Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Tests of Assurance from 1 John, Part 3
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5-11
Code: 61-10

Now tonight we're going on in our study of this matter of assurance of salvation. We have approached the text of 2 Peter chapter 1 with an almost marathon style. We have been running for a long time and haven't yet landed at verse 5. But we are trying to introduce the theme of 2 Peter 1:5 through 11. The theme here is the matter of the certainty of salvation. The larger subject that Peter is dealing with here is our precious faith which he began to talk about in verse 1. But starting in verse 5 he is concerning himself with this matter of the certainty of salvation.

And just to touch base with the idea, we note down in verses 9, 10 and 11 that he speaks to this very issue saying in verse 9, "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins, therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble, for in this way the entrance in to the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

Peter is concerned that people not forget that they have been forgiven. He is concerned that they be sure about God's calling and choosing them. And that they experience the abundant supply that is theirs through entrance into the Kingdom by way of Christ. It is a matter then of assurance that is on his mind.

And in approaching this I felt it was necessary to deal with the subject on a much broader base and so for a number of weeks we have been endeavoring to discuss the doctrine of the assurance of salvation. And we simply ask the question: how can we as believers enjoy the assurance of salvation? How can I be sure my faith is saving faith? How can I be sure my life is new life in Christ? Obviously this is a vital matter for our joy and for our peace as Christians.

Now before we look in to this particular text, I have been drawing your attention to 1 John because John deals with the same issue. And wanting to be as complete as I can in discussing the subject here, I've digressed over to 1 John and I'm going to do it again tonight. Let's go back to 1 John.

A number of the New Testament writers, of course, are very very concerned about this matter of true salvation, as was our Lord Jesus Himself. And John dedicates actually the entire first epistle to this subject. In chapter 1, for example, let me put you in touch with verse 4. John says, "These things we write so that our joy may be made complete." He is saying the purpose of the writing of this epistle is

that together we might rejoice. Certainly inherent in that joy is the confidence of true salvation.

At the end of this epistle, chapter 5 and verse 13, he sums it up with this very important and somewhat thematic statement, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." Now there is the theme of this epistle. He started out by saying I write in order that you might have full joy. He ends up by saying that full joy is a part of confidence when you know you have eternal life. So John writes this epistle then to give us instruction that we might know that our salvation is genuine.

Now the epistle as such is made up of a series of tests. You often hear people say that the epistle of 1 John is basic, almost primitive, simple, a good place for new Christians to start, and it is. But it is also a very very deep profound and frequently difficult epistle to interpret clearly. One thing, however, that is apparent throughout the epistle is that there are clearly given tests for a person to take to verify a valid salvation. I suppose we could say fairly that if someone was questioning their spiritual condition and weren't sure whether they really possessed eternal life, this would be the place to send them.

Now we've already considered six of those tests and we'll go on from there tonight. Let me just review the first six and I put them in the form of questions. Are you enjoying fellowship with Christ and God? That test appears in chapter 1 verses 2 and 3 and also in chapter 5 verses 1 through 5. Secondly John brings another test. Are you sensitive to sin in your life? That is also in chapter 1 verse 5 through chapter 2 verse 1. Are you sensitive to sin in your life? Three, are you obedient to God? Is it a pattern of your life to obey? That is in chapter 2 verses 3 and 4 and 5. Then the fourth query and test that we noted, do you reject the world? To put it another way to use the very terminology John uses, do you love the world? Do you love the system of the world? That's chapter 2 verses 15 through 17. The fifth test that we have examined, do you love Christ and eagerly wait for His return? Do you love Christ and eagerly wait for His return? That chapter 3 verses 1 through 3, every one who has this hope purifies himself. And then last time we considered number six in our little list, do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? Chapter 3 verses 5 through 10.

So we have gone through quite a number of tests in moving through this wonderful epistle. Now I want to give you some more tonight I trust in a rather rapid fire succession. Number seven on your list, do you love other Christians? Do you love other Christians? And this will move us back to the section that we omitted, one of the key sections, and that's back in chapter 2 verses 9 through 11. Let's go back to chapter 2 and note verses 9, 10 and 11. Verse 9, "The one who says he is in the light," that is the one who says he is a believer, who says he possesses eternal life, who says he knows God, who says he's saved, who says he's converted, "and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now."

Go back to verse 6 just to help you to understand that. The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. Now that says that if you're going to claim to be in Christ, your life is going to show some of the patterns of Christ. And certainly loving your brother would be one very very basic pattern. To be in the light, to be cleansed, to walk with God, to be saved, to be in fellowship with Christ is to experience and express love. So it is not the people who claim to be Christians but it is the people who love the brothers.

Follow it in to verse 10. "The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and doesn't know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." In other words, if you claim to be a Christian but do not love your brothers and sisters in Christ, your claim is a sham.

To illustrate it a little bit further, let me have you turn to the epistle we're studying in the morning, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and listen to how Paul very clearly delineates this matter of love. Verse 9, he says to the Thessalonian believers, "Now as to the love of the brethren," same idea as John, "as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you." Why? Why? "For you yourselves are taught by God to do...what?...to love one another." What Paul is saying there is that it is inherent or implicit in salvation and the granting of the new nature and the Holy Spirit that you will be taught by God to love one another. Whoever loves God loves whom God begets, John says in 1 John 5:1. If you love God you'll love His children. That's just basic. And then in verse 10 of 1 Thessalonians 4 he adds, "For indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia but we urge you, brethren, to...what?...excel still more." You haven't loved as fully as you ought to love, but you have loved. And you don't need to be taught to love, it's instinctive, it's implicit, it's inherent, it's an element within the new nature.

To show you further that clearly in Scripture, look at Romans 5. In Romans 5 we have here a catalog of the things that are ours in justification by faith. Verse 1 says that since we have been justified by faith there are a number of things which we have received. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's a settled peace forever with God. Furthermore, we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. Salvation brings us peace with God and standing in grace. We are literally engulfed by grace which continues to be greater than our sin and to cleanse us.

Then he says we also rejoice in hope, the hope of the glory of God. Some day to be glorified in His presence. Not only this, we rejoice in our tribulations. Why? Tribulation brings perseverance, perseverance proven character, proven character hope and hope does not disappoint. And then he adds because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

It is characteristic of a believer to have peace with God, to stand in grace, to rejoice in hope and to experience love for God. And not only love for God, but the love of God poured in us is expressed not only to God but to all who are God's, other believers. Jesus went so far as to say this in John 13:34, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have...what?...love for one another," John 13:34 and 35. So it is basic to our Christian life that we have a capacity and a capability to love each other. Now we don't need to beg that issue because you're familiar with what the Scripture teaches about it, but suffice it to say for the moment that loving one another means serving one another in humility. It is not primarily an emotion, it is not primarily a feeling, it is primarily a sense of dutiful responsibility, sacrificial service, humble sensitive caring.

So you have to ask yourself the question to be faithful to John here, if you characteristically love other believers. If you claim to be a Christian and you have no love for them or no sacrificial love for them, no dutiful humble caring love for them, then John says you may say you're in the light but the truth is you're in the darkness. Love is the test of divine life. Love in your life means you have crossed over, you have crossed over in to divine life.

Let's go to chapter 3 verse 14 and we'll see it right here. He uses the very Greek term "crossed over," verse 14, "We know that we have crossed over from death in to life," how do I know that? How do I know I'm a Christian? How do I know I've crossed over in to life? Verse 14, "Because we love the brethren." There is a simple test, beloved. Do you care about other believers or are you utterly cold, uncaring, and indifferent? Or do you have a desire to reach out and meet their needs? That's the test. Verse 14 further says, "He who does not love abides in death, he hasn't crossed over in to new life." Verse 15, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has no eternal life abiding in him." People who are characterized by continual hatred which could be translated not so much in a vitriolic vengeful angry hostility as in an utter self-consuming, self-centered, selfish approach to life, do not know God. People who continually focus on themselves and could care less what happens to anybody else no matter what they claim are the children of the devil, characterized by murder, characterized by hatred and they abide in spiritual death. Verse 16 he says it again, "We know love by this that He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Somebody is going to say, "Okay, you're talking about this love, what do you mean?" Well we know it by this, it's sacrifice. Love is defined as sacrificing for others. Do you get joy when you give to the Lord's work? Do you get joy when you come across a person in need and you're able to give them money, a commodity, time, prayer, care to meet that need? Does your heart rejoice when you are able to be with Christian people, to talk with them, to share with them, to discuss the things of God with them, to study the Word, to pray, to just be together? Do you have a desire to take the supply and the resources God has given you and apply them to someone else in the family of God? That's evidence of love. That's evidence of love. Are you willing to lay down your life, your goods, all you are

and possess to meet someone else's need? It doesn't mean that all of us are able at this moment in time to say.."Well if the hour ever came when someone was going to run a sword through my heart if I didn't make a loving sacrifice, I don't know whether I'd be able to stand the test." If you're a true Christian when the hour came, believe me, God would give you the grace to stand it, right? You don't have the grace to endure what you're not enduring, but when it comes you would. The question is, in the circumstance I'm in now with the opportunity I have now, do I express love sacrificially?

Verse 17, here he gets very particular, "Whoever has the world's goods," and here's how he defines love, it's not just giving your life, that's nice to lay down our lives for the brethren, but let's take a very simple one, you have the world's goods, that is commodities, clothing, housing, food, sustenance, and behold your brother in need and you close your heart against him, John asks a simple question, how does the love of God abide in you? How could you possibly be a Christian? You see, Christians have received the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. They don't have to be taught to love one another, they've been taught by God to do that as a part of the sanctifying influence of justification. And in that condition they love. And one who has the resources to meet a need but closes his compassion to the one in need may claim to be a Christian but John raises the question...how does the love of God abide in him? So he says in verse 18, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth." Verse 19, "We shall know by this," by what? By love, "That we are of the truth and shall do...what?...assure our hearts." What a statement.

You want assurance? You want assurance as you stand before Him, as you stand before God, assurance that you are a Christian, a true believer, that your faith is the real thing? That assurance will come by your love. You will know you are of the truth and assure your hearts. By the way, the word patho is the word assure, it means to pacify, to tranquilize, to soothe, to persuade. And so you can assure your heart as you stand before God that you're a true Christian under the scrutiny of divine knowledge, you can be sure if you see love in your life. It isn't perfect love but it is the love of God at work in you loving others.

Verse 20, "In whatever our heart condemns us for God is greater than our heart and knows all things." What does that mean? Listen to this, your heart may put you on a guilt trip, your heart may do its greatest effort to make you doubt. You see, the fallen flesh can do that. It may play games with your mind. Satan may work in you to condemn you before God but in whatever your heart condemns you, if you see love in your life your heart can be assured. God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Even if our heart condemns us, God knows the truth. That's good news, isn't it?

I just would add the footnote here that you may doubt your salvation but God doesn't. If it's real He knows. And even though your heart condemns you, God doesn't. God knows you're a true believer. You may be going through doubt. You may be struggling with your assurance. And what the word of John is in this text is go back to the love of your life and examine if you do not love other Christians and it doesn't show itself or transform itself in to deeds of kindness and sacrifice. And if that's

characteristic of your life, be tranquilized, be soothed, be pacified, for no matter what your heart may do to condemn you, if you can touch those expressions of love in your life, you can be sure of your salvation. And no matter how much condemnation rises out of your own heart, God who is greater than your heart doesn't condemn you. A condemning conscience can rob a Christian of assurance because a condemning conscience, see, looks only at failure. But God is greater than our conscience. He looks at Christ. And how can I know? By looking at my life to see if love is there.

You remember Peter? He kind of dealt with this when he faced Jesus after he denied Him three times. And what did Jesus ask him three times? "Peter, do you...what?...do you love Me? If you love Me then show it by feeding My lambs, then love My lambs, love My sheep, love My people." Finally in some desperation Peter says, "Lord, You know I love You." And when you can know your love for God in Christ, when you can see expressions of your love for other believers no matter how your heart condemns you because of sin, no matter how your conscience condemns you, God is greater than your heart and doesn't condemn you. Your heart and your conscience, as I said, looks only at the failure. God looks at the work of Christ. So, ask yourself the question...do I love other Christians?

Number eight in John's list of tests, do you experience answered prayer? Do you experience answered prayer? Chapter 3, while we're there, look at verse 22. "And whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as He commanded us."

Now what he's saying here in verse 22 is that you can know you're a believer when you begin to receive what you ask. Because the only way that you can receive what you ask is if you do...what?...keep His commandments. And verse 24 says, "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him." So let's start from the end. If you abide in Him and He abides in you, you keep His commandments. If you keep His commandments, He'll answer your prayers. If He answers your prayers, guess what? You belong to Him. That's what John is saying. We can...we can have confidence before God. The end of verse 21, "Even though our heart condemns us we can have confidence before God and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight and that is evidence that He abides in us and we in Him."

Go over to chapter 5 verse 14 and John says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us, and if we know that He hears us and whatever we ask we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him." If you belong to Him, He'll answer your prayers. Answered prayer is a sign you are His child.

Could I say it this way? God is more anxious to answer the prayer of His children than they are to ask. There's a certain disappointment, I think, in God's heart because He would do so much more

than we ever ask Him to do. Ever had that thought? There must be a certain disappointment in the sense that He would do so much more than we ever ask Him to do. But when you pray, that is evidence that you know God if in response He answers your prayer.

There are many people who pray to God. You hear people say that, that little expression, "Well I pray to God so-and-so and so-and-so." They don't even know the God they're praying to, nor do they know what prayer is. But for those of us who pray and our prayers are answered, we can know we have eternal life. Now one of the good reasons to have an active and aggressive and faithful prayer life is so that you can enjoy the assurance that answered prayer brings, right? There are some people who probably don't enjoy their salvation assurance simply because they have such a skimpy experience of answered prayer because they have such an ineffective prayer life. I can only tell you, these things have accumulated in my life, that I have had God answer my prayers in large quantity through the years, continually which is evidence that He hears me, which is evidence that I abide in Him and He in me. Answered prayer.

Have you had your prayers answered? Then you have eternal life. Is that a pattern for you in life? Have you prayed for someone and seen them come to Christ? Have you prayed for someone who had a great trouble and a great need in their life and God used some means to turn that in to blessing and joy? Have you sought God about a lack in your life and have Him fill it? Have you prayed for forgiveness in a clear conscience and received it? Have you asked God for enabling grace to present the truth on some occasion to an individual or a group and He gave you the grace to do it? Have you sought power in proclaiming the gospel and experienced it? Have you asked that God would help you lead someone to the Savior and He did? Have you sought that God would give you contentment with your circumstances and you enjoyed it and He granted peace? Have you asked that the Lord would teach you some lessons about Him and help you to get to know Him better and He did teach you some hard lessons and now you do know Him better? See, all of those are indications that you belong to Him and He to you...answered prayer.

Number nine, another test John gives, do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Chapter 4 verse 13, by the way, one of the reasons that 1 John is difficult to interpret is cause John cycles back through the same subjects all the time. He sort of...he has a general kind of flow but every once in a while he leaps forward or jumps backward and picks up something. The most difficult thing about 1 John is trying to outline it. It almost outlines itself in a spiral and that's why we jump back a little bit. There's a flow but it jumps here and there from time to time, showing something of the passion of John who is not quite so coldly analytical as say Paul. But back in chapter 4 and verse 13, listen to this, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us," how do we know that? You know, isn't it amazing, I just read that and I say, how in the world can people be running around trying to figure our whether they're saved? "By this we know, we abide in Him and He in us." I mean, it couldn't be more obvious than that. How? "Because He has given us of His Spirit. And the first thing that the Spirit did was bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the

Savior of the world and we confess Jesus as the Son of God."

If you confess Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, committing your life to Him, that was the work of the Spirit of God in you. And that was evidence number one that you possess the Holy Spirit because apart from the Holy Spirit you're not going to know who Christ is and you're certainly not going to confess Him as Lord and Savior. Have you experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit? In what sense? In the sense that you've acknowledged Jesus Christ, confessed He is the Son of God. With all that that means, if so, God abides in you, you abide in God because the Spirit has effected that belief, that faith. If you have experienced salvation, faith, love for Christ, commitment to Him, that was the Holy Spirit at work in you. If you have experienced illumination, that is the understanding of the Word of God. Who was that? John says we have an anointing from God so we don't need a human teacher. Who is that anointing? Holy Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, 1 Corinthians 2, even the deep things of God and makes them known to us, right? They're discerned by the Spirit.

Have you come to faith in Christ? Have you come to commit your life to Jesus Christ? Have you come to the point where you have demonstrated your love for Christ in submission to Him? That's the work of the Spirit in you. When you read the Word of God, is it illuminated to your heart? Do you understand what it says? In fact, do you understand so well you wish you didn't understand quite that well? Is it relatively clear? I'm not talking about the obscure passages that all of us struggle with, but isn't the Word of God quickened to you when you read it. Ask yourself, does it convict me when I'm sinful? Does it make me rejoice when I'm worshiping? That's illumination.

How about fellowship? Have you ever experienced fellowship with God? You say, "What do you mean?" Well let's take prayer. Do you talk to God? Commune with Him? Pray to Him? Who is prompting that? Who in you makes you cry Abba Father? Galatians 4 says He's given us His Spirit by which we cry Abba Father. What makes you go to God for fellowship? Go to God for communion? The prompting of the Holy Spirit. What about praise? Who is it that lifts your heart to praise and adore God? Christ. Who is it that fills you to sing with meaning and devotion those wonderful songs of praise we sung a few minutes ago? It was the Holy Spirit. The unregenerate don't do that. The ungodly don't do that with joy. Have you ever...have you ever borne spiritual fruit in your life? Have you ever experienced love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control? That's the fruit of the Spirit. Those attitudes are spiritual graces. Have you ever been used by God in serving? Have you ever witnessed to someone? Have you ever ministered in a spiritual way through helping someone, through giving to someone, through leading through all of those areas of spiritual giftedness? You see, if any of those things or many of those things have occurred in your life, that is evidence of the Spirit of God. Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Those are the ways, listen carefully, in which Romans 8:16 is fulfilled...the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. How does the Spirit bear witness? By saying, "You're a Christian, you're a Christian, did you hear me?" No. There's no audible voice. How does the Holy Spirit bear witness to that? It bears witness by your faith in Christ and your love for Christ, it bears witness by illuminating

the Scripture to you, it bears witness by drawing you into fellowship with God for the purpose of prayer and praise, bears witness by producing spiritual graces in you, the fruit of the Spirit, bears witness by producing effective witness, effective service and ministry to other believers, that is the work of the Spirit. It is not some kind of esoteric spacy theoretical mystical thing the Spirit does, but those very experiential concrete works. If you have experienced the ministry of the Spirit of God, you can be assured if the Spirit is in you you belong to God. That's what he's saying here in verse 13. The Spirit is in you, you belong to God. He's given you His Spirit, be assured. Don't let your heart condemn you, damn you, tell you you're not a believer, get back in touch with the work of the Spirit in you. There's no reason to doubt and be unstable.

Number ten, can you discern between spiritual truth and error? Can you discern between spiritual truth and error? It seems fairly obvious but let's go to chapter 4 verse 1, "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. By this you can know...here's the way to test them...every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." In other words, every spirit that acknowledges the reality of Christ inherent in Jesus Christ that He is the Savior, the anointed, the Messiah, but also that this anointed Savior, Messiah, God the second person has literally come in incarnate human flesh, that's the test. By the way, every false religious system that I know of violates that test. They will always undermine the truth about who Jesus Christ is. Because if you postulate Jesus Christ to be exactly who the Bible says He is, accomplishing exactly what the Bible says He accomplished, it eliminates a false religious system. All false religious systems have to attack the person and work of Christ. So the test is very simple, any spirit confessing Jesus the Savior, the Christ, the Anointed in the fullness of His work in incarnation is from God. Can you discern that?

Verse 3, "Every spirit that doesn't confess Jesus isn't from God, it is the spirit of the Antichrist of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world, you are from God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world. They're from the world therefore they speak as from the world, the world listens to them. We're from God. He who knows God, listens to us." Did you hear that? True believers will listen to true prophets because true believers discern truth from error about the person and work of Christ. That is the watershed issue. If some guy came in this pulpit and stood here and taught error about the person of Jesus Christ, it by response would separate the believers from the unbelievers. True believers would say, "That's not true." Why...you say, "Well, how do we know that?" You know that because God has given you the truth. You have an anointing from God to discern. That's the indwelling ministry teaching of the Holy Spirit. Obviously there were in the church to which John wrote some false teachers. These false teachers were teaching about...something about Jesus, we don't know what. And so here you have not a moral test, and not an experiential test, but a doctrinal test. He says true believers know truth from error.

That's why, according to the Word of God, a true believer can never deviate into error about the person and work of Jesus Christ. Someone says, "Well I used to believe in Jesus Christ, but I've seen the light. Now I believe Jesus Christ was an angelic being. Or, I believe Jesus Christ was an emanation from God. Or I believe Jesus Christ was a demiurge, or I believe Jesus Christ was a divine spirit without the human element. Or I believe Jesus was just a man and not divine." Any of those aberrations of Jesus Christ reflect an unregenerate heart. Why? Simple concept, when you were saved you were saved by believing the truth about whom? Jesus Christ. Is that right? So when you were saved you were saved by believing the truth about Jesus Christ. How did you come to believe that? The Holy Spirit of God, right? Made it clear in your mind. So from the moment of your salvation there's one thing you're clear about and that is who Christ is and what He did...or you never would have been saved. Any other than Christ who did any other than Christ did was not the Savior. So from the very beginning of salvation you came in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and you remain there because the same Spirit who revealed that to you initially continues to affirm that. That's the substance of your ongoing faith. And note this, beloved, you were once given the faith to believe and that is still being given to you as a divine gift. You were once made to understand who Christ is and that is continually given to you as a divine gift. True believers know truth from error because of the Holy Spirit.

Down in verse 1 of chapter 5, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." It's the same test again. When you believe the right thing about Christ, you're born of God. Basic, absolutely basic, so essential.

Now you need to be skeptical. Go back to verse 1 of chapter 4 for a moment. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit." Don't believe everything you hear. Stop believing everybody. Test the spirits. Test, dokimazo, continual practice, continually be testing the spirits. The spirit implies the influence behind the mouth of the teacher or the prophet. Test them. Why? Cause there's so many fake prophets, false prophets. Here are three tests. Test number one, confession of the divine Lord, verses 2 and 3. Do they confess Jesus has come in the flesh from God? That He is God the second person come incarnate into the world as Savior, Messiah, King? In other words, agree with God's revelation concerning Jesus Christ. That's test number one. Commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ who is God in human flesh.

Test number two, commitment to the divine Word. Verse 4, "You're from God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world therefore they speak as from the world and the world listens to them. We are from God, he who knows God listens to us. He who is not from God doesn't listen to us, by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." That's the second test. Really those two tests suffice. What do they say about Christ? And do they listen to the Word of God?

You will notice that cults invariably whether it's Christian Science, Jehovah's Witness, Mormonism or any of the others, first attack the person of Christ, secondly, postulate a substitute for the Bible. Invariably a true believer can discern between the truth and error. True believers don't believe lies. Why? They have a resident truth teacher. Satan's people listen to him. God's people listen to Him. You want to know if you're a Christian? Ask yourself this, can I tell truth from error? Can I tell the truth about Christ from error? Can I tell the truth from the Word from error? I'm telling you, it's so clear. I heard a radio program recently and there was a guy on there propagating a false religion. I don't know anything about that religion. I don't know particulars about what they believe. But I could tell you from the word out of his mouth in the first sentence, I knew that man did not represent the truth. Just in the way he skewed one small statement and from then on I could not accept anything he said. And I listened rather intently until he was finished and he told me about the great prophet who is the instrument of God to bring this great truth to humanity. It did not square with Scripture. I don't need to know what that system is. I don't need to know anything about it. I know it didn't fit the Scripture. How do you know that? Because the Spirit of God has convinced me about Jesus Christ and convinced me about salvation in Christ by grace through faith and convinced me of the veracity and truthfulness of the Word of God and I do not need some prophet of modern times to give me the truth.

That should be true in your life, too. You don't have to be a seminary graduate to know the truth from the error. Now we're talking about basic truth, the personal work of Christ and the divine Word of God.

Last point, have you been...have you been rejected for your faith? Let's say it that way. Have you been rejected for your faith? Look at chapter 3 verse 13, "Do not marvel, brethren, if the world...what?...hates you." Hmmm, Cain hated Abel, the unrighteous always hate the righteous...always, because their deeds are evil and ours are righteous. Have you experienced animosity, hostility, rejection, bitterness, alienation, being ostracized, even persecution? If so, that's a sign of your Christianity. We are the off scouring of the world, aren't we? Listen to Philippians 1:28, I love this verse, Paul says, "In no way be alarmed by your opponents, which is a sign of destruction for them but of salvation for you." If you have attacking opponents, it's a sign of destruction for them, it's a sign of salvation for you. When you're persecuted don't say, "Oh, woe is me, am I really a Christian? Things are going so badly, I wonder if God cares." If the world is persecuting you say, "Isn't this wonderful, it's pretty clear who I am." Don't be surprised if the world hates you.

I'll never forget the night the demons were screaming, "Get him out, get him out," they didn't want me in the room. That was a very confirming night for me. The fact that the demons knew whose side I was on was good information for me to have. And when the world comes at you and the spirit of Satan comes at you in one form or another and you're hated for the sake of righteousness, that's an affirmation. Now if you're hated because you're obnoxious, that's another issue. There really is no virtue in that.

Now let me run those tests by again just ever so briefly, if I might, because these are the things that we want to touch. Are you enjoying fellowship with God and Christ? Are you sensitive to sin in your life? Are you obedient to God's Word? Do you reject the world? Do you love Christ and eagerly wait for His return? Do you see the decreasing pattern of sin in your life? Do you love other Christians? So very very basic. Do you experience answers to your prayers? Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Can you discern between spiritual truth and error? And have you been rejected, hated, alienated for your faith in Christ?

If so, says John, "I write all these things that you may know that you have...what?...eternal life." Be assured, dear friend, there's no reason for you to go through your spiritual experience in the dumps and yet millions of Christians do and very rarely does anybody ever teach about this most important theme. Let's bow together in prayer.

We rejoice, Father, we rejoice that we can know that we have eternal life and that the eternal life we have is indeed eternal. O what a joy. Thank You for the happiness of heart that comes to the true believer. And, Lord, we would pray as well for the one who exposed to these tests failed and is now dealing with the realization that no matter what the claim might be there's no real salvation there. The one who is saying I don't enjoy fellowship with God and Christ, I live in sin, I'm not really sensitive to it, I'm not obedient, I don't reject the world, I don't really wait for Christ's coming, I don't see a decreasing pattern of sin in my life, I don't love other Christians, I don't experience answered prayer and the ministry of the Spirit, I can't discern the truth from error and I'm certainly not persecuted for righteousness, Father, for that person save them for Jesus' sake and for Your eternal glory. For the rest of us, fill our hearts with joy because our salvation is real and sure in Christ's name. Amen.

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