

Safe Until He Comes

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Bible Verse: 1 John 2:24-28
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Last time we looked at an extended passage, verses 12 through 23 of 1 John 2 and we saw that there was a word of encouragement in that text in verses 12 to 14, John writing to believers and encouraging them with his inspired testimony that he knew that they were in the faith, and we see that the nature of true salvation and the nature and the intention of God for us is that we would know that we are truly saved. Chapter 5, verse 13, "I've written these things so that you would know that you have eternal life." Now there are many voices in the broadly called Christian church that would deny the reality of the assurance of salvation, those that say you can't know until you die whether you're going to heaven or not, others saying you may be saved now but you could sin in such a way that you would lose your salvation and God would take it away from you, and those frightening thoughts, those very unsettling thoughts can do nothing but take away confidence in a soul and replace it with fear and uncertainty about where do I really stand with God, and those voices that, you know, are prominent elsewhere, again in the church very broadly speaking, leave people in a condition where they don't really know if they're saved or not. What we want to see here from 1 John is that God wants you to know, he intends for you to know and it's part of the blessing of salvation that you would know that you have eternal life and therefore your heart can be at a settled peace and that there can be a serenity that fills your life and guides the way that you respond to all of life and, you know, when you and I eventually approach death whether it comes suddenly or over a long period of time, we can approach those final moments of life with an utter sense of confidence that the Lord who saved us in the past is going to complete what he began in us and usher us safely into heaven. Paul said, "For me to be absent from the flesh is to be at home in the Lord." And all of those things are grounded in the fact that we can know that we have salvation and that salvation is permanent, it is eternal life and it is life once given that God does not take back. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable, the Bible says, and so when he gives us salvation, he's given it to us forever and he wants us to know that.

So there's this great word of encouragement in verses 12 to 14. Flowing from that is a commitment to holiness that God works in the hearts of the truly redeemed and that we are to act upon. John says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world." These things are passing. These things are from the devil and so we need to resist and to overcome the remaining sin in our lives so that we would seek after holiness that is fitting in response to this great gift that God has given us. So he gives us salvation, he wants us

to know what it is like and we are then to work out our salvation with fear and trembling in the words of Philippians 2. We know that we're saved, we're saved forever and as a result of that we apply ourselves to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved us in the first place. So we confess sin, we repent of sin, we seek to grow in the knowledge of his word, to grow in personal holiness all the while understanding that it's the Spirit of God who is working these things in us and through us and accomplishing this great work of perfecting our salvation.

Then we saw in the last section there, verses 18 through 23, it was a word of examination, a word giving us discernment on how to tell true teachers from false teachers, and central in that is the nature of our confession of Jesus Christ; that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, that he is fully equal with the Father, sharing the same essence that the Father does, yet he came to earth, took on our humanity in order to give his life as a sacrifice for our sins, and raised from the dead, exalted on high, he's now Lord over all and the Gospel is proclaimed to sinners just like you and me, that we are to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to find eternal life and to find the forgiveness of our sins. People, teachers who deny the deity of Christ or teach other manner of false doctrine about him, they destroy the entire possibility of salvation because they're not holding out the true Savior to those who hear, and so it's important for us to have discernment and to examine what it is that we confess and what it is that we believe about the Lord Jesus Christ.

I had someone tell me many years ago who does not see the things of Christ in the same way that we do here at Truth Community Church, and this person told me, he said, "I can't imagine that God would send me to hell because I have a wrong opinion about Jesus." Well, I had the opportunity to say, "Well, that's exactly what God's going to do. You don't get to make up your own Jesus. You have to believe in the true Jesus to have a true salvation, otherwise you are still in your sins. A false Christ does not truly deliver you from your sins and the guilt and judgment that is upon you." So, yes, what we believe about Christ is the most important aspect of who we are because it is the true Christ alone that saves us. There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved and that name of Jesus is an expression of everything that he is, fully God, fully man in one person. So, yes, we need to believe in the true Christ and without that we are still in our sins.

With that little bit of review we can move into tonight's text. John is writing because these false teachers were trying to draw the believers away. We saw that last time, and even in the text that we see here this evening, that right at the core of what John says is this concern for the effect of false teachers upon the true flock of God. Look at verse 26 with me where he says, "These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you." There was this repeated effort that they were making to draw believers out of the church. The false teachers from verse 19 we saw, they had left, they had gone out on their own, they had abandoned the fellowship with true believers thereby showing that they were never saved to begin with, and now, as it were, they were looking back into the true church and doing a dog whistle trying to whistle people to follow them out of the church themselves. And so John's writing to protect the readers of his letter

from that kind of dangerous, satanic, antichrist influence being expressed through human teachers.

So in the midst of this battle, the question then becomes: well, how is it that ordinary believers like you and I, how are we going to thrive in such a hostile spiritual environment when discernment is so difficult and tricky at times, for lack of a better word, discernment is difficult, these false teachers are subtle, it says in 2 Corinthians 11 that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light, for all the world it looks like it's the truth thing when actually it's just a satanic counterfeit? Jesus spoke about wolves who come to you in sheep's clothing and thereby look to destroy and devour the flock. Do you see, my friends, how very important this is? It is so very critical for us to know what the truth is, to be able to recognize false teachers and to turn away from them so that we would be safe at the coming of Christ. And you know, one of the marks, Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are truly disciples of Mine," John 8:31 and 32. Well, it's continuing in the truth of Christ that is a mark of a true Christian and the one who leaves and abandons that shows that they were never saved in the first place and Scripture is filled with warnings about people who are tares among the wheat, people who believe for a time and then fall away and thereby show that they were never saved. You know, all of this that I've said for these opening, you know, few minutes is enough to recognize that the stakes are very very high here, it's very easy to go astray, and it leaves us wondering, it leaves us asking the question, "Well, how then do I, how do I pursue my perseverance in a way that would promote my spiritual safety? What do I do?" Well, in these five verses that I read earlier, we're going to see three principles that you can look to and find where spiritual security is available for you. The wonderful thing about this is that I'm not, for those of you that have followed our teaching for any period of time at all, I'm not going to tell you anything new, there's not anything secret here, these are the things that are open and available to every true Christian.

You know, one thing that I'll say just as a very brief tangent. My friends, the letter of Jude says that the true faith has been handed once for all to the saints, and we are preaching, we are endeavoring to preach the same truth that has been preached for the last 500 years since the time of the Reformation which was a recovery of the true Gospel as it was first given to the apostles. So one of the things that you want to be careful about is to beware of someone who comes to you proclaiming that they have some kind of new teaching, after 2,000 years they alone have found and discovered the truth about justification, or the church has gotten it all wrong, and Joseph Smith and the Mormons, you know, after 1,800 years saying God came to him in order to recover the truth once for all and to give him new revelation to correct everything that had gone wrong. Oh, my friends, that's not the way to go. When you start to hear somebody saying, "I've got, I found something that everybody has missed," that's a sure indication that you should turn and walk away and not let that person have any influence on you. So all of that simply to say, that little tangent to say this, that what we are about see from this text is familiar and the very familiarity of it gives us a sense of confidence that this is the true path that God has given us to walk on.

So let's look at this first thing. How are we going to know, how are we going to avoid the work of deceivers that are so constantly at work under their demonically inspired actions? How are we going to discern the truth so that we can walk in it and enjoy the joy, the holiness and assurance that God has for us? Well, point 1, you turn to Scripture. You turn to Scripture. You see, faithfulness to Scripture is a hallmark of the true Christian.

Look at verse 24 with me. John says, "As for you," and he's drawing a contrast with those who deny Christ in verse 23. Look at it there so you can pick up the contrast. "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." So he's addressed false teachers and now he says, "As for you, here's what you need to do." He's talking, remember he's talking to true Christians here to the little children, to the fathers, to the young man who he knows have eternal life. He says, "Here's what you are to do as a true Christian." Look at it there with me in verse 24, "let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." The teaching which they heard from the beginning, the true Gospel, that is what they are to cling to. That apostolic message that they had heard from the Apostle John, that was what they were to cling to, not follow after other teachers who were introducing new things and contradicting what John had told them all along. So John as a representative of the apostolic circle says, "I came to you with apostolic teaching. You heard that from the very beginning of my ministry in your midst. This is what you've heard from the true apostles of Jesus Christ." He says, "What you are to do, then, as little children who are truly in Christ, you are to continue in that teaching which you heard from the beginning."

So, yes, there are antichrists out there, there are false teachers, there are false prophets, but you who have been delivered into the truth by the saving work of Jesus Christ applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the true Gospel, you stay with what you have known. Don't be itching after new things. Don't be looking to have your ears tickled with every new thing that comes along. The mark of a true Christian is faithfulness to the Scriptures that delivered them in the first place. So while the antichrists go after different things, you stick with that apostolic message. You see, my friend, the path of true Christian discipleship goes straight through the word of God. It does not bypass it to find other things. It does not add new revelation from all of the different cults that have come and gone and are still with us today in many cases. It's not things that are added to the Scripture that open us up to a secret knowledge, a secret knowledge where the will of God is really found. No, no, it's simple, it's straightforward, my beloved, it's right here in the 66 books of the English Bible. For those of us that speak English, it's right here in the four corners of this great book, this book above all books, this book of 66 books, it is right there that we find the revelation of God and stay with it. 2 Timothy 3, all Scripture inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. Well, don't you see that if you're equipped for every good work, you don't need anything in addition to it, anything beside it? Don't you see that Scripture says in Psalm 19 the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul? So we don't need new revelation from subsequent teachers, we just need to focus on what we have received from the apostles of Jesus Christ, and so that tells us where our foundation is, it tells us what will build us up and edify us. It's all coming from the pure milk of the word

of God and that's why the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2 said to Christians, he said as newborn babes long for the pure milk of the word.

So one of the ways, my friend, that you can grow in your salvation whether you're a new young believer, you know, maybe you're a young woman just entering into your teen years and you're fresh with the knowledge that Christ has saved you. Well, I want to tell you that the word of God is the means that he will use to keep you for the next 60 years of your life, and what a blessing for you to have found this so early in your life. Maybe you're a mature seasoned saint and you've been around for a few decades and you're established and you're mature and you're not tempted away by error. Well, even for you, my friend, my respected esteemed friend, even for you, even for you the word of God is still your path forward, it's also what you heard in the beginning. Let that abide in you. In other words, continue in it. Stay with the program because it is the word of God that he uses to ensure our well-being and our protection through the entirety of our Christian lives. And there are so many things that would make us esteem and revere the word of God, it is God's word, after all, it's survived for thousands of years, men have shed their blood over it, we've received Scripture, as it were, with bloodstained pages, a man like Patrick Hamilton who was the first martyr in Scotland, I hope to preach on him one day soon, and others like him that rather than deny the word of God, rather than deny the true Gospel, they chose instead to endure miserable horrible executions because they wouldn't deny this truth. You know, that's how precious this is and that's the heritage that we have received here in the 21st century. Well, in addition to all of those things that make the word of God wonderful, we find that it's also the word of God that sustains us and directs us and provides the guardrail, so to speak, for our spiritual lives that ensures our security all the way through until we go to heaven. Do you see how precious God's word is? Do you see why it should be the most precious book of all to the affections of your heart? John says in order to avoid the deceivers, as for you, let what you've heard from the beginning abide in you, the apostolic message, the truth as we've received it from the apostles of Jesus Christ.

So for those who abide like that there's all kinds of promises that are set forth for us here. Look at verse 24, he says, "If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." You will participate in the life of God himself. You will fellowship with the very life of God. This is what John said at the very opening of his book in chapter 1, verse 3. Look at that with me. He said, "What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also." Again, this apostolic word that was given to them, this apostolic word that he's proclaiming and what is the outcome of it? What is the result of it? "So that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." John says, "I want you to have an experiential participation in the life of God." Which, you know, God gives us of his very life when he saves us. The Holy Spirit himself comes to indwell us. What John is saying in this letter is that, "I want you to know that to the full. I want you to live this out. It's the place of joy. It's the place of holiness. It's the place of assurance." And as you abide in the Scripture, my friend, that's what God promises to you is that your earthly life would be marked by the supremacy of this spiritual life that is the true birthright of every true

Christian and the means by which that is sustained in us is through the very word of God himself.

You know, if I could just say a word to those of you that are maybe feeling a little spiritually dry, maybe you're struggling, you know, maybe you've just really gotten cold and indifferent. That happens sometimes. Well, it's quite possible if not quite likely that if you looked back at your life over the recent weeks and months, wouldn't you find, I'm sure some of you if not most of you in that condition, you would find that you've strayed away from the word of God. It's not a regular part of your life, let alone a daily part of your life. You might show up on Sunday when we were meeting, you might show up on Sundays but, you know, your love for the word of God, you've let it grow cold. Well, let me invite you back to the word of God and as a believer, you know, you don't have to stay in that stale condition, the word of God is ever living, ever fresh, ever flowing with its clear healthy water to refresh your soul. And you know, over the years, you know, as I've kind of, you know, gone through my own spiritual ups and downs, you know, when I found myself in those dry places, to come back to God's word, do you know what I found every time without exception is that God was swift to bless my soul again as I came back to God's word and started reading it with a fresh hunger, with that fresh desire that we alluded to from Peter. That's what's available to you in your stale condition, just come back to the word of God. Make it a priority. Open it up tonight before you go to bed. Start with the Gospel of John or start with a Psalm, a short one like Psalm 100 and just let God minister to you through his word, and in that way resume your abiding in Christ by abiding in his word, and the promise that God gives is that you'll share in that knowledge of the fellowship, the participation in his very life.

John goes on and expands the promise even further when he says there in verse 25, he says, "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." And it's important for us to understand what is actually promised to us in Scripture. What exactly is the promise of the Christian life? Well, we've said these things in so many different ways so many times but it bears repetition yet again. We need to build our hope on what God has actually said to us in his word rather than what we wish he had said to us in our carnal preferences, the unsanctified aspects of our thinking. You know, God has not promised to us earthly prosperity. He has not promised personal fulfillment to us. It is not the salvation of your loved ones that God has even promised to you. None of those things are guaranteed to us as individual believers. We may be fulfilled in life, that would be wonderful. We may experience material blessings at the hand of God. We may see our loved ones come to Christ but those are not central to the promise. There are many Christians who go through life and those aspects of existence are rather foreign to them. I know some of you grieve over your loved ones who are not in Christ and you're almost at the edge of despair wondering if they ever will after all these decades, come to Christ as you continue to pray for them. Well, let's step away from those external aspects of life and external aspects of reality and remember what it is that God has promised to us. He's promised here it says in verse 25, what he's promised to us is eternal life. Well, your earthly desires may not come to pass but the promise is eternal life and that's independent of those earthly desires.

God promises to us spiritual blessings in Christ. To speak of eternal life is to speak of the knowledge of God, to know the living God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, to know the forgiveness of your sins and to have the security that it will go well for you on judgment day. It's the hope of future glory, the promise that one day we will see Christ face-to-face and we will be like him because we will see him as he is, and in the meantime while we wait, to know this one of superlative excellence as it's set forth in the book of Hebrews, he who is greater than angels, greater than Old Testament priests who gave a sacrifice that was greater than the Old Testament sacrifices, and surpassing in every possible dimension that you could ever think of, you can know this Christ and know him personally and you can know that you belong to him, and you can know that he loves you, you can know that he gave himself up for you on the cross of Calvary, and as we grow in that which is known as Reform doctrine, we understand that Christ died for us particularly. My Christian friend, he died for you by name. There's a sense in which I can't fully explain this or understand it but there's a sense in which as he bore our sins on the cross, somehow in the infinity of his person he was thinking of us, he was considering us because he was dying as a direct substitute for our sins.

Well, that's magnificent. That is magnificent. That is of such a high, exalted, noble character to know that one of such majestic worth as Jesus Christ thought of us in his darkest hour on the cross and as he bore the wrath of God, he bore it for you, my Christian friend. He bore it for me. And that wonder of knowledge in Christ is promised to us by God for those that belong to him, those that are in his family. And you see, and that's more than enough, my friend. I say it gently but I say it truly, that's more than enough to compensate for every earthly loss or every earthly disappointment that we could ever have. We lose relationships, they kind of come and go, we lose jobs, we lose our prosperity, we lose our health, loved ones spurn us, friends despise us, forsake us, but through it all underlying that there is something greater, something more wonderful, something more precious than anything that humans could give to us, it's this knowledge of Christ and that he has loved us and considered our soul and gave himself that he might bring us to himself, that we would be with him at that great feast in the celebration of the bridegroom as he welcomes his bride into heaven, and you have a place there reserved for you in heaven, Peter says. That is what's been promised to us, all of those magnificent riches in Christ, and so when we understand what's promised to us, we understand what it is that we pursue, it shapes our affections and we're not shaken by the fact that life here on earth doesn't go quite the way that we had hoped or expected, those things come and go, we are wrapped up in a wonderful abiding security in Christ and the knowledge that he loves us, and this is splendor, this is eternal life to have that as our own personal possession in our hearts.

So I have to ask you, you know, do you know Christ like that, my friend, or is that foreign to you? Have you had maybe mistaken ideas of what it meant to be a Christian and you were merely looking for Jesus to kind of smooth out the bumps in your life and to just help you when problems come up? Well, I've got blessed news for you, Christ is calling you out of that modern false Gospel, calling you out of that, calling you to repent and put your faith in him and to enter into this fellowship of life, enter into this wonder of eternal life that far surpasses those things that have been sold to you. You were sold a

counterfeit version of Christianity by people who maybe meant well but didn't understand or didn't tell you the truth about it all. Well, tonight Christ comes and calls you to himself, to this manner of eternal life of which we've been speaking. It's a promise that he keeps to everyone who comes to him in repentant faith. Wouldn't it be great if tonight was the day of your salvation? Look at these Scriptures, consider them well and ask the Spirit of God to do a work in your heart that you cannot accomplish on your own.

All of these things we see as we turn to Scripture and so in the midst of these promises John says these words that we already looked at in verse 26. He's been writing about the protective influence of apostolic teaching which now in the 21st century, we understand that we find it in the written word of God, in the Bible, and now he's talked about the promise of fellowship, the promise of eternal life, and he clarifies what he's doing, he says, "These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. You know what false teachers do if you up and follow them? They may be exposing the fact that you were never a true Christian for one thing, if they entice you away from the truth, they are enticing you away from this fellowship with God, they are enticing you away from this knowledge of eternal life of which we have been speaking." Well, my friend, what that means is these spiritual realities should be so precious to you that you immediately recognize that a false teacher would rob you of those most sacred jewels, they would rob you of those most sacred possessions that you have, these spiritual riches in Christ. So John says, "I'm writing concerning those who are trying to deceive you. If you follow after them, you are losing your possession of these things." I don't mean that in the sense of losing your salvation, simply that false teaching clouds the knowledge of God and the knowledge of eternal life and the deeper you go into it, the more that that, you lose that experience and maybe it's even been exposing to you that you're not really even saved because, again as Jesus said, "If you abide in My teaching, you are truly disciples of Mine."

So that means that we need to be really careful when new teachers come to us, especially if they're bringing doctrine that's foreign to your ears. Oh, time out. Don't go after that kind of stuff. There are those who want to deceive you, who want to bring you into enslavement to their own twisted versions of what truth is which is no truth at all. Understand that John writes and says, "In the Scripture, in apostolic teaching you find your protection against those who are trying to take those precious things away from you." So how can you thrive in an environment like this? You turn to Scripture and you find that which protects you.

So that's the first point for this evening. Secondly what we find as we continue in this passage is this, is that you trust the Spirit. You trust the Spirit. You turn to Scripture and then you trust the Spirit of God and John spells this out in verse 27. Look at it there with me, he says, "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." That's a pretty long verse, isn't it, and as Scripture sometimes is, it's kind of a complex sentence but we'll just break it down piece by piece and let God help us here. The anointing in this verse is a reference to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer.

That's what John is saying, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you." You, my Christian friend, you received the Holy Spirit the moment that you believed. "If any man does not have the Spirit of God, he does not belong to Christ," Romans 8 teaches us. So you received the Holy Spirit when you believed and the Holy Spirit came into your life in one aspect of it is a down payment that the fullness of the gift of salvation would one day be delivered to you, the Holy Spirit is a down payment on greater things to come, but there's more to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life than just that. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell you in order to teach you, to be your teacher par excellence, you could say, the indwelling teacher who guides you into the truth. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help you understand the word of God, to give you understanding that goes beyond your natural ability, that goes beyond even the limits of human education as he takes the word of God, brings it to your mind and expands your understanding of it. What John is saying is abide in the Spirit. Let that anointing which you received from him continue to abide in you.

And one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit, my friend, is this, these are blessed truths and blessed truths in an unseen realm, the Spirit of God indwells us to help defend us against deception. Look, the Spirit of God led you to Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God alone was the power that enabled you to believe. He supernaturally took away your heart of stone and instilled in you a heart of flesh that was tender to the word of God and able and willing to believe and to repent and believe in Christ. The Spirit of God did that for you. You didn't do that to yourself. Well, understand this, my friend, the Spirit – this is so sweet, this is so so sweet and so far superior to the false claims of charismatic theology that tie up the work of the Holy Spirit in gimmicks and false gifts. Here's the true ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God guided you to Christ, now that you are in Christ and the Spirit of God indwells you, he keeps you in Christ. He protects you. He preserves you and his power cannot fail. This is very very comforting. Yes, God calls you and me to work out our salvation, we are called and commanded to persevere in the faith, but right alongside that command is the statement in Philippians 2 that it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Your efforts at pursuing sanctification are energized by the Holy Spirit and so as you go to the word of God in the context of what's being said here, as you go to the word of God, the Spirit of God gives you discernment, he gives you understanding, he helps you to distinguish what is true from what is false.

Now that doesn't happen all in a moment. Part of the way that the Spirit of God does that is through the sustained study of the word of God over the course of time. Let me remind you of 2 Timothy 2:15 where it says this, we just turn back a few pages in your Bible to 2 Timothy 2:15 where it says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." You see, the Spirit of God works through our applied diligence to the word of God, our commitment to understand it well and to understand it accurately. We don't engage in the study of the word of God as Christians by ourselves, left to our own resources and left to our own intellect. The indwelling Spirit is given to help us understand these things. 1 Corinthians 2 is a passage that we need to see in this context. 1 Corinthians 2:12 and 13 where it says this, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who

is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." And so we see the Spirit of God indwelling true believers and having as one of his primary ministries to us to illumine our minds to Scripture to help us understand and to grow in the truth.

So as we turn to Scripture as we saw in point 1, we understand in point 2 that we can trust the ministry of the Holy Spirit to guide us to that which is really true, and as he guides us to that which is really true, he defends us from those who are trying to deceive us. And so, yes, we come with diligence to the word of God but we come in faith, we come by faith trusting that the Spirit that God has given us will use his word and help us understand it so that we grow in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. It's wonderful truth. This is part of what God has given to us and that's why we are able and that's why we can be confident that we can overcome false teachers when it's all said and done because the Spirit of God is given to us to help us achieve precisely that victory in Christ. So it's just wonderful wonderful truth. False teachers may undermine your confidence, they may shake you for a while but in the end their efforts to mislead Christians are doomed to failure because the Spirit of God is given to us to keep us in the truth.

And do you know what else that means? Kind of looking at it from a human perspective, those of you that have come out of false teaching, you've come out of false churches either from your childhood or more recently and you've turned your back on those who were misleading you, let me tell you something really wonderful, something tremendously encouraging: the fact that you turned away from those false teachers is a sure mark of the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. The fact that you could not tolerate falsehood and that you went out looking for truth and pursuing truth as is found in Jesus Christ, truth as it's found in the Scripture, that's a mark of the work of the Spirit of God that is far superlative to the false gift of tongues or false gifts of healings or false prophecies that are, you know, that are no true prophecies at all. Your desire for truth and your understanding of truth is a sure mark of the work of the Holy Spirit whose given to us for the ability that we might know the things that God has freely given to us in his word.

So this is wonderful, encouraging, seeing what the mark of the work of the Spirit of God is, and the point here in verse 27 is that you can trust the Spirit to continue that work that he has begun in you. You know, that's the language of Philippians 1:6, isn't it, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Well, the certainty that that work will be perfected is the fact that God has put his Spirit in us for precisely that purpose. Now what that means is that the Holy Spirit does not just, is not just a passive resident in our lives, he has an active ministry to direct us and to keep us and to teach us, to protect us from fatal error.

Now, as John goes on, he makes a statement that is easily misunderstood. Look at verse 27 with me, he says, "the anointing which you received from Him abides in you," and therefore is protection against those who are trying to deceive you found in verse 26. Then he goes on and he makes this statement, he says, "and you have no need for anyone

to teach you." Well, I've had people tell me, "See, I don't need a pastor. I don't need any teachers. I have the Holy Spirit and that's all that I need. The Spirit teaches me and that's that," and that kind of settles them into their self-satisfied approach to spiritual life. Well, maybe they're a Christian, maybe they're not, I don't need to speculate on that especially in such a general reference as I'm making right now, but here's what you need to understand about this and follow me closely so that you're not misled on this: John is not dismissing the role of teachers in the church. That is not what he is doing here and if you think for just a moment just in the context of what's being said here, you can see why that must be the case. What is John the apostle doing as he writes this letter? What's he doing? He's teaching them. John is teaching them, why? Because they need the instruction in apostolic doctrine. What he's talking about here is not the role of legitimate teachers in the church, rather what he's telling them is this, is that you don't need false teachers who come to you with so-called new revelation in order to find the true knowledge of God. No, you don't need teachers like that because you already have what you are to do is to abide in the teaching that you heard from the beginning. Trust the Scripture. Trust the Spirit of God that it's at work in you. He's refuting and taking away the role that false teachers were trying to exercise in the life of these believers as they whistled like they were whistling for dogs to come after them. John's saying you don't need that.

Let me give you a parallel passage of Scripture to help you understand that this is not a proof text for rejecting all teachers in your life. In Ephesians 4, turn over there with me, in Ephesians 4 in verse 11 it says that God "gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." God gives pastors and teachers to local churches throughout the world in order to build them up in doctrine. John is not contradicting that in what he's saying here at all, he's speaking in the context of false teachers trying to bring new theories, new revelation. He says, "You don't need that. You have everything that you need in the Scriptures, in Christ, in the Spirit. You have everything you need, you don't need to go beyond what you heard from the beginning, rather you simply need to abide in it and you will have everything that God has appointed for you for your spiritual growth, for your sanctification, for your joy, for your holiness, for your assurance." So we don't need Ellen G. White. We don't need the book of Mormon. We don't need Catholic tradition. We don't need charismatic prophecies. I could go on and on but I won't. We have the word of God, we have the Spirit of God indwelling us, and that's what we can abide in and know that we are growing and heading toward the goal that God has appointed for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. So what you beware of is not teachers of the Bible but teachers who come bringing things beyond the Bible. That's what you don't need and that's what John is trying to protect his readers from.

So here's the thing, beloved, and I feel really animated about this, what I'm about to say, but I'm going to control my emotions in saying it. Beloved, you must understand this, you must understand that God loves his people and God is not hiding things from his people. He is not hiding the Holy Spirit so that only some people get him in a second blessing, and he's not hiding his truth and giving it only to a select few who are the dispensers and the gatekeepers of truth. No, God loves us and therefore God is not hiding his truth from

his people. He has made it known, he has made it available in his word and you can turn to the Scripture and trust the Spirit of God as a Christian and realize that you have everything that is necessary for life and godliness found within the pages of this most blessed book. So the Spirit guides you – watch this – the Spirit guides you not apart from the word of God. Oh, this is so important. I did a series of 10 or 11 messages on the charismatic movement because this very point is so important. The Spirit of God does not guide you apart from the word of God, he guides you through the word of God. He's given to help you understand the word of God and it is that trusting in the Spirit's work through the word of God that is the call of God upon your life so that at the end of verse 27 we see this, "as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." You see, as we turn to Scripture, as we trust the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God is working in us to keep us abiding in Christ. And so it's a reality that is being described here, this is what the Spirit of God does, there is also an aspect of an imperative, there is also an aspect of command here that this is what you are to do, my Christian friend, my brother or sister in Christ, you are to turn to Scripture and trust the Holy Spirit as you do and the result of that process is the long-term outcome that you will abide in Christ and arrive safe at the end of your life and enter into heaven without fail and without fear. What a blessing we have from God in these things.

So as we continue on, what we see this ministry of the Spirit in your heart, we now come to the third and final point of tonight's text and it's this, it's turn to the Second Coming. Turn to the Second Coming. We trust the Scripture or we turn to the Scripture, we trust the Spirit of God and we turn to the Second Coming by which I mean we set our hope on the coming return of Jesus Christ. We see this in verse 28 as John kind of summarizes things for us here. He says, "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." Jesus Christ is going to appear. Jesus Christ is coming again and what John says is he lifts them from the immediate situation and points them to that which was still future, and it is still future to us. Jesus Christ is coming again and when he comes, we want to be found by him blameless. When he comes and he could come at any time, we want to be found doing the things, believing the things, being the person that would be pleasing to him at his arrival. Can you imagine if Christ returned in this next hour and it was at that time that you were pursuing sin or you were vile or you were profane or you were doing other things to defile yourself and all of a sudden Christ appears? That would be awful, wouldn't it? "O Lord, I'm ashamed that You found me doing that when You came." No, this motivation of realizing that Christ is coming again is a true motivation to holiness in our lives. We want to be holy because our God is holy. We want to be holy because Christ is coming again and we want to do everything in our human ability, our human power to be found pleasing by him if and when he does.

So John says, look at it again in verse 28, little children, abide in him, abide in him by turning to Scripture, abide in him by trusting in the Spirit so that you will experience this result, when Christ appears you can have confidence. When he comes, as it were, you can run to him and know that you are going to be found blameless in his sight rather than shrinking away in shame because you had been unfaithful during the course of your life. So John places the coming of Jesus as the ground of their hope and this is the conclusion

to the passage. God is at work in us. Let me back up and state it this way. My Christian friend, God saved you in the past, God is saving you now in that he is keeping you and one day God will save you and deliver you fully into heaven. You are completely saved, you are being saved from sin as you go through life and you will enter into the fullness of that salvation at a time yet to come. So there is just this telescopic expansion of the reality of salvation. We are fully justified now. We will most certainly go to heaven, but God is continuing his work in sanctification in our lives so that we will be delivered into that ultimate time of glorification when we are with him in heaven.

So what John is saying here is that God is at work in us and the reality and the understanding of that work does not make us passive, it does not make us indifferent to holiness, rather the fullness of everything that we have seen tonight motivates us and encourages us to pursue greater Christ-likeness in our lives. So for now, Jesus is hidden from our sight, we don't see him physically, but as the Scripture says here in verse 28, he's going to appear, he's going to be made manifest, we will see him face-to-face and he is going to return for us. So remembering that coming of Christ becomes a sure motivation to holiness as we remember that wonderful promise of Jesus in John 14:3 when he said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will receive you to Myself so that where I am there you may be also." So here in this passage of Scripture, John wants us to be confident as Christians that Christ is coming for us as well and that Christ has saved us and that when he appears, you and I as believers in Christ, we will be safe, we will be confident. When Christ appears, we'll, as it were, we'll run to him. We won't be calling for the rocks to fall upon us to hide us from his presence as the wicked will be. This will be the consummation of every hope that we have ever had.

So my friend, I must only ask you this: will you be safe when Jesus comes again? Well, there are spiritual responsibilities for you now. Turn to Scripture, trust the Spirit and turn to the Second Coming of Christ. As you do those things, you'll find the Spirit of God bringing to a fullness of expression in your mind that Christ keeps his own, that Christ will receive you when he returns and do you know what the effect of that will be as that becomes the more increasing possession of your spiritual life? You'll grow in joy. You'll grow in holiness. You'll grow in assurance. That's my prayer for you as we close tonight.

Let's pray together.

Father, I simply thank You for the clarity of Your word. How we love our Lord Jesus and how we ask You to continue the work that the Spirit of God has begun in us. Give us understanding in Your word, help us yield to the fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit that we might bring forth His fruit in our lives and, Father, we ask You to keep us safe until the Second Coming of Christ, and I pray for each one under the sound of my voice, Father, that when Christ appears each one might have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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