

5 Rock-Solid Truths for an Uncertain Year

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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Let's open our Bibles to 1 John...1 John chapter 5. If you just glance at verses 13 to 21, you will recognize the word "know" is there. Verse 13, "That you may know." Verse 15, "If we know and He hears us, we know we have the requests we've asked." If you drop down to verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins." Verse 19, "We know that we are of God." Verse 20, "And we know that the Son of God has come that we might...verse 20...know Him who is true." This is all about what we know.

You will also recognize that the word "confidence" appears in verse 14, "And this is the confidence..." What is in verse 13, we know. What is in verses 14 through 17 is one subject about which we can be confident. What is in verse 18 we know. What is in verse 19 we know. What is in verse 20 we know. And a final warning appears in verse 21. This is about what we know. That's why I've called it Christian certainties.

Now obviously we live in a very, very uncertain world. We hear this all the time, that these are very unstable times, uncertain times. We struggle against all of the uncertainties that we face. And, of course, since the terrible tragedy of 9-11 a couple of years ago, there is a new kind of uncertainty injected into our daily lives, the fear of terrorism. We are uncertain when we fly. We are uncertain when we are in public places. This introduces to us a new uncertainty. There are increasing uncertainties about walking down the street and just being in a visible place because there are bombings and there are drive-by shootings, and you all know the uncertainties with which we live. And there are some more common uncertainties. When we buy a car, we are uncertain that it's going to function well and so we want a guarantee. And the manufacturer provides a guarantee and if he didn't provide a guarantee we wouldn't buy the car. And then fearing that we might have an accident for which we could not pay and then get sued, we hedge against that uncertainty by buying an insurance policy and spend our lives pouring a small fortune into the insurance company for something that hasn't happened. But it might. And when you go to a store to buy an appliance, you are immediately told by the sales person that you need to buy a 36 month warranty, or you need to buy a service guarantee, which is another way of saying this is a lousy product, something could go wrong. And many people do that. There's uncertainty about our health and so we spend thousands of dollars a year buying either insurance or buying into some kind of a medical plan to protect us from illness and accident and catastrophic issues that might come into our lives physically.

There's even uncertainty of life in a family. And so insurance policies are basically purchased so that should the bread-winner, the husband, die there's money immediately given to the wife. Most of you women sitting out there would be far wealthier if your husband was dead than you are now...or certainly many of you.

There's uncertainty with employment, so we have unemployment insurance...and so it goes. I talked to a professional athlete that when he negotiated his massive contract, it included the provision in the contract that in case of injury or accident that made him impossible for him to play that his complete salary would be paid for the full length of the contract which happened to be five years, and he would receive an additional 200 percent of that contract for his injury. And they signed him, of course.

There is uncertainty about fire and theft so you have a Homeowner's policy. There's even uncertainty now about marrying people so we now have pre-nuptial agreements where a partner's want a hedge against somehow being extorted by the person they're marrying. And so it goes.

People are so uncertain that they will literally spend huge percentages of their money to cover all of the potential contingencies. And there are other people who will pay large amounts of money to mediums, astrologers, fortune tellers to have some insight into the future, to remove some of the fearful uncertainty.

And I suppose a good question to ask an unbeliever when you talk to one is, what are you absolutely certain of? And, you know, the standard answer is death and taxes. But beyond that, and death might be a good place to stop, but beyond that sort of trite answer...what are you really certain of? You can't be certain that this planet is going to be here. The second law of thermodynamics tells us that all the material universe is tending toward disorder and disruption. You can't depend upon anything material, anything physical. You can't really depend on people. There are no guarantees about how people are going to treat you in the future, even your own spouse and your own family, your parents, your children.

It's very hard for an unbeliever to answer the question, "What are you absolutely certain of?" And if you can get that person to say, "Well I am certain of death," you've put them in a very, very good position. Well after you've died, what then are you certain of? Poses the inevitable question about eternal life.

Well against the background of living in an uncertain world and living basically with people who are uncertain about almost everything, the Bible is a divine revelation that is filled with absolute certainties...absolute certainties. Let me just suggest a few of them that I jotted down. Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out," that's a certainty. Or Psalm 19:7, "The testimony of the Lord, Scripture, is sure." The Bible is certain.

The consequence of sin is certain. Proverbs 11:18, "To him that sows righteousness assure reward." Job 34:12, "God will not do wickedly," that is certain. Isaiah 53:4, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is assuredty(?) that Jesus has done that. In fact, in Isaiah 55:3 it speaks of the sure mercies of the Lord. His mercies are certain. John 6:69, Peter said, "We are certain that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." John 16:30, "We are sure that You know all things." John 17:8, "They have known surely...says Jesus...that I came from You." Romans 2:2, "We are certain that the judgment of God is according to truth." Romans 4:16, "The promise of salvation is sure." 2 Timothy 2:19, "The foundation of God is sure." Hebrews 6:19, "Christ is a sure anchor in the presence of God." Second Peter 1:19, "Scripture is a sure word of prophecy." Revelation 22:20 Jesus said, "Surely I come quickly."

There's a few and many, many, many more. We deal in certainties in an uncertain world. That is a problem for our uncertain world, isn't it? It is an offense to people to say that you are certain about everything. It is really an intolerable posture and position to take. But it is the truth. The Bible is a book of absolutes. It's a book of certainties. We are certain how the universe began. We are certain how it will end. We are certain why God created and how His purpose in the beginning will consummate in the end. We are certain about why people behave the way they behave. We are certain about what is right and what is wrong. We are certain about the elements that make for good human relationships. We are certain about what is necessary to go to heaven. We are certain that there is a hell and certain about how people get there. We are certain about all those things.

We are certain about God's promises, certain about His Son, the Savior. Certain about His substitutionary death, His literal resurrection, certain about His Second Coming. We are certain about all these things, absolutely certain.

Now you understand again that is not something that is easily accepted in our society. But we are unique in a world of doubters. God has even given us a guarantee for the truth of His redemptive promise. In Ephesians 1:14 it says, "He's given as a pledge," that's a guarantee, "of our inheritance, the Holy Spirit of promise."

When you became a believer, you put your trust in Jesus Christ...why? Because you came to the conviction and the belief that all God's promises were true. Is that right? You came to the conviction that what He said about you is true. What He said about your sin is true. What He said about the judgment you would receive was true. What He said about forgiveness, mercy and grace was true. What He said about Christ was true in the Scripture. You came to the conclusion that all of that was true. And when you believed in the truth of the gospel, embracing all that God has said, you put your trust in Christ because of that belief and God promised you eternal life and to secure that eternal life He gave you a guarantee and the guarantee that He gave you was the Holy Spirit who immediately took up residence in your heart. And that's exactly what Paul says in Ephesians 1:14, "He is the pledge, the *arrabon*," *arrabon* means guarantee, down payment, deposit, pledge, promise. It's even

the word for engagement ring, the symbol of a pledge and a promise.

God deals in certainties. He has bound Himself by His Word to those certainties and He has guaranteed His Word in the gift of the Holy Spirit whose temple we, as believers, are. And so as we come to the end of John's epistle, John wants to reiterate for his readers and for us the certainties that are ours in Christ. With verse 12, John ended the formal argument of the book. Verse 12 summed it all up. "He who has the Son has the life," the eternal life. "He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Remember, this is a book that is intended to distinguish true Christians from false Christians. And John sums it up by saying eternal life belongs to those who have the Son. If you have the Son, you have the life. If you don't have the Son, you don't have the life.

And then John summarizes His purpose in verse 13. "These things I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." This book was written to give you assurance. Chapter 1 verse 4 says, "These things we write that your joy may be made complete." The only way you'll have complete joy is to have complete assurance of your salvation. Chapter 2 verse 1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He says I'm writing so that you may have full joy, full joy related to the fact that you always have an advocate who intercedes even when you sin so that you can know that you are saved. I want you to have joy. I want you to have holiness and confidence in His intercession. And I want you to consummately to have the assurance that you may know that you have eternal life.

That is the most important certainty, to know you have eternal life, to be certain you have eternal life. All through the epistle he's been giving tests...tests that identify the true and the false believers. There were false teachers among these believers. There were anti-Christians among these believers. There were spiritual fakes and phonies and deceivers among these believers. They were insecure, as believers tend to be when they're not well taught, and so John gives tests, doctrinal tests, the test of understanding a true view of man as sinful, the test of understanding a true view of Jesus Christ who He is and why He came. Those are the doctrinal tests. The moral tests have to do with obedience to the Law of God and to Christ and love for God and not the world and love for others. And we've gone through all of those various tests.

And believers who read the epistle are like us, study the epistle, come to the conclusion that they pass the test. They believe the right things about themselves as sinners. They believe the right things about Jesus Christ, the Savior. They manifestly obey the Word of God, that's the direction of life and demonstrate love for Him and love for others. John says here that's why I've written this. I want you to know. I want you to be certain. I want you to be confident.

Of course the Roman Catholic church says nobody can ever know if they're saved, nobody can ever know if they're going to go to heaven until after they die. Which would be to completely discard this

entire epistle.

By the way, the word “know” appears 39 times in this epistle. I counted them just to be sure, I think that's accurate, I may be off one or two. Thirty-nine times in this epistle and seven of those times in this section. Our faith is not a hope so, it's a no so. It's not wishful thinking, it's not pie in the sky. God has spoken and what God has spoken is true. And if we know what He has said, then we know what is true. We don't speculate. We don't hope. We are certain.

I remember years ago when I was writing a book on the Charismatic Movement, I was talking about the danger of thinking that God gives new revelation, that God speaks. And I read a book written by a Charismatic leader and in it he said this, “When someone in our congregation stands up and says, ‘Thus says the Lord,’ we know that either he is representing what the Lord has said or he's not.” Now that is not helpful. That's why we don't turn to that because there is no criteria by which to know. We know what God has put in His holy Word.

Listen to Job. Job in the patriarchal era, way back before Moses, therefore before the writing of the Pentateuch, before there was any Scripture in anybody's hand, Job the righteous man says this, Job 19:25, “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer...what?...lives and that at the last He will take His stand on the earth, and even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I will see God whom I myself shall behold and whom mine eyes shall see and not another.” I know my Redeemer lives, I know that He will stand on the earth in the last days and set up His eternal Kingdom, I know that after this body is dissolved, I will awaken to see God with my own eyes. That's a lot to know. Before there was written any Scripture, I know...said Job. Maybe the oldest book in the Old Testament.

In chapter 42, Job answered the Lord and said, “I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.” He had a sound doctrine of eternal life, resurrection. “In my flesh shall I see God.” Bodily resurrection, an eternal Kingdom and he also had a sound understanding of the absolute sovereignty of God. One might say that he was a pre-Abrahamic Calvinist. He knew.

The Old Testament is filled with such statements of absolute knowledge. I wish I could take the time. Here's what the Psalmist says, David in Psalm 20 verse 6, “Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed. He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.” David said, “I know my God, here's the prayers of those that are His and He answers...He answers.”

In Psalm 56 verse 9, similarly, “They my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know that God is for me.” Isn't that great? I may have enemies. They may attack me. But God is on my side. “In God, therefore, whose Word I praise, in the Lord whose Word I praise, in God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” And there is a confidence in God's absolute power, omnipotence. These are just highlights.

Psalm 119:75, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." I know what You do is right and sometimes you bring suffering because You're faithful to me. Faithful? Yes, faithful to bring the necessary suffering to perfect me. So the psalmist says that, I know. You do what's right even when You allow suffering, Your purpose is to be faithful to make me what I need to be.

Psalm 135:5, "For I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all depths." Anywhere in the universe I know, says the psalmist. God does whatever He wants.

In Psalm 140 verse 12, "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor." I know, he's saying, that God is compassionate.

Now, let me just give you a little exercise. As you read through your Bible from place to place and time to time and day to day, just see how many times you find somebody say, "I know..I know." Here's something else Paul said, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me." That's a certainty, right? Romans 7:18. I know that. Or 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed and I am confident that He is able to guard what I've entrusted to Him until that day." That is I know my Lord to whom I've committed my life will keep me...I know.

So here John closes his epistle. Oh that's just sort of footnote. As he closes his epistle, he uses the word "know" seven times...six of the seven it's *oida*, a form of *oida*, which is a reference to absolute knowledge, not something learned by experience...positive, absolute knowledge known not by our experience but by divine revelation.

So here we are as Christians living in a world of absolute certainties. This is a great crescendo of this magnificent epistle. You pass the test, you pass the doctrinal test, you pass the moral test, you are the real Christians and you know.

Now he's going to close with five things we know. I'll give you one tonight. It's a good one. Be content. That leaves four for next time. Number one, we know we have eternal life. We know we have eternal life.

Look at verse 13, "These things I've written to you." What do you mean, John? What things?

The whole letter...the whole letter. How do I know that? Well there are a number of indications. One, he shifts from the third person in verse 12, "He who has the Son has the life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" to the first person, "These things I have written." Which indicates that this is not in the flow of thought. He's not simply saying...What I've just said in the prior

verse. But rather, there's a shift all together out of the third person of speaking to them to a self-proclamation to his purpose. Plus, "These things I've written to you that you may know" introduces all that is about to follow, all of which is the conclusion, all of which is about what we know. So clearly this literally refers to the whole epistle which then launches him in to all the things that we who do have the Son know for certain. This is also good parallel to the gospel of John.

When John wrote his gospel, 21 chapters, he came down in to chapter 20, the end of the chapter, the last verse of chapter 20 and he said this, "These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." That sweeps back over the whole of the gospel of John, everything from chapter 1, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. All things were made by Him, without Him was not anything made that was made," all the way down, "And the Word became flesh," and all through those 20 chapters, everything so far has been written that you may believe. All the "I am" sections, all the miracles of Jesus that are recorded in the gospel of John, all intended that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing, you may have life, eternal life in His name. The gospel of John was written, follow me, the gospel of John was written so that people might believe and be saved. The epistle of John was written so that the saved might know they're saved. The gospel of John has a message of salvation. The epistle of John has a message of assurance.

And so, the parallels as he gets close to the end of the gospel, he says this has all been written that you might believe. And here as he gets near the end, this has all been written that you who believe might know that you have eternal life. The first one was to bring you to belief. And this one is to eliminate any lingering doubt.

How wonderful it is to know this. As I said earlier, it must be sad to be a Roman Catholic. It must be sad to live your whole life caught up in a system and the more devout you are, the more you give to that system, and be told incessantly and constantly that one thing you can never ever know is where you're going to go when you die. Talk about frustration. Talk about disappointment. Talk about beleaguered people. I can't imagine anything worse than going all the way through your life with some kind of loyalty to that system, never ever knowing or even being able to know whether you've qualified to go to heaven. We can know.

People who have no interest in religion or very minimal interest in religion generally say, "Well I hope I'm going to heaven, I think I might be good enough." You know, that's a question you really ought to have some certainty on because eternity lasts a long time. I mean, just kind of going around and taking a cavalier approach in life, "Well I think I'm going to heaven, I think...you know, when things all sort of wind down, I'll probably be good enough to get there," you know, you need to do a little better than that because of what is at stake. Can you know? Of course. John says that's why I wrote this epistle. Measure yourself against the tests. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you understand your own sinful condition? Are you manifesting day in and day out the evidence of a transformed life by

virtue of your love for God? Your love for others? Your hatred toward the world? And by a manifestation of your obedience?

If that's the case, if you pass the test, verse 13 says, "You may know that you have eternal life." You may now know that you have eternal life. When I die, I'm going to heaven. If people say to me, "When you die, are you sure you're going to heaven?" Absolutely...absolutely. I always think about what Larry King said to me off the air, he said, "Do you have any fear of death?"

I said, "I have no fear of death."

He said, "You don't have any fear of death?"

I said, "Well, you know, I have a normal antipathy toward pain and so I would like to minimize my pain in dying, that's just kind of a normal thing. But death itself? No, I don't have any fear of death."

And he said, "Well how is it you have no fear of death?"

I said, "Because I know exactly where I'm going to go. I know exactly where I'm going to go. I'm going to go to heaven."

"Are you sure you're going to heaven?"

"Absolutely sure."

And, of course, he said to me, "I wish I had that faith."

Well that faith comes by hearing the message of Jesus Christ. These Christians to whom John wrote had been shaken by false teachers. They had been shaken by antichrists. They were insecure. They had therefore lost their confidence in ongoing forgiveness. They had lost their joy. And so John has gone back and said, "Look, examine yourself. If you're walking in the light as He is in the light, then you're in the fellowship. If you're confessing your sin, then you're the one whom He's forgiving."

Look at your life, if you're obeying the commands of Christ, if you're loving God, loving others and not loving the world, if you're confessing Jesus as God, if you're practicing righteousness, if you're experiencing the internal confident witness of the Holy Spirit, then you can be sure. You can be sure.

And so, the first certainty is that you have eternal life. Now I don't need to spend a great deal of time defining for you what eternal life is. In the simplest sense, eternal life means living forever with God. It means living forever with God in His glorious, wonderful heaven. I mean, that's what it means.

But there's a lot more to it. For example, go down to verse 20, the last statement. It speaks of Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life. So eternal life is living forever with God, listen to this,

possessing the very life of God that was possessed by Christ Himself. Reenter into the very life of God. In some ways we inherit His perfect, sinless, holy, righteous life without becoming God. I guess you could say, I don't know, it's a good illustration, we're like a lightbulb. We contain His life like a lightbulb contains light. The bulb isn't light. The light comes into the bulb and illuminates. So His life will be transmitted to us, it's already been transmitted to us although the light doesn't shine very brightly because the bulb is still dark. It's not pure crystal transparency because it's darkened by our fallen flesh in which we still live.

I guess you could put it this way. The light is on but what the world sees is dim. Some day when we leave this mortal flesh and enter into the glorious manifestation of the children of God, we will become absolutely transparent, crystal-clear bulbs through which the power of eternal life will flow to radiate throughout all eternity.

In John 17, that great High Priestly prayer that Jesus prayed, and the third verse, He says, "And this is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You sent." That's exactly what we read in chapter 5 verse 20. God and Christ are the eternal life. They are the power of eternal life. And to say that we will have eternal life is simply to say that we will literally have the life of God in us, it's already true, it's just not fully manifest because that life is incarcerated in the darkness of our still fallen flesh. We already possess that life, that's why we love God, that's why we love others, that's why we don't love the world, that's why we have a longing in the heart to obey, that's why we desire righteousness and hate sin because that life is already in us. It is the very life of God. Another way to see it is that the Spirit of God dwells in us and therefore that presence of God is in us as the Spirit of God is in us, as the Spirit of Christ is in us, as God is in us, as Christ is in us. The whole essential nature of the Trinity has taken up residence in our lives. It is a massive miracle. The world doesn't yet see it, as Romans 8 says. They can't see us yet because we haven't had that unveiling, that glorious manifestation awaits the resurrection. In the meantime we struggle with the dark covering that makes the light that is in us so hard to see.

This is not about a duration of life. It is about a quality of life, a kind of life we have now and will forever have the life of God in us, holy and pure and righteous and good and content and satisfied and fulfilled. Eternal life is a life that lacks nothing, wants nothing, seeks nothing, misses nothing, desires nothing other than what it has. God's life in us, we already have it...that's what He says. Verse 13 says, "These things I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." The Lord wants us to be certain about that.

Secondly, we not only know we have eternal life, that is a certainty, we know we have our prayers answered so that until we get to eternal glory, in the meantime we have direct access to the throne of God, verse 14 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 in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him. We are certain that we possess eternal life if we

pass the tests. We are certain that we have the resources of God at our disposal by merely asking.

And then in verse 16 He says, of course, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death, I do not say he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin and there is a sin not leading to death." And John gives this little caveat, "Yes you have an access to all of God's resources through prayer, yes God will hear your prayer and answer your prayer, unless you're praying for someone to be restored or to be healed and it is a sin that they have committed unto death." And God will not answer that prayer.

It just illustrates that when you pray according to God's will, and if He hears you, and He does, you know that He'll answer and give you what you request if it's consistent with His will unless it falls into the category of divine judgment where God is really unable to answer. But that's just the exception, that's not the main point. That's the sub-point. The main point is He hears, He answers and we have what we ask in His will. And here's an illustration of something that's not in His will and that is it's not in His will to deliver someone from death who has committed a sin that in God's judgment leads to death. And only God knows what that sin is, it's not a specific sin, it could be different in any case and every case. It could be the straw that broke the camel's back in the continually disobedient believer. Certainly would...or could be applied to a non-believer who commits a sin of apostasy and you're praying for their salvation, it's too late.

But apart from that extremity, apart from that thing which is outside His will such as illustrated here, we know for certain that we have eternal life and that we have answered prayer. Then we come to the last three certainties. The last three certainties...we know, we know, we know...verses 18 through 20.

And the first one, verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins, but he who is born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him."

What does this mean? It means we know we have eternal life. We know we have answered prayer. And here we know we have victory over sin. We know we have victory over sin. No one who is born of God sins. We have already gone into that in detail...in detail. But here it is in review.

No one born again, no one given a new nature, no one transformed, regenerated goes on in the same unbroken pattern of sin. The unconverted do nothing but sin. They are dead, Ephesians 2:1 says, in trespasses and sins. They walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience. They walk in the lusts of their flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and are by nature children of wrath, even as all the rest, everybody. There is nothing good in them. They can't do anything good. They are of their father, the devil. Not one of them is profitable. Not one of them is righteous, not even one...Romans 3 says. They are the servants of unrighteousness. They incessantly trample God's law,

trample God's love, trample Christ's gospel. They are defiant, haters of God.

The Hebrew word for sin, *pasha*, is rebellion. They are in constant rebellion against the law, the love and the lordship of God. By nature then, they are children of wrath, headed for wrath. They are, of course, under the direct control of the one who is designated as their father, the devil, Jesus said that in John 8. Also in Acts 26 it says the Lord said to Paul that He was going to send him to open the eyes of sinners so they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God. Men are slaves to sin and slaves to Satan until they're born of God. And we know, verse 18, that no one who is born of God sins. So we come back to the same issue.

How do you tell if someone is a believer? You look at their life. And if there is in their life constant pattern of sin, virtually unbroken, you know that that slavery has not been eliminated. The one born of God does not continue in that same pattern.

Go back to chapter 3 and let me remind you of what He says, and you can sort of pick it up at verse 4. "Everyone who practices sin," we're talking about this constant unbroken pattern. "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness."

So, first of all, sin is incompatible with the Law of God. Sin is incompatible with the Law of God. When a person becomes a Christian, they say with Paul in Romans 7, "O how I love Your law," what David said in Psalm 119, "Your Law is holy, just and good. And there's something in me that loves the Law, that longs to obey the Law." The Christian does not, cannot habitually live in violation of God's law. Sin is incompatible with the Law of God. That's what verse 4 is saying.

Secondly, sin is incompatible with the work of Christ. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins. I mean, Jesus came, died, rose again to take away sin. So therefore if He's done His work in the heart of a person, then sin is to some degree taken away. Ongoing, unbroken pattern of sin no matter whether a person professed to believe, professed to be a Christian, had an experience, got baptized, or whatever, that's not how you judge someone's spiritual condition. You look at your life and if there is an ongoing pattern of sin in their life, if that's the dominant character of their life, they have not been born of God because sin is incompatible with the Law of God, it's incompatible with the work of Christ who appeared in order to take away sin. In fact, he goes on to say, verse 6, "No one who abides in Him sins and no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

He's not saying you never sin. He's talking here about the pattern. "Little children, let no one deceive you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." You look at the life. Again this isn't saying you never sin. Back in chapter 1 he said, verse 8, "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us." It isn't that we never sin, it is that the unbroken pattern of sin no longer exists.

And so, verse 1 of chapter 2, "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin. If any one sins, if the pattern of righteousness now established in the new birth is broken by sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...the sins of believers. Not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." So it isn't perfection we're talking about, it's direction. It's not the complete absence of sin we're talking about, it's the pattern of righteousness, it replaces the unbroken pattern of sin. The one who practices sin, verse 8, is of the devil. And the Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil.

So, both ways...verse 5, He appeared to take away sin and verse 8, He appeared to destroy the works of the devil which is sin. So sin is incompatible with the work of Christ. Sin, thirdly, is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. No one, verse 9 says, who is born of God, it is the Spirit who gives the new birth. We are born of the Spirit and no one born of God's Spirit practices sin. Why? His seed abides in Him. The new life, the righteous seed of life abides in him, he cannot sin because he's born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. It's that simple.

This is so important for us because if we're dealing with certainties here and we want to be certain about our spiritual condition, the question is not something about what did you do in the past, did you pray a prayer, did you do this or that. It is look at your life now and what is the pattern. If you have truly been converted, the power of sin has been broken.

Another way to look at that important truth, just a regripping of what we've studied in the past. Turn to the sixth chapter of Romans for a moment. Romans chapter 6, and we'll just pick it up at verse 17. He says, "Thanks be to God," Romans 6:17, "that though you were slaves of sin," that's the way to define it, you had one master, one dominant master and all you ever did was precisely what that master dictated. You were slaves of sin. "But thanks be to God, you became obedient from the heart internally to that form of teaching to which you were committed. And having been freed from sin, sin's dominion, sin's mastery as indicated in verse 14, having been freed from that you became slaves of righteousness." And in verse 19 he says, "I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." I'm trying to use a human analogy here about slavery to describe what's happened to you spiritually.

"There was a time," verse 19, "when you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness." It was just unbroken, uninterrupted lawlessness in impurity. "Now present your members as slaves to righteousness," 4:20, "When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regards to righteousness."

When you were slaves to sin, there was no righteousness there. And all you got out of that, in verse 21, was death. Verse 22, "You've now been set free from sin and enslaved to God." The outcome of that is eternal life...complete distinction...complete distinction.

It's described in chapter 7 in another analogy. Verse 2, and here's the analogy, "A married woman is bound by law to her husband while he's living. But if her husband dies, she's released from the law concerning the husband." If you're widowed or become a widower, you're no longer bound to the spouse who died. You're released from the obligation, the legal obligation concerning your spouse. "So then if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she should be called an adulterous. But if her husband dies, she's free from the law so that she's not an adulterous though she is joined to another man." You can go marry someone else.

And then he applies that analogy in verse 4, "Therefore, my brethren, you were made to die to the law, to the body of Christ that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit for God." It's as if your old spouse sin died and your new spouse is righteousness in Christ.

Verse 5 then goes on to say, "We were in the flesh and the sinful passions were aroused by the Law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." You could take the Law of God, put the Law of God into the life of an unconverted person and all the Law of God would do would arouse more passion, more sin and bear more fruit unto death because rebellion is the nature of the unconverted. And the more they know about the Law of God, the more they rebel against it. But verse 6 says, "Now it's as if we've died in Christ and we've been released from the obligation of the Law, having died to that by which we were bound so that we might serve in the newness of the Spirit, not the oldness of the letter." Again the analogy is very clear there. We have new life characterized by slavery to righteousness, obedience to the Law. Satan no longer has hold on us. Sin no longer is our master.

And with that thought, go back to John where we left in the fifth chapter there. "We know," verse 18, "that no one who is born of God sins, in the sense of the continual pattern so described, but he who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him."

It might help if we translated verse 18, "He who was begotten of God keeps him." That's whom? Who is the only begotten of God? Christ. We don't sin because we've been born again and given new life that is characterized by righteousness. Furthermore, we are kept from that old pattern by the very one born of God so that the evil one does not touch us, fasten on to us, lay hold of us, stronger than touch. Satan has no grip, no hold on us.

So we are certain...not only certain that we have eternal life, not only certain that we have answered prayer, we are certain that we have victory over sin. Satan can't hold us. We have died to that former

bondage. We now live with a new master and new life principle. And the one born of God keeps us and the evil one does not touch us. What a tremendous promise that is when you think about the fact that you can never fall back into that former life again, it can't happen.

Why? Look at this. "He who was born of God keeps him." This is the work of Christ who holds on to us, who keeps us. He keeps us from ever falling back into sin's dominion, ever falling back into Satan's kingdom. He can turn Satan loose in our lives like He did with Peter in Luke 22 and allowed Satan to go and sift Peter. And He said, "When it's all over and you're converted and you come out of it, you'll be able to strengthen the brethren." He can let Satan have that Job and know that Job's faith will not fail. He can send to the Apostle Paul a messenger from Satan, a thorn in the flesh, and now that in the midst of it all, Paul will only be humbled, which is good for Paul and good for the service which Paul renders to Christ. And that he will find spiritual power in his own weakness.

Jesus, of course, Himself in John 17, in that really amazing prayer, expresses in the first couple of verses this confidence, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Thy Son that thy Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind and to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life." Down in verse 6 He says, "Thou gavest Me them, Thine they were, Thou gavest them to Me, they've kept Thy Word." God's given to the Son those who believe, the Son receives them. The Son keeps them. John 6 says the same thing. "All that the Father gives shall come to Me. Whoever comes to Me, I'll never turn away but to receive him and raise him on the last day." Nobody falls through the proverbial cracks.

That's why Jude says, and you might look at the end of Jude, verse 24. This is a doxology, this is a tribute of praise to the Lord. "Now to Him who is able to keep you." We just read 1 John 5. "He who was begotten of God keeps him," that is the one born of God. And here's the same thing. "Now to Him who is able to keep you. He not only wills to do it, He is able to do it. He keeps you from stumbling and will make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy." And who is this? Verse 25, "The only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. And to Him be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen." He's the one committed to keeping us.

So we know that no one who is committed to God will fall back into the pattern of sin. What about if somebody does appear to be born of God? They're in the church, they're involved, but they fall back in an unbroken pattern of sin, later deny the faith? Chapter 2 verse 19, remember, we were there. "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. They went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not all of us."

If you have been born of God, you do not fall or live in a pattern of sin because the one begotten of God, the only begotten of God, Christ Himself, keeps you. And the evil one never again can lay hold on you. He can come after you but he can't succeed. He couldn't succeed with Job or Peter or Paul or

anyone else because the Lord Himself is able and willing to keep us.

We noted last time from Hebrews 6 also this same great emphasis where it tells us that we have security. Verse 19, "An anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil." It's the picture of having your soul and chain running to an anchor inside the veil in the heavenly Holy of Holies where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us. It's as if you're tied by an unbreakable chain to Christ right in the Holy of Holies in heaven and nothing can ever break that chain. It's a glorious, magnificent picture.

Preservation is as guaranteed as justification. When He justifies someone, He gives to them eternal life, He preserves them. Faithful, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, "Faithful is He who calls you and He also will bring it to pass." If He called you in the beginning, you'll be there at the end. It's just that simple. And there are many verses that say the same thing.

Second Timothy 4:18 comes to mind. "The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom." Isn't that a wonderful confidence? The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His glorious heaven. What a promise.

Now as I said earlier, there is going to be sin but it's not the unbroken pattern. Let me just kind of sum this matter up. I'm going to be kept if I'm a true believer, and so are you. Why? The Word of God promises it. "He that began a good work in you will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ." This life is eternal. The Word of God promises it. The power of God makes it possible. We were saved by His power. And if He could save us when we were enemies, He can keep us now that we're friends.

In Romans 5 chapter 5 and verse 10, that very important verse that basically says this by referring to the greater and then the lesser. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled we'll be saved by His life." In other words, if He can do the great work in saving us by His death, He can do a lesser work in keeping us by His ever living to make intercession for us.

So the Word of God secures us forever. The power of God secures us forever. And I think we could add, the purpose of God, that God predetermined before the foundation of the world who He would save, wrote their names down and He will bring all of them to glory. You could add as well, the prayer of Christ secures us. Again it's back in that seventeenth chapter of John where Jesus, I think it's verse 11, says, yes, "I'm no more in the world, yet they themselves are in the world. I come to Thee, holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me that they may be one, even as we are." Jesus says, "Father, keep them, keep them, keep them."

There was a little time in their brief window when Jesus was going to bearing sin, separated from God. He was the keeper of the redeemed but for that period of time He says, "Father, keep them till I

can come back and keep them Myself.”

The Word of God, the power of God, the purpose of God, the prayer of Christ, all of these things work to our perseverance. And you could even add our union with Christ. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” If we go, He goes because we're inextricably linked to Him.

And then you have, and I need to draw your attention to this, just for a brief moment. The eighth chapter of Romans and in the eighth chapter of Romans everything is pulled together to affirm our ultimate triumph over sin. Verse 31, Romans 8. “If God is for us, who is against us?” If this is God's determined plan, if this is what He says in His Word, if this is what He promises, if this is what He purposes, if this is what the Son prays for, if this is what He intercedes for, if this is the effect of His elective purpose, if this is the effect of the new birth, regeneration, if this is the effect of our union with Christ, if this is what God has determined and He is for us, then who could successfully be against us since there is no power equal to His?

And again, somewhat similar to Romans 5:10, “If He didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us,” if He would give His Son in death to save us, “how would He not also with Him freely give us everything.” In other words, if He would give up His Son to save us, the greater, wouldn't He do less to keep us? Of course.

You say, “Well somebody might bring a charge against us. Somebody might come to God, like Satan tried to do with Job, and convince God that we're not worthy.” Verse 33 says, “Who will bring a charge against God's elect?” God is the one who justifies. God already declared we were righteous, imputed the righteousness of Christ to us. There's no higher court. No indictment against us could stand. God has already declared us just. “Who is the one who would condemn us? Would Christ who died for us who was raised for us who is at the right hand of God interceding for us? Is there anything that could separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, anything?

No, verse 37, “And all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” And then he just sums it up in that great conclusion, “I am convinced neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing,” he's just scanning the universe of options. “Nothing could separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So this we're certain. We are certain we have eternal life. We are certain we have answered prayer and we are certain that we have victory over sin.

Fourthly, in the list of five, second in the list of three tonight, we know we belong to God...we know we belong to God. And this really says the same thing another way. Verse 19, “We know that we are of God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” There are two realms. There's the world

and there are the people of God. We are God's, the whole world belongs to Satan. We belong to God. He bought us with a price. We are His. We've really been His since He purposed to redeem us before the foundations of the world.

On the other hand, the whole world belongs to the evil one, *haponeros*, Satan. The world lies in the lap of the evil one, like a baby cradle to sleep in the arms of Satan. This is a very dramatic picture. We're not in the embrace of Satan, we're in the embrace of God. Two distinct realms and only two...the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And by that he means the whole human system. There's nothing in it, there's nothing about it that is not under Satan's control. Its economics, its politics, its religion, its education, its everything, its entertainment, its athletics, it's everything...everything. There are elements of the world that we can enjoy because of God's creation and we can see the image of God and we can see the creative glory of God manifest in the world. But the system that functions within His creation is a system that is completely contaminated. That's why chapter 2 verses 15 to 17, again remember we are reviewing, John says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life is not from the Father but is of the world. The world is passing away, also its lusts. On the other hand, the one who does the will of God abides forever."

We have eternal life. We have divine access to the throne of God. We have triumph over sin. We belong to God. That's opposite everything in the world around us. They do not have eternal life, they have no access to God through any prayer. God is not bound to hear a thing they ask for. They are dominated by evil and they belong to Satan. Clear distinctions. Be certain of this, you are God's. You are His beloved child to whom He has given life. John 1:12, "As many as received Him, Christ, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God." Well, so much more to say on that.

We know we have eternal life. We know we have answered prayer. We know we have victory over sin. We know we belong to God. One final thought, and we know that Christ is the true God. We know that Christ is the true God.

And he ends where he began. "He began what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of life and the life was manifest and we've seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

He starts by introducing Christ. That's chapter 1 verses 1 to 3. We saw Him, we heard Him, we touched Him. We saw the living, eternal life. We saw God the Father manifest in the Son. That's

where he begins. That's the first and great certainty that makes all other certainties possible. And so he ends where he began. We know this, of all things that we know, that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding in order that we might 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. And there's a great crystal logical statement there. This is the final certainty.

And because of all of that, he ends with, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols. Don't get sucked off by any other supposed god. Don't worship at any other shrine than the Son of God. We know that the Son of God has come, God in the form of man, God the Son is come," *heko*, present tense, to have come and to be present, He is here. Our faith is not theoretical, our faith is based on abiding reality, the Son of God has come, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, rose literally from the grave, ascended to the right hand of the Father, interceding for us and some day will come again.

"And we not only know the Son of God has come, but we know that He has given us understanding so that we might know Him who is true. And not only know Him, but we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ." The essence of what it means to be a Christian, to have understanding, to know Him who is true, the true and living God as revealed in Jesus Christ. And not just to know Him, but to be in Him who is true. And who is it? It is the true God and eternal life. All other gods are imposters and no one else possesses eternal life.

And John goes back to the heart of all Christian theology, back to the issue of genuineness. No one is a Christian who doesn't believe this. No one is a Christian who doesn't believe that God is revealed alone in His Son Jesus Christ, that He alone is the true God and eternal life. There is no salvation apart from Christ. Christ alone.

Back in chapter 4 verse 14, "We have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and He in God." That's exclusivity.

Down in chapter 5 verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." There isn't any other way to be born of God except to believe that Jesus is the Christ. Back in chapter 4, "Don't believe every spirit, tests the spirits. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." That's why no people in other religions will ever be in heaven because only those who confess Jesus are born again and know God. There is no other way.

Chapter 2 verse 23, "Whoever denies the Son doesn't have the Father. The one who confesses the Son has the Father also." Backing up to verse 22, "Who is the liar? The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."

So John comes back to what we've been talking about, the doctrinal argument, Christology. And here he says, here's the climactic certainty, "We know that the Son of God has come into the world, we've been given understanding to know Him who is true, to be in Him who is true." And he uses this word "true" a couple of times here, actually three times in that one verse, because it's essential that people understand the truth as over against the lies of Satan. We know Him who is true. We are in Him who is true. This is the true God. Do you get the picture that he's trying to emphasize true, *alethinos*? You could translate it real, authentic. And because of that, verse 21, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols, don't allow anything apart from Christ to influence you." Since you know the true God, stay away from idols.

Paul told the Corinthians the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10, he said you cannot come to the table of the Lord and then go to the table of idols, the table of demons. You can't do that. John's ministry was associated with Ephesus. Ephesus was the center of idolatry, massive amounts of idolatry occurred there...the temple of Artemis...Diana, 420 feet by 250 feet, hundreds of people lived off the temple trade, priests, eunuchs, temple wardens, prostitutes, etc., etc., etc. You remember the guild of the silversmiths who made the idols, book of Acts gives the story in chapter 19, you remember how rampant idolatry was in that ancient world and sometimes Christians could drift off into those kinds of things. So he ends by saying, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

You're not going to fall back into that because you're being kept by the one who is born of God. But don't tamper with that. And so, John's summary ends. We know we have eternal life. We know along the way to get to our eternal life we have answered prayer. We know we have victory over sin. We know we belong to God. And we know Jesus Christ is the one true God and eternal life. And if we know those things to be true, it's evidence that we belong to God.

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