

# TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

## **Standing Firm in a World of Falsehood**

1 John 2:22-25

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The opportunity that we have to share life together and to walk through life together in GraceLife is a great privilege indeed. I was thinking about this yesterday. In the collective walk with Christ that we have individually as we share life together would see the different manifestations of what it means to be a Christian lived out by different people in different areas of life as we see people persevering through hard aches, as we see people being faithful in quiet ways in duty and opportunity, as we see them rejoicing in the midst of their trials, we see in front of our own eyes as we live life together, the glory manifested in what it means to be a Christian. And I just thank God for the opportunity to be a part of your life and for you to be a part of mine—it is a great, great blessing and I think of you and thank God for you throughout the week and your lives are a rich encouragement to me, you need to know that.

And that makes it a real joy to bring the word of God to you from time to time as we do here and to know that the things that we are going through in the book of 1 John are going to strengthen that fellowship, strengthen your walks and give you an even greater expanded capacity to enjoy life in Christ and to anticipate the life that is yet to come when we go to heaven to be with Him. I want you to be conscious of the blessing that is ours to be together and to walk through life together as members of GraceLife. I am even thinking of the way people face death with hope, with courage. You know, there's time when I go in to a serious hospital situation and I'm just really eager to encourage someone and they are already encouraged because they are already loving Christ and trusting Him in the midst of it. The privilege is great and you manifest the reality of Christ in your lives.

And as we come to 1 John, we just see the opportunities to deepen our roots in that even more and to enjoy more greatly the wonders of being a Christian, of being redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The apostle John in 1 John lays down a plumb line, he lays down the standard of what it means to be a Christian, what Christian belief is like, what Christian conduct is like, what Christian love is like. He lays down a standard, a plumb line by which everything else can be measured. We as Christians can see what we aspire to, we see what our lives should be like and at the same time, we are given discernment so that we can more easily recognize false teachers who don't hold to biblical truth, the same things that give us the aspirations of heart in love, in conduct and in belief are the same things that would expose someone for being a fraud when he is not the man who teaches these things, when he is not the man who lives these things. As we come to know

these things personally, we are individually and collectively able to tell truth from falsehood—that's a great blessing.

And get this, at the same time, as we understand the plumb line of true Christianity, we also have a clear idea of what it is that we proclaim to the unsaved people that the Lord brings in to our lives, we know what to say to them, we know what issues to get them to focus on, to challenge their thinking, to challenge their world view, to examine their hearts. All of these plum line truths that John brings up for us so clearly radiate in multiple directions. And as you embrace these things and as you understand them in your heart, you are given the capacity to discern truth from error from people who would presume to teach the word of God. You know how to live yourself, you know the things that cause your own heart to rejoice and you know what to share with those who are unsaved. The passage that we have today simply strengthens us in this all the more.

As we have studied the book of 1 John, I have said it repeatedly, and I have said it repeatedly because I believe it to be true, that John is writing to help true Christians find spiritual victory in a hostile world. His audience in this letter is true Christians and you can see that by the way he uses the second person pronoun as he says "you" he addresses his audience and his readers as "you" he talks about them in affirming ways. "You know the truth..." "Your sins have been forgiven..." "You are walking with God..." His primary audience is true believers. And so as true Christians, we come to receive it in the loving gracious affirming spirit that John wrote this letter. We know that God has given us this book so that we as believers can walk in the midst of a hostile environment in spiritual victory by which we mean knowing joy, knowing holiness, knowing the assurance of our salvation. You just want to lift your arms up in victory and triumph and say "Yes, this is true, yes, I know something of this even though my experience is imperfect, even though I fall short of this miserably so by the way that I live and I fall short of what I know to be true." But the truth of the matter is that God is leading us to spiritual victory as John says in chapter 5:

*This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.*

The content of what we believe, the work that God has done in our hearts as believers in Christ, this is our victory, and we just want to celebrate and rejoice because God has been so good to us.

Now, for us to enter in to the fullness of that victory, to know the fullness of the experience of that, we need to know that we ourselves are truly Christians and we need to discern the reality of those who teach, those who claim to be Christian teachers and leaders so we can know who to follow. Someone that manifests falseness, we set them aside, we don't worry about missing out on the will of God because false teacher is not one to worry about, we want to know the truth.

In our teaching on exposition of this, we come to chapter 2 and verses 22-25 this morning. And as we come to this point, just to kind of remind you of where we have been, the apostle John has already given us two primary tests for discernment about what it means to be a true Christian.

First of all, he gave us what we call a moral test (and this is just by way of a brief review). Look at verses 3-4 with me, the moral test of what it means to be a true Christian, John says:

*By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.*

What he is saying is that true Christians as a pattern of their lives obey God's commands. Their lives are oriented toward obedience to the word of God, they have submitted as a matter of final principle their lives to the authority of God as revealed in His word and their lives manifest the fruit of that. You could say that John is addressing the fact that true Christians bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance. True Christians have oriented their lives away from sin, they have turned from sin and have oriented their lives toward the word of God, toward obedience to Him, they have submitted to His authority and seek to follow Him with their lives, both internally and externally. Imposters do not do that. People who do not orient their lives toward obedience to God are not Christians no matter what they say with their lips. Look again at verse 4. Someone may say "I have come to know Him." With his lips he professes the knowledge of God and yet his life shows that he does not keep the commandments of God. As I have said to you many times, when there is that kind of inconsistency between life and lips, you listen to what a person's life is saying not what their lips say. Their life would be consistent with their testimony if they are true believers and that's true for us individually as well. So there is a moral test of what it means to be a true Christian.

Secondly, he gives what we could call a social test, the test of love. Look at 1 John 2:9-10:

*The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.*

True Christians manifest the love of God in their lives, particularly toward other believers. The commonality of the shared life that we share with other believers in Christ naturally expresses in love and compassion and devotion to one another, that's the natural consequence of having the love of God shed abroad in your heart. Imposters are not like that. Imposters have no love for the church, they manifest hatred in their lives, they manifest angry temperamental spirits and by that, they betray the lie of what they claim to believe.

That was just a very brief review that we have covered in the past. But as we move in to today's passage, verses 22-25 (I am very happy to get in to this) we are going to see some other distinguishing marks of the true believer. These things are going to open up your understanding in ways that in such clarity, John is so clear on these things, it is going to give even a greater clarity to your mind as you assess your own spiritual life and as you evaluate the world around you and as you seek to minister to those whom you know do not know Christ.

What we are going to do this morning is we are going to structure this message around three questions that you can use to examine yourself, three questions that you can use to recall the

wonder of the miracle of the greatness of the grace of God in your salvation and be encouraged by it, three questions that will give you discernment, three questions that will help you in evangelism as you speak the truth to those who do not know Christ. These things are useful in all three of those areas: discernment of teachers, evaluating yourself, knowing how to share the gospel with others. And these are questions that you can direct directly to them.

### **1. Do You Know the True Christ?**

Do you know the true Christ, which is a slightly different question than saying do you believe in Jesus as we are going to unfold. Do you know the true Christ? We emphasize the true as we evaluate these things, as we speak with people to show that there are false Christ's or false views of Christ that do not save. And so we have to ask the question, do you know the true Christ. You can call this the third test of discernment, it is a doctrinal test—the moral test, the social test, now we come to the doctrinal test. The question is, what do you believe about Jesus Christ. And in the words of Jesus who do you say that He is? Look at verses 22-23 with me (we will stay here for a while) He says:

*Who is the liar, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*

John states it in a negative way, he says:

*This is the antichrist, the one who denies the father and the Son...*

Again negatively:

*Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.*

Then he states it positively:

*The one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*

That combination of the negative and positive gives clarity to what he is saying. Now, what is the context of this question here? Why is it that he is asking “Who is the liar, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ.” As you read the background information on 1 John, you will find that there is a general consensus that John was combatting false teachers who had a false notion, a dangerous notion about who Jesus was. They talked of the man Jesus, the man Jesus of Nazareth who was a mere man, not somebody who was from all time, eternal, pre-existing with the Father in heaven. He was a mere man and at the time of His baptism, these people taught, a power from God, a Christ spirit came upon Him at His baptism and that Christ spirit left Him just before He was crucified. In our day and age, it sounds kind of bizarre and I suppose that it is. But what they taught was that the Christ's spirit came upon the man Jesus from the time of His baptism and left just prior to His crucifixion. And so what they were saying was that the man Jesus of Nazareth Himself was not truly the Christ (there's the point). Jesus had divine

powers for a time, they would have said, but (get this) He was not eternally deity, He was not in nature the very essence of God, He was not truly God as the eternal God that created the heavens and the earth were. They had a false view of Christ and this view was influencing the people that John was writing to, the true Christians.

Now, stay with me for a little bit, not just a little bit, but the whole time. I want you here with me because I know this is going to help you because it has helped me so much. Understand that that kind of esoteric teaching in essence was a frontal assault on the person of Jesus Christ. It was a denial of who He was because it denied the reality of the full incarnation of Jesus Christ, it denied that God Himself in the person of the second person of the trinity left the glories of heaven and took on full humanity and went to the cross with the purpose of redeeming His people from their sins. In their view, in this false view, humanity and deity were never truly resident together in the person of Jesus Christ, He was someone else other than what the scriptures teach Him to be.

Now, if you are new to the Bible as some of you are, if you are a fairly a new Christian, new to Bible teaching, or if you are not even a Christian, it might strike you as harsh and unloving and unnecessarily bigoted for the apostle John to look at those teachers and call them in such absolute terms as the liar and the antichrist. Why so strong? Why such harsh language? Aren't we talking about abstract principles anyway? Why do we need to get so worked up about what somebody says? He's got his view of God, I've got mine, you've got yours, what's the problem? Why can't we all get along together?

Well, the apostle John is speaking in such clear and harsh terms against these false teachers because (get this) a false savior delivers a false salvation. A false view of Christ who is the only savior of the world, if you teach a false Christ, you have eviscerated the possibility of ever finding true salvation. You must believe in Christ for who He truly is. The gospel (get this) the gospel is based on the historical facts, the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth. This is not an abstract principle; this is not a philosophy that we are talking about. We are talking about a real historical person; we don't have the liberty to define who that person is. He was and He is God incarnate by which we mean God in human flesh. He took on human flesh in order to become the savior of men. He shared the essence of God with God the Father:

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*

To say that He was not God is to deny the very essence of the savior—we can't do that. And to deny the true reality of the creator of the universe, the one from whom all existence flows is the ultimate lie, that's why he says:

*Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ.*

If you deny that, you are denying the very essence of reality, there is no truth in you at all. You are a liar and your father is the devil who is the father of lies, you antichrist, is what he says. And he explains it a little further, in the pattern of John, he will state a subject and he will go on to something else and he will circle back around and expand on it later in the letter. He does this

with the concept of the spirit of antichrist. Turn over to chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, since we've got an extra minute here. Chapter 4:1-3 is what we are going to take a look at. He says "beloved" I like that word "beloved" I like the fact that the spirit of God inspired in apostle to reflect the attitude of God toward believers and he says "beloved". This is the attitude of God toward all Christians, my beloved, he is writing to help us, he is writing under the inspiration of God to help us and he tells us to be discerning. Look at verse 1, he says:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out in to the world.*

We say "How do I test them? How do I test these spirits?" Well, the whole book of 1 John is designed to give you that kind of discernment, it's a glorious, wonderful truth. There is nothing hidden here, there is nothing secret here, God laid it all out bare in His word for us to be able to read it and understand. This is a gift from God that we might know that we are on the true path. Now in verse 2 he says:

*By this you know the Spirit of God, every Spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*

He has come in the flesh, if you have come in the flesh, you have come from some place. He came from heaven to earth in human flesh. Those who teach that are teaching consistently with the Spirit of God. Verse 3:

*Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of antichrist of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world.*

Antichrist opposed to the true Christ, the opposition to Christ is manifested in teaching that denies the truth about who He is. And as you look around in the nature of, not forget for a moment, all the cults that are around, if you look around just in the nature of the teaching under the umbrella of what is called the evangelical church these days, you can't help but realize that we are in the midst of the spirit of antichrist all around us. Good luck, so speak, finding teachers who want to be serious about talking about Christ, teaching who He is.

Saving faith (get this) one aspect of the content of saving faith is that you believe that Jesus Christ came from heaven and took on human flesh. You believe that He was and He is fully God and fully man, if you do not believe that, you are not a Christian. And saving faith further believes that when Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth, that He came with a divine purpose, He came on a divine mission. Look at verse 14 of chapter 4 for example. I love the way John spells all of this out in this letter, this is so clear and obvious if we just pick up and read. In verse 14 he says:

*We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son for this purpose to be the savior of the world.*

Saving faith understands and personally appropriates the reality that God the Father sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ to offer His life as an atoning sacrifice for your sins. You recognize that you are guilty before the law of God, you are a law-breaker in every sense of the word, guilty, condemned and unable to save yourself and you look outside of yourself to the person of Christ who you understand to be God in human flesh and that when He offered His life on the cross, He was offering His life as a sacrifice to satisfy the demands of divine justice on you, taking the wrath of God, the penalty that your sins deserved in His own body so that you could be forgiven. Your punishment transferred to Him, that is the sense in which He is the savior of the world. Saving faith believes that, there is content. The saving faith is not a general ambiguous, ill-defined sense that “Yeah, I believe in Jesus.” What do you mean by that? I say that as if talking to an unbeliever, what do you mean by that? You say that you believe in Jesus, but the question that I want to know is, do you know the true Christ as is revealed in scripture, as God incarnate, that is the question.

And as you are dealing with unbelievers, as you are trying to share the faith and someone says “Yeah, I believe in Christ” or “I’ve accepted Christ” come back to this question, do you know the true Christ? And understand the content of that because, if you had any interaction with them, you know that a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon would say “Yeah, we both believe in Jesus”. No, you don’t, you don’t believe in the Christ revealed in the Bible. If you are a Jehovah’s Witness, you believe that God created Him, He wasn’t fully God, He wasn’t the real essence of God in your view. Don’t try to tell me, you lying, deceiving fug. Don’t try to tell me and pass off as a lie, don’t pass your lie on to me that you believe in the same Christ that I do. You know that you don’t, so why are you saying that you do. Do you believe in the true Christ? That’s the question. Tell me what you believe about Jesus, let’s define our terms here. And when we define our terms, it becomes clear to me that we don’t share the same faith.

I’m not suggesting that if a couple of Jehovah’s Witnesses come to your door that you attack them with the words “lying fug” right at the start. (laughter) My point is more personal to you in terms of the way that you think about this internally is to not be deceived, don’t be carried away by that. Don’t be deceived by people who use the same words that you use, but have a different meaning that they attach to, and that’s the point.

When a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon, a Jew, anyone else denies the deity of Christ, the unique deity of Christ, the shared essence of God the Father from all of eternity, the Bible says that in a unique way, they are the liar, the antichrists and that is because they are denying eternal truth about the eternal Son of God with eternal implications about eternal salvation for eternal souls. These things of spiritual truth, these biblical revelations about Christ are of massive, incalculable importance. The destiny of souls hangs in the balance so to speak.

And so we are without apology, clear in our doctrine of Christ. We, without apology hold that forth and don’t want to soften the edges because we understand that this is no petty theological disagreement that is better suited for the class room than it is for discussion between two human beings about the nature of truth. When you deny the biblical view of Christ, you are articulating the ultimate lie against the ultimate truth—let’s be clear about what is going on here. And understand that John wrote this letter not to professional theologians, but to humble, common if

you will, believers in Christ. This is intending to be appropriated by everyone in the church, this is intended to be appropriated by you, the stay at home mom, the older person in retirement, all points in between. This is not just the job of pastors and professional theologians to know and articulate, this belongs to you, this is for you to know, for you to appropriate and for you to treasure. To treasure, to love with all of your heart the fact that the God of the universe has made the truth about Christ known to you personally in your heart. He has unveiled and opened the scriptures to your understanding, prompted you to believe so that you can know the truth.

So, our goal is not to find common ground with heretics, our goal is not to debate secondary issues about whether blood transfusion is good or bad, as what JW's do if you are wondering how I got my reference. As Christians, we want to cut straight to the chase with the question, do you know the true Christ. And the adjective "true" invokes doctrine and that's where you want the discussion to go. You want to make the focus the attention the person of Christ in those discussions with the unsaved. And as you are contemplating your own spiritual life, as you are alone with God yourself, this is where you come back and with a tender heart before a holy God as a true Christian you say "This is incomprehensible that God has made the true Christ known to me. God orchestrated my life in such a way to bring me under the sound of the gospel, He opened my heart to believe—I know the true Christ, I know the eternal Son of God, I know Him. If I said I didn't know Him I would be a liar just like them, I know the true Christ, I have an intimate relationship with Him, I have God as it were." Look at the end of chapter 2:23, he says:

*The one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*

Jesus said:

*I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.*

John writes this letter with great passion. It is out of a heart of passion that words like "the liar" and "the antichrist" come forth. It is out of great passion for the truth that he addresses believers as "beloved" and "brethren" and "little children" "my little children" he says. These spiritual truths, these spiritual realities, when you have truly been born again invoke some manner of passion, they invoke some manner of loyalty to these truths. And when you see them challenged, there should be something, you don't have to be an animal like I am, that there should be something in you that wells up against that and says "No, no, what you are saying is not true."

And here is what I am really getting at, it is not the way you elevate your voice or your hand motions when you say it. But there should be something in your deepest heart affections that responds to the question, do you know the true Christ with the love and affection and the loyalty that says "I do, praise God, hallelujah, I do, I know the true Christ." And the thought of yielding to a false view of Christ is unthinkable, it is inconceivable to a Christian. And you realize that just because someone says I believe in Jesus does not mean that they truly know Him if they have a false conception about who He is.

It's easy to illustrate this on a personal level with a silly hypothetical. Suppose I came to you and said "I know the president of the United States, I know him, I know the president." Initially you might say "Wow, he knows the president." Some of you might say "I'm sorry, but that's a political thing, it shouldn't even cross your mind." I'd say "Yeah, but why did it cross yours in just that moment?" "Well, I don't know, I'm just trying to help you." I say "I know the president of the United States, yeah, I was just with him, fine chap that president of the United States. You know he is a short, fat man who lives on a farm in Kansas, that's the president of the United States." You'd say "Wait a minute, you don't know the president of the United States, that's not who the president is." There's an objective reality to the president, there's truth about him and you would tell me if you thought about it, you say, you are not free to make up your own definition about who the president of the United States is. You can't just conjure up in your imagination who the president is because who the president is, is independent of what you think him to be. If you are going to truly know the president, you have to know him for who he actually in time and space historical reality is. Your description of the president shows that your view is not rooted in reality, you don't know the true president. He is the figment of your imagination, you have no relationship with the president at all, I can tell by the way you describe him.

Spiritually speaking, it is the same principle when people talk about their view of the person of Jesus. You don't get a personal Jesus; He is who He is. And the question is, do you know the true Christ because you must receive Him for who He is. And so, your doctrine about Christ goes a long way to tell me about whether you are a true Christian. As you understand this personally, you appropriate the reality "Yes, that is what I believe about Christ, that's exactly what I believe Him to be. Holy God came to earth, took on human flesh, died for my sins, rose again, ascended to heaven and is coming back again." That's the true Christ, if that's what you believe about Jesus of Nazareth and that that's who He is, that's a compelling evidence that your salvation is real as you evaluate yourself in the context of the other things that we talked about.

All I'm asking you to do as you enter in to spiritual conversations with other people is to ask them that question and be prepared to explain what the true Christ is. As we make Christ the issue of those conversations, we have got it right where it needs to be if He is the issue.

Now, notice at the end of verse 23 again:

*The one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*

You have the Father; your confession means you have Him. You have entered in to a relationship with the true God through the indwelling Holy Spirit in an eternal relationship that will last through all eternity. You have Him on an ongoing basis, He belongs to you as it were because you are part of His family. I belong to my children because I am their father. Spiritually speaking, true Christians have the Father, they belong to Him, He is their Father because He has adopted them in to His family. The marvel of that truth is hard to express, it shows forth the greatness of the love of God for His children, He belongs to us through faith in Christ. So we ask the question, do you know the true Christ?

Now, having exposed the heretics here in verses 22-23 for their false view of Christ, John in the verses to come turns back to his pastoral concern for his readers. He shows them how to protect themselves from the heretics and in this he shows forth another aspect of being a true Christian. We will phrase it with the second question here this morning:

## **2. Do You Continue in God's Word?**

Look at verse 24 and I will explain this, he says:

*As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

He opens this verse with a very strong contrast. He had been talking about the liars, the antichrists, the false teachers. And now he sharply changes directions in verse 24 when he says "as for you," now I'm back to addressing you as a true believer, I'm back to addressing you as those who truly know Christ, I'm back to addressing you as the true flock of God. I've dealt with the heretics now, I'm coming to you now and saying what do you do in response to this environment of heresy, this hostile environment against truth. What do you do in order to survive and prosper spiritually in the midst of such an environment? The message is so simple. In contrast to the esoteric secrets of these false teachers, John says these antichrists are around, but you, I'm speaking emphatically to you, I want to call attention forcibly to you, what you do as a true Christian because you stick to the apostolic message, stick to what you heard from the beginning of your salvation, stay true to it, make the teaching that you received a priority that you never abandon. Be faithful to the gospel which was entrusted to you at the time of your conversion, that which saved you, be faithful to it, continue in it, he says. That's the meaning of the word "abide" to have the idea of remaining in something, to continue in it, abide in that truth, continue in that truth which you heard from the beginning.

Now today with the completion of the New Testament canon, we can expand and reference to the entire word of God, being faithful to the entire word of God, being faithful to the doctrine that is taught within it. And understand that faithfulness to scripture, loving the word of God, continuing in the teaching of the word of God, growing in the doctrine of the Bible, that is a hallmark of a true Christian. If you want to write this passage down, Psalm 1:2-3, familiar passage. Notice how this was expressed in the opening Psalm:

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers.*

He separated himself from those who are opposed to God. What does he do by contrast? Verse 2:

*But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night. He would be like a tree, firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither and in whatever he does he prospers.*

The affections of his heart, the delight of his heart is rooted in the word of God and the word of God is running through his mind day and night on an ongoing basis. He finds his thoughts coming back to the anchor of scripture and he meditates on it, he seeks to understand it, he seeks to apply it. Continuing in God's word is the mark of the righteous man. In Psalm 119:97, the psalmist says:

*O, how I love your law, it is my meditation all the day.*

All the day, my heart can't get away from it, I don't want my heart to get away from it. That is where my deepest affections are, is found in me for your word.

Jesus said an echo of the same thing in John 8:31-32, Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him:

*If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.*

He says my disciples continue in my word and as they do, they come to knowledge of the truth and it sets them free, it sanctifies them, it encourages them, it gives them discernment so that they can stay on the true path of discipleship to me.

The true Christian continues in God's word. Understand that as I am standing here and preach to you so often week to week to week, I understand and I thank God for the reality that your presence here week after week is an indication that that's exactly what you want to do—that's why you come. There is no other reason to come to GraceLife if it is not to hear the teaching of God's word. You are manifesting what I'm talking about is what I'm trying to say to the vast majority of you in this room this morning. You are continuing in God's word.

Understand by contrast the person who took a passing interest in the Bible in sometime past and walked away, no longer shares an interest in the things of God, no longer has an interest in the word of God, the teaching of the word of God, that is the person who should have great fear for his soul because those who can walk away from the word of God, abandon it as a priority in their life as an interest in their life, they are showing forth the great probability that they were never saved to begin with. Because when God imparts His life to you in regeneration, when God makes you a new creation, part of what it does in every believer is plant in them a love for the word of God—that's part of being a new creation.

While I understand that you go through ebbs and flows in your life, sometimes you seem spiritually hot, sometimes you struggle, the truth of the matter is that there is an abiding principle deep in the heart of every true Christian that orients him towards God's word. And the more you sow toward that, the more that you cultivate your life toward that, the more you are going to know the blessing of God, spiritually speaking not necessarily in external circumstances, but you are going to know the joy, the assurance, the holiness that John speaks about in 1 John because the path of stability, the path of spiritual discernment, the path of discipleship to Christ resides right here in the word of God. And as you read the scriptures, as you understand, as you are

taught the word of God, God takes His word and directs your mind toward Christ and toward His truth and by the power of His Holy Spirit guards you from error. This is the meaning of what John is saying in the context, he has just been talking about heretics and how they deny the true Christ and now he says you, those who know Christ let that abide in you as you heard from the beginning because if it does, you abide in the Son, you will abide in the truth. You hold in your hands the greatest spiritual protection if you are holding your Bible in your lap as it is here today. It is not just mechanical reading; it is reading with meditation that cultivates doctrinal truth in your life.

So I should ask you, do you continue in God's word? Is that the mark of your life? Friends, somehow in some manner is the Bible an ongoing part of your life, not only on Sunday, but throughout the week. I am not going to quantify it any more than that, I don't think that that would be scripturally justified. But somehow as a true Christian, you should be able to look at your life and say "Yes, here is where the Bible is an ongoing part of my life. I am continuing in God's word. You know I want to do more, as you bring this out preacher, you know, I want more, you are making me hungry, I am remembering things that I have forgotten. I have kind of drifted away, but I'm coming back. You know, as I see this in the word of God, I'm coming back. I want to be back in God's word, I want to be back in the Bible because that's where the deepest affections of my heart are."

For those of you that might be interested, earlier this week on the front page of the [gracelifepulpit.com](http://gracelifepulpit.com) we posted a couple of different Bible reading plans. If you have already gone far from your New Year's resolution on that thing and say "Oh, it's March" there is a place that you can go if you need a place to start. There are multiple ways to being in God's word, this is one opportunity if you have no other that you are using. Be continuing in God's word, I believe that about you, just be faithful to it for your sake. Let God's shape your thinking and shape your life.

And finally:

### **3. Do You Rejoice in Eternal Life?**

For those who have believed in the true Christ and those who continue to abide in God's word, God has made a promise. Think about that, God with no external obligation upon Him, makes a promise to His children, to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 25, John says:

*This is the promise which He Himself made to us, eternal life.*

A promise of eternal life. A promise (get this) God has declared what He will do for us. And because He can never lie, because He is faithful, this promise is certain. This is the promise that belongs to you as a believer in Jesus Christ, eternal life. If you want me to state it a little differently with a different nuance, God has given us absolute assurance about our present experience and what we can expect still to come with certainty. Because it depends not on us, but on the promise of the faithful God, the promise of the God who is true, and He has promised

to us eternal life. What exactly has He promised? Sometimes you need to go back to the nature of the promise. As I talk to people from time to time and what has God actually promised to me, we need to know the nature of the promise so that we can build our hope on what God has truly promised, not what we want Him to promise. Perhaps it doesn't need to be said, but I want to say it anyway, the gospel doesn't promise you and me earthly prosperity or satisfaction in all of our relationships or promise us personal fulfilment. He does not promise that all of your loved ones without exception and without fail will come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

In the blessing of God, those things often come, but they are not the core of the promise, it is an overflow of, it is a spill-over blessing, a spill-over benefit, but that's not what we seek, that's not what God has promised because these earthly relationships and these earthly things may not come to pass. James 4 says, you don't know what your life would be like tomorrow. Jesus said in John 16, in this world you have tribulation. And so, what I am trying to do here is negatively is to kind of clear your mind away so that you can more easily receive the true nature of the promise. The real nature of the promises of God is not tied to this life. Your sorrows may be, and for some of you are, deep and long-standing and severe. And if you expect earthly ease because you think that's what Christ has promised, you are probably going to be discouraged and uncertain in days to come if you are not already. But if you are clear about the nature of the promise, you know what to seek and what to treasure, you know what glory in your heart after.

The promise is eternal life, what does that mean? Let's sample just in the few minutes or so that we have left, what John himself mentions in this letter, we are limited to three aspects of this.

What does eternal life look like? What is the promise that God has given to us? What is it that we as Christians can know for certain belong to us and that we can enjoy now and expect to continue with ultimate consummation in the future? I am going to give you three things, there are three sub points here.

First of all, the knowledge of God Himself. Look at chapter 1:3, the apostle John says:

*What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too, may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

Shared life with God, the knowledge of God and fellowship with Him, that is part of the promise of eternal life. Look at chapter 5:20, it is stated even more clearly:

*We know that the Son of God has come (here's that incarnation issue again) he has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

The knowledge of God motivates a true Christian. The promise of eternal life, inherent in that, the knowledge of the true God is what He has promised us as we pursue Him in His word, as we live in obedience to Him, you are going to know Him in deeper ways, you are going to understand Him, both intellectually and in your experience. The knowledge of the true and

living God, that's the promise, that promise applies to every believer, prosperous or not, happy or not. The knowledge of God is part of the promise.

Secondly, the forgiveness of sin. The true Christian having eternal life has the forgiveness of sin, is conscious of the forgiveness of sin and glories in the forgiveness of sin. Chapter 1:7 at the end:

*The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Chapter 2:2:

*Christ Himself is the propitiation for our sins.*

Chapter 2:12:

*Little children, I am writing to you because your sins have been forgiven you for His Name's sake.*

Chapter 4:10:

*This is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Inheriting eternal life is the forgiveness of sins. What God has promised, what God has declared, what God assures us of based on His own infallible character, His impeccable character is that when you believe in Jesus Christ, you have the full and complete forgiveness of all your sins. And therefore, there is no condemnation for you who are in Christ Jesus, therefore, death holds no fear for you, therefore, you are at peace with God. The forgiveness of sins is intrinsic to the eternal life of which John speaks.

Your violations of God's law wiped away in the righteousness of Christ, imputed to your account so that no one could ever bring a charge against those who are in Christ Jesus—that's God's promise. The true Christian likes that, the true Christian rejoices in that.

Thirdly, eternal life includes God's promise of the assurance of future glory. Understand that this life is not intended to be full experience of salvation. This is a foretaste, this is an appetizer of the full banquet that we are going to one day enjoy at the table of Christ in heaven. Chapter 3:2, there is more to come:

*Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is.*

Chapter 5:13:

*I have written these things so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

This is our spiritual reward and God will be faithful to deliver it. And so the question is, do you love God? Do you love Christ? Do you have an assurance that God has forgiven your sins? Do you have an assurance that one day you will be face to face with Jesus Christ, not as your judge, you will see in His face not your judge, but your savior?

These questions lay open our hearts before the Lord. If you treasure these spiritual realities, take courage, you can and you will stand firm in a world of falsehood. Christ belongs to you and will keep you to the end. Thank Him, pursue Him and rejoice for ever more.

Let's pray. *Father, we resonate these spiritual realities that you have revealed in your word. This is the life that flows from being born again. And these things show forth your own goodness and glory, your holiness and faithfulness. Thank you for these things. For those who do not them, open their eyes that they might repent and flee to Christ for salvation. Establish us in these things oh God that we might honor Christ until we see Him face to face. In His name we pray. Amen.*