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

Certainty of Christian Assurance, The Part 1
Scripture: 1 John 2:3
Code: 62-11

Let's open our Bibles to 1 John chapter 2, we want to get right into the lesson tonight. I have a lot to say and a lot to sort out in my mind as we work our way through.

When I was a little kid I used to get the *Reader's Digest*when it came to our house and I would open it up and I would rush right to the section that said, "The most unforgetable character I ever met." Remember that section of the *Reader's Digest*? There was always some really strange or unique personality that was described in those little articles every month. And as I look back over my life, there are a lot of people that fit into that category. I have met a lot of unforgetable characters, you know, Clayton Erb, Phil Johnson, they're literally...there's a long, long list of unforgetable characters that I've met in my life. But as a boy there was man that stood out, one man. I became personally acquainted with this man. His name was Fred Demarra(?), that name may ring a bell with you because he was known when I was young as the great imposter. And they actually made a Hollywood movie about his life. He was really a remarkable man. And I knew him because in the midst of all his amazing feats, he joined our church and I got to know him.

He made all kinds of claims, falsifying all kinds of documents, forging all kinds of different identities, moving all over the United States of America performing functions in such a manner that they tended to confirm his claims. He never was educated beyond high school and yet he became a university president chosen by the board because of his formidable educational past, all falsified. The United States Government hired him as a prison warden because of his training in prison science, police science and law. He became a dentist and practiced for a number of years. He became a teacher and that's where he came into my life, he taught at my high school and he was good. He became a surgeon, practiced surgery for a number of years. One hand on the scalpel, the other hand to turn the pages of the book. He claimed to be all of these things at one point in his life and it was so preposterous that he could do what he did that they made a movie called The Great Imposter. You might find it in an old film library and it's true.

Believe me, this goes on in the church all the time...all the time. It's loaded with great imposters. And so it introduces to us the question...how do we know who's real? How do we know who's a true Christian? And how do we know that we are? They say that some people get so good at deception, they actually deceive themselves. It's really a critical important issue. It's important to be able to discern who is a true Christian so we know how to deal with those people, so that we can be a help to them. And it's certainly important to know what our own condition before God is.

And this brings up the very, very important subject of assurance...assurance of salvation.

Is it really possible to have full assurance of one's salvation? To really know that you're saved and you're on your way to heaven? Well the Scripture says yes it is possible. Not only does the Bible teach that assurance is possible, the Bible commands us to pursue the path where that assurance lies. In 2 Peter 1:10 Peter wrote, "Be diligent to make sure about God's calling and choosing you." You have to apply a certain diligence to the pursuit of that certainty. Assurance is not only possible, it's commanded. It is also a privilege, it's part of your birthright as a Christian. You ought to know that you're secure. That is a privilege that you should enjoy. You ought to know that you are saved. That's a birthright that you have as a believer. And frankly, assurance is the best of blessings. I mean, assurance is the true taste of heaven on earth, isn't it? A person who doesn't have assurance about their salvation is in the worst misery. People ask me all kinds of questions every Sunday in all the years of my life and the most painful question, the most painful question asked is the question of the person who says, "I don't know if I'm really saved. I think I might not be a Christian. Can you help me?" That is a massive despair. That's why Fanny Crosby wrote the hymn that says, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine," and the next line, "O what a foretaste of glory divine." It's the taste of heaven to know you're saved. It's a taste of hell to think you're not.

And yet, in contemporary Christianity assurance is, as a subject, very often ignored. It's ignored by people who assume that if you pray a prayer, walk an aisle, make some kind of statement, or even are baptized that you're saved and it's not even a question. Why talk about assurance? You're saved. You did what you're supposed to do. So those kinds of people who preach that sort of shallow message, decisional regeneration, you could call it, in some cases baptisimal regeneration, they don't want to talk about assurance because that would be to pose doubts where there shouldn't be any.

It's also ignored by people who claim that you could lose your salvation and so rather than feeling assured about your salvation, you're better off to be really nervous about it. I'm sure there are millions of people in group one who believe they're saved, but they're not. But they've been told they shouldn't even ask the question. There are other people who are certain they might be lost and are supposed to live in a perpetual state of fear that in fact even if they were saved they might lose their salvation. So don't get too assured.

Assurance is a marvelous reality in the Word of God, but it has been seriously attacked through the years. And we need to understand it. There are people, as I said, in group one, this is more common today, who don't ever examine themselves as the Bible tells us to do, examine yourself whether you be in the faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5. They don't do that because they think there's any reason to do that, of course they're Christians. They go to church. They prayed a prayer. They believe in Jesus. And any doubt that they have about that comes from Satan or from poor self-esteem. In either case it's pretty dangerous to your spiritual well-being to believe any of that. So in evangelicalism typically

today assurance isn't an issue. I can't remember how long it's been since I heard anybody preach on or saw anybody who wrote on the issue of assurance. Why everybody is sure they're saved. In fact, now the new trend is even people who don't believe in Jesus ought to be sure they're saved. Let's go around the world and tell everybody who believes in God however they imagine Him to be that they are saved. I read an article in *The Times*today from a few weeks back, one of the popular television preachers has now come to the conclusion that everybody is saved who believes in God at all, therefore everybody will be in heaven, quote, "Except just a few folks." I don't know who they are. We're sure that everybody who believes in Jesus is saved. We're sure everybody who has prayed the prayer or made the quote/unquote decision is saved. We're even pretty sure that people who never heard about Jesus but believe in God are probably saved, so why would we worry about a silly thing like assurance?

Through history it's been a major issue. Give you a little bit of history. You can read the details of this in my book, The Gospel According to the Apostles, or Faith Works, both titles of the same book. You start with Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholicism denies in its theology, denies that anyone can have the assurance of salvation...anyone. It says, "No one can have the assurance of salvation, no one." Because salvation is a joint effort between God and the sinner. God will always do His part, but the sinner might not always do his part. So no one can be assured of their salvation until they finally get to heaven. And in that same sort of category you'd put Wesleyanism and Arminian theology where you really can't be sure of your salvation, you might have it now, lose it tomorrow, have it later, lose it tomorrow, so you don't know how it's going to end up when you die. You don't know where you're going to be when you die in terms of your condition.

One of the things that the Reformation dealt with when the gospel was recovered by the great Reformers was this issue of assurance of salvation. And the Reformers taught that the believer can be and should be fully assured of salvation. Calvin, John Calvin actually taught that assurance is of the essence of faith...assurance is of the essence of faith.

Now let me get a little bit theological on you. When you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you know you're doing that. You experience that. Justification is a forensic act by God, you don't experience it. Faith you experience, you didn't believe and now you believe. You've come to recognize the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You've come to understand the gospel and it awakens your dead heart to your sinful condition. You repent of your sin, you reach out in faith, you embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and you know you're doing that. That's faith. Faith is something you experience. There's a mental aspect of it. You understand the truth and you understand that it is the truth. There's an emotional response to that, your heart awakens and you want to move away from your past and you want to embrace that truth. And then there's an action that follows your emotion and that is the actual act of confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. And you're in on all of that. That's happening in you. And the moment someone trusts Christ for salvation, that person who embraces Christ has a real sense of their own faith and they know that the Bible promises that you are saved by

grace through faith so they therefore know that based on the promise of the Word of God they are saved. Calvin was right. There is in faith itself a component of assurance. If I believe the Bible enough to change my view about myself, see myself not as a righteous person but as a sinner, if I believe what the Bible says about my condition, the wickedness of my heart, the condemnation that awaits me, alienation from God, all of that, if I now instead of thinking good about myself see myself as evil, see myself as wretched, miserable, naked, blind, cut off from God, separated, doomed, damned to hell, and all of that, the reason that I've come to that conviction is because I understand and believe the Bible's diagnosis, right? That's why it says faith comes by hearing the Word. Faith is a response to the truth that captures my mind, my emotions and my action.

So when I read the Scripture and the Scripture says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to be called the children of God," if I believe that and I receive Him, then there is assurance in that faith based upon the same Scripture that caused me to act in faith. I embraced Christ because the Bible said He's my only hope. I repented because the Bible said I must repent. I acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord because the Bible says He is Lord. But the Bible also says when I do that I'm saved, and so based upon what Scripture says there is inherent in my faith a component of assurance. If I can believe that I'll be saved by turning to Christ, then I know when I do that I'm saved. Calvin was right and I believe that's exactly what Calvin was saying that there is in the essence of faith a component of assurance.

It seems then that this is exactly what everyone should expect. You should expect that when you embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, you'll be saved. You'll be saved. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting or eternal life." That's what it says. So if you believe in Him, you're going to have eternal life. And that's the reason you believe in Him so you can have eternal life. So when you trust Him, put your faith in Him, coming along with that is the promise that you have eternal life. There is that essential assurance in the very act of faith because it's based upon what Scripture says is true.

And yet there is essential assurance in faith, and yet it has limits...it has limits. That assurance that we have in the act of faith comes from the promise of Scripture. That...I'll say it again, that assurance that we have in the act of faith comes from the promise of Scripture. He says it so I believe it so I am assured it is so. That's a sort of cognitive assurance, sort of a cognitive assurance. It's in my mind because I know the Bible is true because I believe it's true, I embrace Christ, He saves me because I've done what He asked, I've repented of my sin and embraced Him as Savior and Lord. And if I've done that it says I'm saved and so I'm saved. And therein is that cognitive assurance.

It's not perfect assurance, that's why we read Mark 9:24 the man who said, "I do believe, help my...what?...my unbelief." The Apostles in Luke 17:5 said, "Increase our faith." It's not a full assurance. In Hebrews chapter 10 we are commanded, "Draw near with full assurance of faith." But we don't all have always full assurance because there are two other elements to assurance. There's

that cognitive element that comes right out of the promises of Scripture. And secondly, there's that subjective element of assurance that comes by the witness of the Holy Spirit...the witness of the Holy Spirit in us. And there's a third element, there's what I'll call the behavioral assurance that comes because we see how we live our lives. In a sense, it starts in the mind, it moves to the emotions, senses, and then it goes to the life. All three of those contribute to a full assurance.

Now what we have in evangelicalism in the contemporary scene is nothing but number one. Well I prayed the prayer, I did the thing, and the Bible says if I do that then I'm saved, and so that's that. Even though the prayer may have been superficial, the faith may have been non-saving faith, less than genuine. The first is only true. You can only bank on that cognitive assurance based upon the promise of Scripture if you have the second affirmation of assurance, the subjective working of the Spirit of God in you and the third one, the manifestation of the life of God in you by the way you live.

It's amazing how the Reformers grappled with this issue. Some of the reformed theologians didn't agree with Calvin. They...they felt that there was no real assurance in faith because they didn't want people to feel assured just because they had that moment of faith or because they had that experience of faith. They didn't want them just to think that because of that they were secure and they could live any way they wanted to life. And so because of the threat of antinomianism, that is people living against the Law, *nomos*is the old word in Greek for the Law, *antinomos*means lawless living. They were concerned that people who made some profession of faith in Christ if they were reinforced to have assurance about their salvation strictly on that cognitive basis of taking the promise of Scripture and nothing more that they would then feel free to live any ole way they wanted to live. And so the Westminister Confession of faith which articulated reformed theology in 1646 said this, "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, it does but not to the degree that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it." They were trying to find some balance. They said it is not the kind of assurance that eliminates the fact that a true believer may wait long and go through much conflict before he really partakes of that assurance.

So they were saying, in a sense, it's a...it's...it's the first category of assurance but it doesn't give you the full assurance. And I think that was appropriate. I think Calvin's emphasis was point one, their emphasis was point two and three, there's more to make it a full assurance. They felt that assurance was something other than faith. Calvin thought it was essentially in faith. They thought it was something other than faith. I think there was truth on both sides. Calvin was right, there was a...there was a cognitive, mental, rational response to the actual promise of God that was inherent in the act of faith. I'm putting my faith in Christ because that's how I will be saved, therefore I'm assured I am. But the Westminster Confession Divines were also right when they said that's not all there is to it, that's not the full assurance of faith.

Well along came the Puritans. Many of us love the Puritans and rightly so, the seventeenth century English reformers. And they really took that idea of the Westminster Confession that you need to wait

long and through much conflict come to assurance. And frankly they just got absolutely carried away and they...they demanded, actually, that preachers preach to produce widespread lack of assurance. That was the idea. Make people feel insecure. And what happened under the preaching of the Puritans was people became frightened, fearful, and they became obsessed with the fact that they might not be elect. Preach hard election, as the Puritans did and then on the other hand make people feel that they're not saved and therefore they're not elect. And the people were caught between believing the doctrine of election and not knowing whether they were really saved. They lapsed into morbid introspection. People lapsed into utter despair. Puritans tended to emphasize the inward introspective assurance of self-examination. And it got to the point that it was almost endless self-examination. And if you read widely in Puritan literature, you find that Puritan literature, much of it, much of it is written for people struggling with whether they're saved because their preachers have been preaching them into that condition.

Now we come to today. What preacher does that? Nobody would dare do that. Preachers today want to make the gospel minimal, just believe this, you're in. We don't ever talk about the fact that you might not be saved. There are no calls to holiness. There is no emphasis that if you see sin in your life you might be lost. One of the most prominent evangelists in this country over the first half of this last century and almost to the end lived a long life, told me with his own mouth that he didn't want to deal with issues like this because if he did he would have to go back and realize that many of the people that he told were saved were not. He couldn't handle that. Even if you take a little four-law book, take somebody through the four spiritual laws, you come to the end, they say, "Now tell this person they're really saved and here's the little formula. You prayed the prayer therefore you're really saved, don't question that." That was opposite where the Puritans were. The Puritans said, "If you look at your life and you see things there that shouldn't be there, you might be lost." And they pounded people literally into this morbidity where they were fearful that they were not elect.

So there are some people who have false assurance. And there are some people who have no assurance. But there is middle ground. Aren't you glad? The Bible encourages true believers with the promise of eternal salvation. The Bible does not teach that you can lose your salvation, right? It doesn't teach that. It teaches that if you're saved, you're saved forever. So the Bible encourages true believers with the promise of secure and eternal salvation. And the Bible even encourages the believer to pursue the path that makes their calling and election sure.

But at the same time, the Bible also makes false Christians insecure by demanding that they examine themselves, by never settling for an event kind of salvation without a transformation. The Bible intends to make false Christians uncomfortable. It intends to make false Christians fearful by attacking their deceptive sense of security. This is very important. If we confuse the issue of assurance, we will produce multitudes on the one hand whose lives are crippled by doubt and an absence of joy. And if we don't talk about the issue of assurance, other multitudes are going to expect to go to heaven and some day hear, "I never knew you, depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." It's

really important that we understand this.

How can we have what Hebrews 10:22 calls full assurance of faith? How can we have that? Well the answer comes in the same verse, Hebrews 10:22, by having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let me put it to you very simply. There is no assurance of salvation without sanctification. There is no assurance of salvation without sanctification. It isn't enough to know in your mind that the Bible promises that if you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you're going to be saved and you can have a measure of assurance there but that's sort of minimal. That's sort of entry-level assurance. Full assurance is connected to sanctification. And where there is in your life a lack of sanctification, a lack of holiness, there will be with it a lack of assurance.

Now let's look at the second and the third elements of assurance. That assurance which comes in us by the witness of the Holy Spirit and then that assurance which shows up outside of us by our conduct and our behavior. These are so very, very important. If you would turn to the eighth chapter of Romans and going to...as I said, I'm going to have to pick and choose because we can't cover everything we ought to cover. But in Romans chapter 8 verses 14 to 16, verse 14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." All right, there's a starting point. If you've been led by the Spirit of God, you're a child of God. Verse 15, "You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you've received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba Father." There's the second element.

First of all, if you have experienced in your life the direction and the leading of the Spirit of God, verse 14 says, you're God's son. If you've been led to believe the truth about yourself, about Christ, about salvation, if you have been led to embrace the Word of God and to believe it and to love it, if you have seen the Spirit of God directing in your life through the use of spiritual gifts, through ministry, through circumstances of your life that put you in a place where unusual spiritual blessing unfolded, not of material but of a spiritual nature, then you've been led by the Spirit.

I look at my life, I've been led by the Spirit. How many times has the Lord led me across the path of somebody who needed the gospel, the gospel unfolded, it was a circumstance that appeared to me to be utterly serendipitous and yet it was planned from eternity past, the Spirit of God led me to be exactly where I was when I was there. You've had that. I've lived long enough now to have the confidence that I am led by the Spirit of God. I was led here by the Spirit of God. At the time there weren't any bells or whistles and no red light went on on top of my head to make sure that I knew it was God leading me. I was following my heart the best way I knew. There weren't any ways in my senses to distinguish that, but I came here and as I look back I see now that it was the leading of God.

How many times have I received mail at Grace To You where somebody says, "I was about to kill myself, I was about to divorce my wife, my life was in shambles, I turned on the radio, you came on, I was saved?" Well you were led by the Spirit of God to turn the radio on. And then you were led by the Spirit of God to believe. And you were led by the Spirit of God to love the truth and embrace the truth and grow in the truth.

Second thing he says in verse 15 is that you've received the spirit of adoption, as sons by which we cry out Abba Father. Another way the Spirit of God leads you is He leads you to intimacy with God. He leads you to look up to God without fear. You know, the pagan world, the gods were to be feared. We don't feel that way about God. There is in the life of the believer that eagerness to rush into the presence of God with every problem, every issue, every struggle. And the more difficult life becomes, the easier it is to pray. Is that not true? When everything is going well you're not too good at it. But when somebody gets a terminal disease your prayer life gets cranked up immediately. Or when you lose your job, or when you don't have enough money at the end of the month to do what you need to do. Or when your child is on drugs, or whatever and you rush into the presence of God and you unload and that's the Spirit of God within you that makes you know you're a son and you have a right to go out and cry Daddy, Abba Father means Daddy, I have a need.

In verse 16 the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And I think this comes even from the Word of God. As you study the Word of God, the Spirit bears witness through the promises of Scripture that you are His child, that as many as received Him to them He did give the right to become the children of God. This is the assurance that the Holy Spirit gives to us.

Paul demonstrates that in a personal way in 2 Corinthians, I think in that wonderful verse chapter 1 verse 12. When he was responding to the criticisms that were going on in Corinth against him, he has a very interesting response in verse 12 of 2 Corinthians 1. They had accused him of everything. You remember when we studied 1 Corinthians...or 2 Corinthians, these false teachers had come in and they wanted to teach lies but Paul was so beloved there they had to destroy their confidence in Paul so they went on a all-out attack on Paul and they lied about him, they said he was sinful and immoral and a liar and a deceiver and had no credentials and wasn't a true apostle. And they attacked everything about him. And his response is always fascinating to me. In 2 Corinthians 1:12 he says, "Our proud confidence is this," pretty bold statement, you're attacking me, you're accusing me, you're saying I have a hidden life of shame, etc., etc., I'm telling you this, "Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we've conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you."

Paul said...Let me tell you something, you can hit me all you want on the outside, but there is a witness in me that says I have been faithful. There is a witness in me that gives testimony to the fact that I have done what God asked me to do and I have in holiness and godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God conducted myself in the world. You may be accusing me on the

outside, but I'm not being accused on the inside.

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit on the inside is conviction, isn't it? That's another way the Holy Spirit leads us. When you feel rotten about your sin, when you feel wretched about your failures and your weaknesses and your dishonoring of the Lord, that is affirmation that you're a child of God. Another way that you know the Spirit of God is at work in your life is when chastening comes, connection with sin.

So there is the cognitive element of assurance that's inherent in faith because it's tied to the promises of salvation. Then there is that...that sort of inner conscience down in us, it's not just rational, it's the working of the Spirit of God in our conscience and in our emotions so that we feel the weight of our sin. We feel the longing to rush into the presence of God. We see how He directs and leads us, not through our ability to assess all the circumstances and be in the right place but through our desires to go here or go there and we show up and it was where He wanted us to be.

So Paul says you can know your saved if you just take the promises mentally, you can know you're saved if down deep in your heart you see the direction that the Spirit of God is moving, working, unfolding in your life. But there's a third element of assurance and this element of assurance takes us to our text. We always get there eventually. Was that helpful? Just kind of sorting that out? Well good, I know you would say nothing other than it was, but...not in public anyway. But it makes me feel better.

You come to this other component and that is what we find in verses 3 through 6, just take that section. "By this we know that we've come to know Him." Boy, that's good, isn't it? That says it. We want to know if we're really knowing the Lord. Here's how, "By this we know we've come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says I've come to know Him, doesn't keep His commandments, he's a liar, the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected, by this we know that we are in Him. The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." Walk is simply a metaphor for living your life. And if you're a Christian you're going to live your life like Jesus lived His life.

Bottom line, this is the moral test and this is only an element of the moral test. This is the element of obedience. Next passage, verses 7 to 11, is the element of love which is another element of the moral test. And I say moral in the sense that it's talking about a spiritual kind of morality, a biblical kind of morality, a Holy Spirit led morality. Here we come then to the objective, visible proof that you're a Christian, obedience. The work of the Holy Spirit in prompting us, directing us, moving us through our desires, our wants, our longings, the hunger for intimacy with God, that's invisible. But here's a visible way to know you're saved. Here's a visible path to assurance. This will give you the full assurance. You can see this. This is the behavior test by which you can know that you are a believer.

Now in this text the test is stated, the test is applied and the test is exemplified. It is stated, it is applied and it is exemplified. It is stated in verse 3. "And by this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments."

Now let's remember this is getting us to the heart of the book. Here we are really where John intends us to be because if you go over to chapter 5, you ought to underline this, but an asterisk by it, identify it, it's the key verse, 1 John 5:13, "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. And this is the confidence which we have before Him, if we ask anything according to His will He hears us." I want you to have that confidence that you can go to God with all that's on your heart and know that He'll hear you, the confidence that rises out of the assurance that you know Him and that's why I'm writing what I'm writing. So as we get into this particular section, we're really at the heart of the epistle and he starts out by saying, "By this we know that we've come to know Him." That's the purpose of the epistle, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Now the introductory words "and by this" is a transitional phrase used to introduce a new subject. We're done with the prior section on sin and one's view toward sin and the advocacy and the propitiation of Jesus Christ. Now we're transitioning into a new section in which we're looking at the tests that verify salvation. Or how to have full assurance, how to know...to borrow the language of chapter 1...you're really walking in the light, how to know you're really in the fellowship, how to know your fellowship is with God the Father and Jesus Christ the righteous, or how to know you know Him. How to know you really know Him, whether it's walking in the light, being in the fellowship, or knowing Him...those three phrases are synonymous. They all refer to the same thing and that is salvation, a true relationship with God. This is wonderful. This is exciting for a believer. Here it says, "By this we know," not we hope, we think, we wish, we know, *ginoskomen(?)*, present tense, we continually know. And *ginosko*means to actually experience that knowledge, it is to perceive by experience.

So what he is saying here is we can have a measure of assurance by believing what Scripture says. We can have a measure of assurance by the invisible subjective mighty work of the Spirit of God moving in our lives. But this knowledge we can actually experience. Here is the test by which we can reach that full assurance. And I'll tell you right now, this is critical. You're going to question what the Bible says, you're going to question whether the Holy Spirit is leading in your life unless you see this in your life. And that's what I said a moment ago, and I repeat, there's no assurance of salvation apart from sanctification. And now we're in the sanctification zone. We're out of the revelation zone. We're out of the sovereign and providential zone. And we're into the sanctification zone.

"And by this we know that we have come to know," it's a different form of the Greek, it's a perfect tense. It looks at a past action with continuing results. "By this we continue to know that at some point in the past we came to know Him." Tell me how, please tell me how. How can we know? If we keep

His commandments...if we keep His commandments.

Let's talk about knowing. This is really new, not to me or you but to the world of John. Forty times in the little tiny epistle here he uses some form of the word "know." It's either *ginosko*or *oida*the two main Greek words for know over 40 times. This is about knowing. First John 5:13, "That you may know that you have eternal life." This is about knowing. And it's set against the backdrop of people who thought they had attained the true and elevated knowledge. There are people like that in our world, aren't they? The ascended masters, they call themselves, these gurus, these mystics, these people who are the enlightened in the religious world. Well they were around in John's day. They were sort of what we know as pre-Gnostics. Gnostic is something that came in a couple of centuries later and Gnostic comes from *gnosis*, to know. They were in the know. They had the secret knowledge. Remnants of the Gnostic mentality is found in modern New Age and modern philosophy, psychology, even shows up in places like the Masons, secret knowledge. It's in all kinds of religions.

So there were people in John's day who thought they had the secret knowledge, the transcendent knowledge. They had elevated themselves above the hoi-polloi, above the crowd, above the motley people who were the riff-raff of life. It was really a system of salvation by knowledge and it was a self-knowing. They had a system of self-salvation through attaining knowledge. And there are two ways they attained the knowledge. They attained it, some of them, by reason. They just stood on the planet Earth and they just reasoned up into the supernatural realm and put it all together in their minds with the aid of demons. Some of them came to their knowledge not so much by reason but by experience. They engaged themselves in every imaginable kind of experience...drugs, that's not new, sex, any kind of euphoric experience by which they assumed that they were elevating themselves to another dimension. They ascended to the lofty, high, esoteric transcendent knowledge. Knowing was the way to self-salvation. It was the way to superiority. It was the way to religious and mental advancement.

This really developed along two lines, by the way. One line was the sort of the philosophical line. Classic Greek knowing was that you could reason upward to grasp the universe. You could reason upward to ultimate truth, Plato, Aristotle and all flowed out of that, even to modern philosophy. All comes out of that same idea that man can sort out universal realities, not material realities, but the universal invisible realities behind the material world. That's what philosophy is. Philosophy is coming to understand the invisible, coming to understand the realities behind what you can see and feel and touch and smell and taste. That's philosophy. It's the elevation of the mind. Now through the Dark Ages it came back, re-surging through the enlightenment. Philosophy had its heyday, Kant, Hegel, DeCarte(?), all the way down the pipeline and it effects everything. It doesn't matter what people think.

Have you noticed something about philosophy? Knowing by means of philosophy has no connection to morality. Have you noticed that? Go get Paul Johnson's book called The Intellectuals and read it. It is stunning. You'll read about the people who shaped all the western world and you will read these

great philosophers and you will see that they lived the most wretched, immoral, gross, indescribably wicked lives more than you would ever imagine. That is the single most important philosophical book I've ever read and it's called The Intellectuals. It's great reading. And you will find that the architects of philosophy that governs the western world had reached the highest levels of rationalism. They saw themselves as the ascended intellects who had attained to the knowledge of the universal behind the visible and their lives would make a black mark on a piece of coal. It had absolutely no connection to how they lived.

There was another strain of Greek philosophy that found its way not into the mind but into the body. And it came to the place where it took on the forms of hedonism and hedonism basically said that fulfillment is in feelings. Whatever feels good, do it. They pursued, the Greeks did, another concept that ultimate truth was not rationally gained. Ultimate truth was found through experience, through fulfilling every emotion, fulfilling every desire, every longing. Jean-Paul Sartre went on that path and ended up bankrupt.

You know, those two strains of philosophy that you come to knowing through the mind, you come to knowing through the body, the impulses, the drives. But just like philosophy, hedonism which really is a kind of philosophy, had absolutely no connection to morality. Philosophies of the world have no required moral standards. And certainly those who live for pleasure have no moral standards so that neither case, whether you were coming to the ascended knowledge through your mind or through your body, there was no connection between that kind of knowing and how you lived your life. Really those two strains are still with us. The first one through the mind is Modernism. The second, through the body and feelings, is Post-Modernism. But in either case they had no connection to behavior. The rationalist lives in sin and the libertine lives in sin. Absolutely no bearing on how they live.

Paul says in Titus 1:16, "Such people may claim to know God," listen to this, "but in their works they deny Him." You don't know God until it shows up in how you live. Bottom line, you don't know God until it shows up in how you live. The true knowing changes your conduct and the only ones who really know God, not the ascended Gnostics, and not the descended hedonists, the only ones who really know God are those who have been affected by that knowledge toward holy conduct. That is absolutely consistent with what the New Covenant teaches.

Let me take you back to the New Covenant. In Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant is the covenant of salvation and I just want to show you that this is there, it's in the New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31, "The days are coming, says the Lord, I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, it's not going to be like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." It's not going to be like the Sinaitic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the covenant of law, the covenant which, of course, they broke. "This is a covenant which I'll make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord." Here is the covenant. "I'll put My Law within them, on their heart I'll write it."

You know how you can tell a New Covenant person? Not because they made a profession of faith in God. Not because of something they did outwardly. You can...something they did at a moment in time outwardly. You can tell a person who is truly a New Covenant person who has genuinely been converted, who has been saved because God's Law is in them written on their hearts. And He says, "I'll be their God and they will be My people." It is the people who live by the Law of God not because it's imposed on them from the outside, but because it's planted on the inside. "They shall not teach again each man his neighbor, each man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord, they will know Me. I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I'll remember no more'."

How do you know the ones who know Him? Because His Law is written on their heart and whatever is in a man's heart controls how he lives, right? "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." You know, Israel is the greatest illustration of the connection between knowing God and obeying Him. Israel is the greatest illustration of that. Israel always said, "We know God, we know God, God is our God, we worship the true God." And God continually judged them for what? Disobedience...disobedience...disobedience...you don't know Me...you don't know Me. And He proved by His judgment that that nation while claiming to know Him didn't know Him at all. To know God, to know Christ is to be compelled on the inside to obey the Law that God wrote there. People have said actually to me, "I don't go to your church, too legalistic." My first concern is they're not Christians because they see the Law of God as something imposed on them on the outside. I would be more prone to say, "Boy, I can't go to your church because you don't love the Law of God from the heart. I couldn't be in a church like that." You see, that's where the law was written in the New Covenant, it was written in the heart.

So what do we have here? We have a collection of people who love the Law of God from the heart. Why are you here? You can't have a Sunday-night service today, it doesn't work. People aren't going to come. They're certainly not going to come and listen to a talking head for an hour and five minutes. They're surely not going to come and listen to theology. You can't get young people to come to church, are you kidding? By the way, over the five years, the last five years just since we've studied, 89 percent of the people that joined our church are 35 and under.

"Oh, you can't reach those kind of people, you can't reach a slick, cool generation standing up there talking theology out of the Bible and singing antiquated hymns." Really? Do you know what's going on here? These people have the Law of God written in their hearts. I'm not imposing something on you, am I? Aren't you here because you want to know the Law of God? Aren't you here because you want to live the Law of God? This is not burdensome to you, is it?

See, people are so...they don't even get it. You've got a whole Christian world out there, they don't get it. They don't understand that if you get up and preach the Law of God the way God wrote it, you're not going to cause the true believers to leave because that is in their heart. This is not a legal

obedience imposed on us on the outside, this is a gracious obedience driven from the inside. Now that's a...that's a third, you know, element of full assurance. You look at your life, do you love the Law of God? Can you say like the Apostle Paul, "Even though I don't do what I ought to do, and often do what I ought not to do, O how I love Your Law?" Can you say that with David? You love the Law of God, it was his delight? That's, you know, that's the third and visible component that brings assurance.

Well our time is gone, more than gone. Okay, I have more to say on this next week. I think...is next week communion...Sunday night? So I'll finish it up. The introduction is longer than the sermon so...will you pray with me?

Father, it's just so thrilling for us to see how the Word clarifies this critical matter. But thank You that You have given us assurance. We don't have to live without assurance. We don't have to live in constant fear, doubt. We can have that sort of entry-level assurance that is essential to our initial faith, else we wouldn't have put our trust in Christ if we didn't believe it would save. And we can enjoy and experience that second divine subjective marvelous kind of assurance that's the working of the Spirit of God in us to convict us of sin, to chasten and discipline and to direct us to cry out to You in our times of need and seek intimacy. That assurance of the Spirit of God's leading that we see in the providences of life as things unfold that are so clearly Your direction, they have no other explanation. We see that. But help us to know that the full assurance awaits the manifestation of our obedience from the heart, loving obedience. May we pursue that obedience with all our hearts that we might enjoy the full assurance of faith, coming into Your presence with a clean heart and a body washed so that we might enjoy the assurance of our salvation that is granted in its fullness when there is manifest sanctification. We thank You for this great truth in Your Son's name. Amen.

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