to house children in Bristol, England many years ago, and it was a testimony that God hears and answers prayer. The same was true, and still is, of the Dohnavur Fellowship, a work established by Amy Carmichael in India to rescue Indian girls from a life of sin as temple prostitutes. These are wonderful stories of the faithfulness of God in answer to prayer. If you haven't read the lives of these people, it will do your soul good to get their biographies and read them.

— But the most amazing account of one who lived a life of prayer, is the

story of our Lord Jesus Christ which we have in the four Gospels. We would think that He, the Son of God, of all people would not have needed to pray. But He often spent whole nights in prayer. And who can forget what happened in Gethsemane? And what Christian has not been blessed in an overwhelming way by our Lord's prayer in John 17. As Dr. Lloyd-Jones remarked in his commentary on 1 John, it is hard for us to understand the importance of prayer when we know that God is sovereign and is working all things out after the counsel of His own will, but it is very important! In fact James has told us in his epistle that one reason we have not is because we ask not. See James 4:2. And you will remember the Lord rebuked Peter, James, and John because they went to sleep instead of *watching with Him in prayer*. The apostles refused to take on added responsibilities because they felt it imperative that they give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). And note what they put first: prayer. The ministry of the Word is never what it should be, and can be, without much prayer. Luther sought to give his best hours to prayer--and usually that was three hours. The people whom the Lord has used have without exception been people who prayed.

And yet, while prayer is a privilege, it is an obligation that we have to God. Our Lord said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1), and the implication is that if we don't pray, we will faint! Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, said, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). But there are many passages which encourage us to pray, assuring us that God hears and answers prayer. It is very significant that in the final hours before our Lord's arrest, He had much to say to His disciples about prayer. Read John 14, 15, and 16, and you will see what He said.

Today we come, as I have said, to two very wonderful verses on prayer: 1 John 5:14-15. If you haven't committed them to memory already, I hope that you will. And once you memorize them, review and review them until you can never forget them. They will continue to bless you as long as you live. Let me read them to you now. (Read 1 John 5:14-15.)

Let me consider with you, first of all,

I. THE PLACE THEY HAVE IN THIS EPISTLE.

It always is helpful to see how verses fit into the book where we find them if we are to get the most benefit from them. Noticing the context always helps us to understand particular verses.

As we saw last week, the Apostle John had just stated his purpose in writing this epistle. It was that we might know that we have eternal life, and that we might continue to believe in the Lord's Name. And then, to show that verse 14 and verse 15 are related to verse 13, you will notice that the Apostle John tied them together with the word "*and*." So they are definitely related to what the Apostle John said in verse 13.

There are two points that I would make in noticing this.

The first is that the Apostle John was indicating that prayer is the special privilege and responsibility of those of us who are the people of God. I won't say that God doesn't answer some prayers of people who are not saved, but I will say that this sacred privilege belongs in a special way to those who know the Lord. We have this God-given right. God is our heavenly Father because the Lord Jesus has saved us from our sins, and so prayer is for us!

But let me follow that point up with this one: The people who are going to make prayer a priority in their lives are those believers who *know* that they are saved. If you are not certain that you are saved, you are not going to be certain about anything else in the Christian life. That is why it is so important to be able to say from the heart that you *know* that you are saved! And the Apostle Paul indicates this by the way that he puts these verses together.

Notice the word "know" in verse 13, and the word "confidence" in verse 14. They are not words which express doubt or uncertainty. They are strong words of conviction and assurance. We, after having applied the tests of eternal life which he has given us in this epistle, can say to God's glory that *we know that we have eternal life*, and that very truth leads us to go on to say that *we know that we can pray, and that God will answer our prayers*. But if you aren't quite sure about your salvation, you are going to feel that same way about prayer and praying. And if you aren't sure, you probably won't pray very much--if at all!

So before we are ready for verses 14 and 15, we have to deal with whether or not we are sure that we are saved.

But let me assume today that we can say that we know that we have eternal life, what is important for us to learn in verses 14 and 15?

Let me call your attention to the word "confidence," and I will call my

next point what John called it:

II. CONFIDENCE IN GOD (1 John 5:14a).

Our confidence is not in ourselves. Nor is our confidence in the way we pray, the words we say, when we come to God in prayer. Our “confidence” is “in Him,” in God. If God can save me, if He can change my heart so that I am a new creature, if He can make me His child and deliver me from the power of sin, then obviously He is the One I need to come to with every need I have. Not only that, but He is the One Whom I need to worship and praise for all that He has done for me, and for all that He continues to do for me. That is why we all need to understand that salvation is *a work of GOD!* If we have the idea that salvation is part God’s work and part ours, or even mostly God’s work, but a little left over for us to do, our confidence in God is not going to be as strong as it ought to be, and so our confidence in God to answer prayer will be weakened. But if we *know* that God alone saved, then we will not have any trouble with words like we find that the Apostle Paul wrote in Eph. 3:20-21:

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph 3:20-21).

And, by the way, Paul wrote this just after concluding one of his prayers for the believers at Ephesus.

The word “confidence” is a very interesting and a very powerful word. It means *openly, frankly, fearlessly confident, boldly, with cheerful courage, and assurance*. The Apostle John used it in 2:28; 3:21; and 4:17, in addition to our text here.

Now our confidence is twofold--one has to do with our praying and God hearing, and the other has to do with God’s answering.

III. OUR TWOFOLD CONFIDENCE (1 John 5:14b-15).

A. Our praying and God hearing (1 John 5:14b-15).

God does not give us a promise that He will do *whatever we ask Him to do*. He never does that. And we can be thankful to He hasn’t promised to answer any prayer that we pray. In God’s family we are like we all were when we were children, and even as adults we are often the same way: *we want things that really are not the best for us*. Our parents were wise

enough to know when to say “no.” And God is infinitely wise. He knows how sin has corrupted us, how it has made us covet things, and how short-sighted we are. We don’t always realize the consequences of what we want, or of what we want to do.

No, not whatever we ask, but “if we ask any thing according to His will.” Do you see what this does to us immediately? It causes us to find out what the will of God is, but where do we go to find the will of God. Most of you know the answer. *The will of God is in the Word of God!* And so we can ask anything that we want to ask, but it has to be “any thing according to His will.”

How wise God is! He knows that being redeemed, we will want to pray, and so from the very first of our relationship with Him, He causes us to read His Word, and to seek on the pages of Scripture that which is His will.

When the Lord was speaking to His disciples in the Upper Room, just before His arrest, He said what amounts to the same thing that we have here in 1 John 5--written about 50 or 60 years later. But the Lord expressed it in different words. This is what He said in the Upper Room:

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (John 14: 13-14).

One thing that asking in the Lord’s Name means is that we ask what the Lord Himself would ask. And we know that our Lord was totally committed to doing the will of His Father.

Now there are some things that we might ask for which are not mentioned in Scripture, and yet they might be the will of God. Sometimes we have to say, even as our Lord said in the Garden of Gethsemane, “yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” Or we simply submit ourselves to the will of God. We pray that way about our physical health. We don’t know what the will of God is, but we can bring all of our burdens to the Lord, not to tell Him what He has to do, but to lay our burdens before Him, and then let Him do as He sees fit. This also is praying according to God’s will.

Now when we pray according to His will, He hears us. The Lord hears every word that we say. He even knows our thoughts. But when the Apostle John said that if we ask according to God’s will, He hears us, He meant that it is a petition to which He gives His special and immediate

attention.

Have you noticed in reading the Psalms how many times the Psalmists pleaded with God to hear them? I had it in the Psalm I read this morning:

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer (Psa. 4:1).

Another such verse is in Psalm 17:

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.

And then in the next verse, we read this:

7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them (Psa. 17:6-7).

This introduces another feature of prayer that is prayed according to God's will, and that is faith. Perhaps this is the reason that the Apostle John added at the end of verse 13 in 1 John 5, "and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." We have believed in Christ for our salvation, and we continue to ~~trust~~ the Lord throughout our lives. The Lord emphasized this in Matt. 21:22:

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

This was brought out in Matt. 9:27-29 where we read,

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

So there is much that we need to learn concerning prayer. "He heareth us" is one promise, but then we read:

B. God's answering (1 John 5:15).

This is a second wonderful promise. (Read v. 15.) If we ask according to God's will, seeking His glory and not our own gratification, and if we ask in faith believing the promise of God, believing that God has heard us, then "we know that we have the petition that we desired of Him." This is not a guarantee that we will have it immediately. But it means that in the Lord's time and in the Lord's way the request will be granted.

God always reserves the right to do things His way--and His ways are so often very different from our ways.

Let me give you an illustration of this from the life of our Lord. It is called "the second miracle that Jesus did, when he came out of Judaea into Galilee" (John 4:54). If you would like to follow this account as I read it to you, you can turn to John 4, beginning with verse 46, and I will read down to the end of the chapter. The word translated "Sir" in verse 49 is the Greek word for *Lord*, and I believe that it indicates that this nobleman was a child of God. (Read John 4:46-54.)

Concl: Would you think that I was being too hard on our generation of professing Christians if I were to say that the place where we are weak and failing is where prayer is concerned? Don't we live in a day where we see people being manipulated to come to church by the music that is being used, and by the tendency to minimize the time given to the exposition of Scripture (if what is being given in many of our churches can be called exposition). We manipulate people to "decide for Christ." We manipulate them to give their money. But how much real praying is being done? And the praying that is done, how much of it is according to the Word of God?

Let me ask those of us who are here: How many of us are faithful in prayer? How many of us really believe that the blessing of the Lord upon Trinity Bible Church is really dependent upon our prayers--the right kind of praying, with the right motives, in complete confidence in the Lord to meet our needs, and to use us for His glory? God has moved in mighty ways in past days when His people have really sought His blessing. We need to forget the ways that men are seeking to do the work of the Lord, and get back to doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way. Then we can expect to see real blessing, life-changing blessing, blessing that God will give for His own glory and not at all for our glory. May the Lord burden each one of us to give ourselves more to prayer, and through the grace of God let us pray down blessings from the Lord that possibly will go far beyond anything we have yet seen. There is no limit to what God will do in answer to the right kind of praying.

PRAYER AND SIN

1 John 5:16-17

Intro: We come to another passage in 1 John which we must classify as “difficult.” But just because it is “difficult,” is no reason that it is not important. In fact, it is *very important*--and I trust that our consideration of it today will show us how really important it is. It would seem that its importance is emphasized by the fact that it comes at the end of his epistle. If you turn back to the first chapter of this epistle, you will find that the Apostle John concluded this epistle on the same note that he began, *speaking about sin!* Why is this?

Well, we need to remind ourselves of the purpose the Apostle John had in writing this epistle which he mentioned in chapter 1. You find it in 1 John 1:3-4. (Read.) The Apostle John wanted every child of God to enjoy the same kind of fellowship that he and his fellow-workers enjoyed (because he said, “we”)--a fellowship “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Surely nothing can be more wonderful than that--to “have fellowship with us” because of the Persons we have fellowship with: “the Father, and...his Son Jesus Christ.” It is really unthinkable that such a high and holy privilege should be granted to any human beings, and yet that is the privilege we enjoy because we have become children of God. There is no question about this. Since we are the children of God, we are admitted day by day into personal communion with our God, and with His Son. There is no need to make an appointment, no standing in line to wait for our turn. In fact, we live in fellowship with God. The life of every child of God is intended to be a life of fellowship with the Three Persons of the Godhead--the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is a personal fellowship, but it is also a corporate, or family fellowship. Notice that in 1 John 1:3-4 that the Apostle John spoke in the plural. It is all plural, even to the point of whether John said “your” or “our” when he spoke of joy in verse 4. Some MSS say “your,” others say “our.”

Now what is it that can interrupt our fellowship? Just one thing: *s-i-n!* That is why the Apostle John finished chapter 1 and started chapter 2 writing about *sin*. But the emphasis in these verses is upon *us--you and me!* We have to be careful about sin in our own lives, and in those times when we do sin, we need to know what to do about it. To do this we need to know what sin is, and to be able to recognize it when we do what God calls *sin*. And we need to know the provision that God has made for our forgiveness and cleansing. It is not just because of our confession that we

are forgiven and cleansed, but because “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” Who “is the propitiation for our sins.”

I hope this is all very clear to each one of us. But now, as we come to the latter end of the epistle, we find that John concluded his epistle, writing about sin. Is there a difference? And we must say that there is. At this point the Apostle John said, “If any man see his brother (or, his sister) sin a sin which is not unto death...” This means that you and I need to be concerned, not only about our own sins, but about the sins of our brothers and sisters in Christ. So let us speak for just a moment about:

I. MY BROTHER’S SIN (1 John 5:16a).

The word “see” in this verse does not just mean that you actually “see” or personally *hear* your brother (or sister) sin, but it also means that if you *know* that such is the case, if you *perceive* that it is the case, if you *are aware* that such is the case, or even that you *are concerned* that such might be the case, then you are to pray.

Now there are a couple of things that needs to be made clear when we talk about something like this. The first is that we are not to be busybodies, prying into people lives to find out what is going on. That is definitely forbidden by Scripture, and a busybody is guilty of sin in being a busybody. Listen to what the Apostle Peter said about a busybody:

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters (1 Pet. 4:15).

Paul wrote this to the Thessalonian church:

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies (2 Thess. 3:11).

And then he wrote this to Timothy about young widows who had too much time on their hands:

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Tim. 5:13).

So we are not to meddle in other people’s lives, but we are to be concerned about others, and when we detect that something is wrong, *we are to pray!* And this is the case of a brother, or a sister, who is not guilty of a sin unto death. Now let me address that subject. It is referred to in both of these verses.

II. “SIN UNTO DEATH” (1 John 5:16, 17).

The only other time this expression is used in the Scriptures is in Rom. 6:16:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

But the context shows that Paul was speaking of a person before he becomes a Christian. He is a servant of sin unto death. There the meaning clearly means *spiritual death, eternal death*. Earlier in Rom. 6:23 the Apostle Paul had said, "For the wages of sin is death," *spiritual and eternal death*. *But in our text in 1 John 5 the meaning appears to be physical death!*

We have many examples in Scripture which show that physical death can be the result of sin, that is, of a particular sin, or of several sins. We have this warning in Proverbs 29:1:

He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

The Egyptians sinned unto death when they did not heed the warnings that God gave them in the plagues. Several times during their wanderings in the desert, God judged His people with physical death because of their murmuring and disobedience. In fact, the whole generation that came out of Egypt died in the desert because of their rebellion against God at Kadesh Barnea. And even Moses sinned unto death when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God told him to do. In the NT we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira. We are told in Acts 5 about how they lied to the Holy Spirit when they brought their offering to the Lord. And then we read about what happened in Corinth because people misused the Lord's Supper. Paul said this:

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:29-31).

So this is something that must not be taken lightly.

How can we identify "sin unto death." Probably the best definition is when a person persists in sinning against God, but we see many cases where that is going on, and yet the person seems to live on. As in the case of Moses, he was one of the godliest of men, but probably because of his position, he was told that he would not enter the promised land. It is always a serious thing to sin, especially to sin knowing that what you are

doing is displeasing to God. Solomon said, “It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not” (Lam. 3:22).

For our encouragement we do have examples of the Lord's mercy upon His people when He declared His intention to destroy them. Such was the case when the children of Israel had worshiped the golden calf at Mount Sinai. This is what the Lord said to Moses on that occasion:

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation (Ex. 32:9-10).

What did Moses do? He pleaded with God for Israel, and so we read in verse 14 of Ex. 32,

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

So these are examples of instances when and where we do not know the will of God. But the point of these verses is obviously that:

III. WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT EACH OTHER (1 John 5:16).

This is the exhortation: “If any man see his brother (or sister) sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask...”

“Ask” is a very strong word. It does not describe just a casual act of prayer, but a pleading with God, prolonged pleading, if necessary. It means to beg, to crave an answer from God. Dr. Lloyd-Jones said that “it means we should be urgent in prayer, that we should always be in an agony of prayer; it should be fervent prayer” (*Life in God*, p. 132).

A good illustration of this kind of praying is Moses' prayer in Ex. 32:31-32:

31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

When we “see” a brother or a sister involved in some sin of some kind, we don't discuss it with each other. It may not even be possible or right for us to go to the sinning person himself or herself. *But we can pray, and we should pray, and we must pray.*

And let us remember that all through this epistle, the Apostle John has been exhorting us to love each other. He has told us that our love for the Lord's people is one of the greatest of evidences that we have really been saved. So our motivation in praying for our brothers and sisters, is to be that we love them. *And it is when we love the people that we are praying for, that we do our best praying. And our greatest concern is not what sin can do to people, but it should be the grief that it causes God when we sin.*

So all through life we are engaged in warfare against sin, warfare to keep ourselves from sinning, and warfare to come to the assistance of others in the family of God when they sin. If there were this constant watchfulness with all of us for each other, undoubtedly there would be a great deal more holiness in our lives.

IV. TWO POSSIBILITIES IN PRAYER (1 John 5:16b).

The situation when we pray for a sinning brother or sister, is much the same when we want to know whether or not we are praying according to the will of God. There are times when we simply do not know because the Word does not tell us everything that is, or is not, the will of God.

I don't know if we can say exactly what the Apostle John meant when he said, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." But I believe that the Apostle meant that we have *no promise* that God will deliver one who is guilty of sinning unto death. There were times in the OT when God told His servants not to pray for His people. This was especially the case in the days of Jeremiah. For example, listen to Jer. 7:16-17:

16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

17 Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

Also we have the following in Jer. 11:13-14:

13 For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.

14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

And there is one other time that the Lord told Jeremiah this:

11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.

12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jer. 14:11-12).

However, in spite of these words, we see that Jeremiah did plead for His people. His love for them in spite of all of their sins, caused him to seek the mercy of God upon them. It is incidents like this which encourage us to believe that even in a case where people have *sinned unto death*, the Lord in his mercy might hear and deliver such sinners for His own glory.

So the point is that there evidently are always those who have *sinned unto death*, and others who have sinned, but not unto death. The Lord has given us no way of identifying the difference between the two. But it is our responsibility to pray for those who do sin, to pray fervently, and to pray faithfully, trusting God to display His power in forgiving His sinning people so that they can be restored to that joyful fellowship with Himself.

Now let me close with a final point:

V. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S DEFINITION OF SIN (1 John 5:17a).

His definition is, "All unrighteousness is sin." Previously he had given us another definition of sin in 1 John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Actually these are the two best ways for us to be able to recognize sin.

Taking 1 John 3:4 first, *sin is any violation of the Word of God*. "The law" is often used in Scripture, not just of the Mosaic Law, but of the Word of God as a whole. To do what Scripture forbids, is sin; not to do what the Scriptures demand, is also sin. As we often say, there are sins of commission, and there are sins of omission. We can sin by what we do, and we can sin because of what we fail to do. So, if we want to know what sin is, the Bible will tell us.

But our text for today says that "all unrighteousness is sin." Since God is righteous, perfectly righteous, any deviation from the character of God, is sin. Any behavior, in thought, word, or deed, which deviates from what and Who God is, is sin. God Himself defines righteousness, and anything

contrary to what you would find in God, is sin. So we need to know our Bibles, not just to become acquainted with the commandments of Scripture, but to become acquainted with God! And the more we do these two things, there greater will be our knowledge of and sensitivity to sin. That is why the Psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psa. 119:11).

Concl: And so, since none of us is exempt from the possibility of sinning, this passage has a message for all of us. If our prayers are to be effectual on behalf of others who are sinning, we need to be extremely careful about sin in our own lives. And let us remember the blessing that came into the life of Job through prayer. We find that stated in Job 42:8-10:

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

And even before all of Job's problems, we are told how faithfully he prayed for his children.

4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually (Job 1:4-5).

May we all be very careful about sin in our lives, asking the Lord every day to keep us from sinning against Him. Let us forsake any sin we have been excusing, and seek forgiveness and cleansing from the Lord. But may we also form the habit of earnestly praying for each other, that the Lord would deliver us from our sinning, and cause us to desire to be holy as He is holy.

THREE GRAND CERTAINTIES

1 John 5:18-21

Intro: My text for today is the last four verses of 1 John. It is very fitting that this epistle which has placed such a strong emphasis upon what we as believers *know*, should conclude with these three grand statements of divine truth. And they are not just of what the Apostle John knew, but what all true believers *know*, or certainly *should know*. And the very fact that we can say that “we know” these great truths, is evidence of God’s grace in our lives. By nature we are totally ignorant of spiritual truth. We do not know these truths naturally. The people of the world do not know what John said here that “we know.” And neither did we before we were saved. If we know them it is only because they are what God has taught us. And so, if we can say from the heart that “we know” what the Apostle John declared in verses 18, 19, and 20, to God belongs all of the glory.

What caused the Apostle John to finish this epistle on this note? It must be that his reference to a sinning brother in verses 16 and 17 was used by the Holy Spirit to conclude in this way. Sin in anyone’s life is always a serious matter (although the world doesn’t treat sin in this way). But one of the great joys of being a child of God is to know that God in salvation has made provision for us so that continual sinning is no longer a necessity. It is one of the tenets of our faith that a believer will not *live* in sin.

Before we consider these four verses, I want to call your attention to the four times that you find the word “know” in verses 18, 19, and 20.

The first three times, at the beginning of each verse, the verb is the same. It is the Greek verb οἶδαμεν. In the middle of verse 20 we have the fourth occurrence of the word “know,” but it is different in the Greek. There it is the word γινώσκουμεν. Let me try to explain the difference between the two verbs which both mean *know*.

The first verb, which the Apostle John used at the beginning of verse 18, and again at the beginning of verse 19, and then at the beginning of verse 20, is a verb which speaks of what Bishop Westcott called, “absolute knowledge,” or “fundamental knowledge.” These are the statements that we had recently in one of our memory verses: Jer. 10:10. “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.” Those are truths that we could put in a doctrinal statement. They are true whether we know it or not, and whether we believe it or not. They are basic,

absolute, fundamental truths. Jeremiah wrote those words about 2600 years ago, and they are just as true today as they were then. And they will always be true! People may not know these things about God, but they are true nevertheless. And once they are told these truths about God, they may see fit to ignore them, but that does not change the fact that they are true. There is only one true God. All others are impostors. He is a living God Who thinks and speaks and sees and hears and acts with sovereign power. And He is a King.

In the same way it is true that “whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” It is also true that those of us who know the Lord “are of God,” and that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” or *in the Wicked One*. It is also true “that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding.” These are basic, divine truths. People can deny them, but they are still true. They were true when the Apostle John wrote them about 1900 years ago, they are true today, and they will always be true. You don’t have to experience them for them to be true; they are independently, absolutely, and fundamentally true. In these days when truth has become relative (at least this is what we are told), and something can be true and right for me, but wrong for you--right can be wrong, and wrong can be right--how refreshing it is to turn to Scripture to find that truth is truth, it always has been truth, is truth today, and always will be truth.

This is the point that the Apostle John was making when he said, “We know,” or, “And we know” in verses 18, 19, and 20.

But now it is the truth which produces changes in our lives. And that is why the Apostle John changed verbs in the middle of verse 20 when he said “that we may know him that is true.” It is one thing to know that God is the true God, the only God, the genuine God, but it is another thing to “know (experientially, in a practical way, in daily life) HIM that is true.” And this is the meaning of the knowledge that John was speaking of in the middle of verse 20.

The absolute, objective truth about God and about our salvation, is designed to bring us on to know in a personal and practical way Him Who is the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ Who is the only One Who can, and does bring us to God!

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18).

To know that “Christ...hath once suffered for sins” is objective truth, that He died, “the Just for the unjust,” but the reason it is important to know

this is that we might experience the Lord's purpose in His death: "that He might bring us to God." And that is where we profit personally from knowing Christ as our Savior. I trust that you understand the relationship between fundamental truth and the practical effect that it can have upon our lives.

Now let us consider these verses, and see how the two kinds of knowledge are related to each other.

I. A CHILD OF GOD AND SIN (1 John 5:18).

The truth is that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not." This is a fundamental truth of the Christian faith. The Apostle John was not saying that a person who is born of God never sins; it is one of the niceties of the Greek language that he could express himself to mean that a persons who is born of God *does not live in sin. He may fall into sin (like King David did), but he won't live there!*

More than that, the evidence that a person is truly born of God is that he, or she, "keepeth himself." That is, he is going to do everything he can to stay away from sin, to guard himself against temptation and the possibility of committing sin. He is going to pray that the Lord will keep him even from temptation. And he is going to be hiding God's Word in his heart so that he won't sin against the Lord. He is not going to make friends who might drag him into sin. Instead, he is going to be seeking the fellowship of the Lord's people that he might receive greater strength to avoid every form of evil.

And what will be the result? "And that wicked one toucheth him not." This is not a casual touch, but it describes the way one person will grab another person and force him to do something that he otherwise would not do. This is the verb that Paul used in 1 Cor. 7:1 when he said that "it is good for a man not to touch a woman."

If we know that Christ has broken the bondage which sin once exercised over us, then we will be encouraged to use the means which God has given us to keep ourselves from sinning against God.

In 1 John 3:9 we have a previous statement which the Apostle John made concerning this same truth. But there he explains what God has done which makes it impossible for us to continue on in a life of sin. (Read 1 John 3:9.)

But let us go on to verse 19.

II. THE CHILD OF GOD AND GOD (1 John 5:19).

The statement of positive, fundamental, objective truth is that every true child of God is “of God.” We have been “born of God.” We have not made ourselves the children of God; God has made us His children. And we not only owe our origin as His children to Him, but we continue to draw our life, our strength, our wisdom, all of our blessings, *from God!* This is what the Apostle John was saying when he wrote John 1:12-13:

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

On the other hand, “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” or *in the Wicked One*. This means that the whole world is under the domination of the Evil One, who is the Devil and Satan. He is “the god of this world,” and, as such, blinds the hearts of men to the Gospel so that he can maintain his control over them. But, as the Apostle Paul said in writing to the churches of Galatia, Christ is the One

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world (age), according to the will of God and our Father:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Gal. 1:4-5).

So God through Christ has delivered us from the Devil and from the world. This is the only reason that we are not where most people are today. God in His grace has set us free.

We know this to be true. God not only saved us, but He sustains us, and we continue to derive our life from Him. And we can be sure, according to Phil. 1:6, that having begun His good work in us, He will continue to work in us until the work of making us like Christ is finished. How inconsistent it is with our new position in Christ if we were to love the world, or even try to use what people might call the best that is in the world. There is nothing in the world that is “of the Father” (1 John 2:16)--the same preposition that John used when he said that “we are of God” in 5:19.

Fausset, in the JFB commentary, wrote:

The believer is delivered out of his (Satan's) power; the whole world *lieth* helpless still in it, including the wise, great, respect-

able--all who are not by vital union in Christ (Vol. VI, p. 645).

Thus the human race falls into two major divisions: those who are of God, on the one hand, and those who by nature are under the control of the Evil One, and who are a part of this world. Let us not be deceived by those in the church today who would have us partake of the "good things" that are in the world, when in the God's sight there is nothing in the world that can possibly add to the sanctification of the people of God.

But let us go on to verse 20.

III. THE CHILD OF GOD AND THE SON OF GOD (1 John 5:20).

The fundamental truth that the Apostle John stated here is that "we know that the Son of God is come." A person cannot be a Christian without knowing this. This is fundamental. This is absolutely the truth in every case. A person cannot be a Christian who is in doubt about Who the Son of God, or why He "is come." True Christians have no doubt as to the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. In His humanity He continued to be in every sense of the words, the Son of God. To deny this is to forsake every claim of being a child of God.

But of all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, and given to us, what is it that the Apostle John mentioned here? He said that the Son of God "hath given us an understanding." Westcott defines this as "the process of rational thought" (p. 195). Sin has made it impossible for man to think clearly about the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of all that the Lord did, and in spite of all that He said, while He was here on earth, with all of the evidence before them, more people rejected the truth than accepted the truth. They proved again and again their unreasonableness.

This ties in perfectly with the way that the Apostle Paul described unregenerate Gentiles in Eph. 4:17-19:

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

We know that the Lord has changed all of that for us. But what is the purpose that He had in doing this for us?

“That we may know him that is true.” This is a reference to God. One commentator has said that “eternal life is the never-ending effort after this knowledge of God” (Westcott, p. 196). Our Lord defined eternal life with these words in His high priestly prayer:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

Three times in 1 John 5:20 God and Christ are called “true.” This means *genuine* as opposed to all other gods who are false gods. “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” We have been brought out of our sin, and out of the world, and out from under the control of Satan, and now we have our life in Him. And our lives are to be lived increasing in our knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Cf. what Peter said at the end of his second epistle: 2 Pet. 3:18. And what Paul said about the objective of his life in Phil. 3:10. This is to be the goal of our lives. Matthew Henry wrote on this verse:

It is a great happiness to know the true God, to know Him in Christ; it is eternal life... It is the glory of the Christian revelation that it gives the best account of the true God, and administers the best eye-salve for our dis-cerning the living and true God (Vol. VI, p. 1098).

IV. A FINAL WARNING (1 John 5:21).

Last words are often very important words, especially when the speaker or writer knows that they are the last. With all that we have in Christ, the constant danger that we face is that of having our hearts turned away from Him. We can never find a greater God because none is greater than He. We can never find one who surpasses our God in His glorious attributes because He is the true God. Every other god is a false god. Listen to what the Psalmist wrote about our true God and the gods of the heathen. Psalm 135 has a passage in it very similar to this one in Psalm 115:1-8:

- 1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.
- 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?
- 3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
- 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
- 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they

smell not:

7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

8 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

Let me quote from Matthew Henry's commentary again:

Since you know the true God, and are in Him, let your light and love guard you against all that is advanced in opposition to Him, or competition with Him. Flee from the false gods of the heathen world. They are not comparable to the God Whose you are and Whom you serve. Adore not your God by statues and images, which share in His worship. Your God is an incomprehensible Spirit, and is disgraced by such sordid representations. Hold no communion with your heathen neighbours in their idolatrous worship. Your God is jealous, and would have you come out, and be separated from among them; mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, that they may not usurp the throne of dominion in the heart, which is due only to God. The God Whom you have known is He Who made you, Who redeemed you by His Son, Who has sent His Gospel to you, Who has pardoned your sins, begotten you unto Himself by His Spirit, and given you eternal life. Cleave to Him in faith, and love and constant obedience, in opposition to all things that would alienate your mind and heart from God. To this living and true God be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Concl: As our country moves farther away from the true God, other gods take the place of the true God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are seeing heathen temples arise here in east Portland with their large idols out for everyone to see. And they will attract a following, we can be sure of that. But there are other gods that Americans have--gods of pleasure, gods of things that we want, gods of ambition. Many a man gives his family the place which God should have. We worship physical fitness, and human beauty.

The third and final temptation which Satan put before the Lord involved worship. The Devil promised the Lord all of the kingdoms of the earth if He would fall down and worship him. How did the Lord respond?

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10).