

Ministry From 1 John 5

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the test of doctrine, the test of love, and the test of obedience in determining whether a person is truly born again.

Duration: 52:47

Scripture: Proverbs 25:2, Matthew 6:33, 1 John 5:10-13, 1 John 5:21

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a visit to a movie lot and compares the façade of the western village to the superficiality of the world. He emphasizes the importance of faith in seeing beyond the glitter and finding something real in the Lord Jesus Christ. The speaker then discusses the witness of men and how we trust in them, using the example of writing a check. He highlights the significance of receiving the witness of God, which is even greater. The sermon concludes by stating that this chapter of the Bible provides clear guidance on salvation and how to know if one is saved, emphasizing the simplicity of the gospel message. The speaker ends with a prayer for those who are still outside of Christ, urging them to come in repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Transcript

All the mothers here to stand so that we can give them, really, some applause, appreciation for all that they do. All the mothers, please stand. Good.

Very good. First John, Chapter 5. First John, Chapter 5. And I think I'll read the whole chapter, and this will be the last. We'll be finishing the book today, Lord willing.

That doesn't mean we've exhausted it. First John, 5, verse 1. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves him who begot also loves him who is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and by blood, Jesus Christ.

Not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three who bear witness in heaven.

Now, the words beginning in heaven down to on earth in the next verse are really not found in any of the early manuscripts of the Bible. There are three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three agree as one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.

This is the witness of God which he has testified of his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son.

And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Now, this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and he will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.

All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death. We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him who is true, and we are in him who is true. In his Son, Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Amen. This is an interesting chapter. If you were marooned on a desert island, and you just had a piece of paper with this one chapter on it, you would have enough information so that you would know how to be saved eternally, how that you might be positive of spending eternity with God in heaven, and you would have information to know whether you were saved or not.

Not bad for a single chapter of the Word of God. In other words, this chapter clearly states the way of salvation and how a person can know that he's saved. And it's written very clearly, mostly in monosyllables.

Now, having said that, there were some difficult portions in the Word, too. That's typical of the Word of God. Why are there difficult things in the Bible? Well, it's given to kings to conceal a matter, but the honor of princes is to search them out.

And God has put things in the Bible that require diligent study. But the way of salvation is not one of those things. You remember we said that this book has to do with the test of life.

The test, whether a person really is a believer or not. And the chapter begins with the test of doctrine. The test of doctrine.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Now, that doesn't just mean a head belief. It doesn't mean a belief in a fact.

It doesn't mean that. It means a commitment of one's life to Jesus as the Son of God. What is a Christian? Well, in the United States, a Christian is anyone who is not an atheist, an agnostic, and anyone who is kind to grandma.

That's a Christian nowadays. That's not a Christian when it comes to the Word of God. And this is a fundamental doctrine of the Word of God.

Jesus is the Christ. And that includes the whole idea that the Lord Jesus Christ is his humanity, perfect man, and his deity, perfect God, fully God. And so he comes back to this test of life, the test of belief.

And everyone should test himself by that. What is my relationship to Jesus Christ? That's it. Do I love him? Do I not only confess him with my lips, but is my whole life a confession of him? True belief is just not a matter of words.

It's a matter of the whole being confessing this truth. Everyone who loves him who begot also loves him who is begotten of him. There's a second test of life, isn't there? If you love God, you love the children of God.

You love other believers of the Lord Jesus. And we already mentioned that, that one of the first things you notice when you've been born again, when the new life of Christ comes into you, is you have a different attitude toward Christians. You're no longer critical of them.

You're no longer resentful of them. You're no longer wish they'd go away. But you really love them in the Lord.

Everyone who loves him who begot. Who's him who begot? Well, it's God. God the Father.

Also loves him who is begotten of him. Here it's referring to other believers. How do you know it's referring to other believers? The next verse.

By this we know that we love the children of God. You see? It goes on to explain. The Bible is its own best commentary.

And usually the text that you're in explains itself. So it seems to me that the first part of verse 2 explains the last part of verse 5. That was one of the testimonies that unsaved people brought concerning the Christians in the early days of the church. The Christians were hounded.

They were harassed. They were persecuted. Actually Nero took them and dipped them, had them dipped in tar and ignited to provide light for his garden parties.

But the testimony that the world bore to the Christians in those days. Behold how these people love one another. Behold how these people love one another.

So John says in verse 2, by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments. You say this is kind of circuitous reasoning, isn't it? When you see he's weaving it all together. You can't take one test of life and just depend on that alone.

You have to take them all together. For instance, a person might like to be in Christian company. Some of us here know a man and he likes to spend time with Christians.

But he doesn't want their Christ. It doesn't work. It doesn't work.

And so he says here by this we know that we love the children of God. That we have the true love of the children of God when we love God. So you ask a person like that, do you love God? And he falls over in a dead faint.

Nobody ever asked him a question like that before. Love God? Could I love God? Never seen him. But the true believer, yes, loves God and keeps his commandments.

There's a third test of life. When a person is born again he has a sincere desire to obey the word of God. He has a tender conscience concerning the word of God.

Remember when Martin Luther was put on trial and he was told that he must recant his belief. And he said my conscience is captive to the word of God. He had no other choice but to stand true to the word of God.

The mark of a true Christian. So there you have the confession of Jesus being the Christ. Love for the brethren.

Love for God. And obedience to the commandments of the Lord. These are some of the tests of life.

How do you pass the test? Put yourself up against these things and say is that a good description of me? Is that a good biography of me? Well he hasn't finished. This is the love of God. You say what do you mean when we love God? Well he said let me explain this to you.

This is the love of God that we keep as commandments. You see it's a braid. He braids all of these things together in 1 John.

And you mustn't take just one thread. You must take the whole braid. This is the love of God that we keep as commandments.

I love this. And his commandments are not burdensome. Often times religious leaders put commandments on people that are burdensome.

That's what the Pharisees did when Jesus was here on earth. They had commandments for the people to obey. They didn't obey them themselves.

And they didn't lift a little finger to help the other people obey them either. And Jesus excoriated them for that. Put on them burdens too heavy to bear he said.

Well you know the burdens of the Lord Jesus are not heavy to bear. Why? Because his commandments are the very thing that the new life wants to do. Here's a mother and she's got a pretty big child.

The baby has grown pretty big now. I mean the baby is heavy. And the mother is having to carry the baby.

You say what a burden. There's no burden for a mother to carry that baby. She loves to carry that baby.

That's the way it is with the commandments of God as they're found here in the New Testament. His commandments are not burdensome. Jesus said that didn't he? In Matthew chapter 11 he said come unto

me all you that labor and are heavy laden.

I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

That's lovely isn't it? My burden is light. And it really is. Whatever is born of God or whoever is born of God overcomes the world.

Overcomes the world. What does this mean? One man against the world? Well let me explain. Whoever is born of God overcomes the world.

This is a victory that has overcome the world. Our faith. What does that mean? Well it means that the world is phony.

The world is a fake. And the faith of a child of God enables him to look beyond the dazzle and the glitter of the world. And see how really empty it is.

Charlie had that opening hymn. Now none but Christ can satisfy him. I tried the broken cisterns Lord.

That's what the world offers you. Broken cisterns. I tried the broken cisterns Lord and ah the water's failing as I stooped to drink.

They fled and mocked me as I wailed. That's the world friends. That's what the world gives you.

Let me give you some examples. Years ago, I've told this before, years ago I was down in Culber City. And right next to where I was staying there was a movie lot, you know.

So one day I couldn't get in. I just walked over and I saw this western village. No, no, a real western village.

And I walked over to the fence and I saw it up close. But then I walked a little to my left and I looked and you know there was nothing but the front of the buildings. There were no buildings there.

Nothing but the front. It was the facade. And I thought ah, the world.

It's all facade. And you know people reading the newspaper today and listening to TV and reading Time Magazine. I tell you, it's a pretty disgusting civilization if you want my opinion.

And faith enables a child of God to see beyond all the glitter and all of the glaze of the world. It's not real. I want something that's real.

That's what the Lord Jesus Christ offers to those who put their faith and trust in him. It really is. So, I like that verse.

Whoever is born of God overcomes. This is the way it overcomes the world. Because you see through its emptiness.

And this is a victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Faith, that is, is the word of God which gives you something definite to judge things by. Who is he who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the son of God? And this is exactly true.

He who believes that Jesus is the son of God is a true Christian. A true child of God. And he has the capacity for overcoming the world.

In that sense. Not as in a war or something like that. But thinking, I don't want to be a part of that system.

That's the system that nailed my Savior to the tree. And it was, too. It's the world.

The world that nailed the Christ of God to the cross of Calvary. It was the religious world that nailed him there. The religious leaders who did it.

They said his blood be on us and on our children. They acknowledged that they were doing it. This is he, verse 6. This is he who came by water and by blood.

I said there were some difficult parts in this chapter. And this is one of them. And it has different interpretations.

This is he who came by water and blood. Jesus Christ, not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

What does that mean, not only by water, but by water and blood? Some believe that means the water and the blood that flowed from the Savior's pierced side on the cross of Calvary. It's a valid explanation. Some believe it refers to purification and redemption from sin.

In other words, the words are used metaphorically. Water referring to purification. Blood referring to the work of Christ on the cross.

Many Christians believe that. It's okay. Some people believe that it refers to baptism and the Lord's Supper, interestingly enough.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I don't see that, but never mind. There's some good people who believe that.

Let me explain what I think it means. Remember we said that 1 John was written against the backdrop of the Gnostics. It was a heresy that had arisen in the early days of the church.

And you remember I mentioned to you that the Gnostics taught that Jesus was not the Christ, that the Christ was a spirit that came from heaven and landed on Jesus at his baptism and left in the Garden of Gethsemane. That's exactly what Christian science teaches. It teaches exactly that, almost in those very words.

Jesus is not the Christ, but the Christ was a spirit that came from heaven and landed on Jesus, the man, at his baptism and left in the Garden of Gethsemane. And I think John is here writing to refute that. And I think water and blood refer to the two terminals of Jesus' public ministry.

The water to his baptism and the blood to his death on the cross of Calvary. They acknowledge that he came by water, but they didn't acknowledge that he came by blood. They said Jesus died, but the Christ didn't die.

And so John is saying, no, not by water only, but by water and blood. So that Jesus Christ was the one who was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ was the one, men lifted up on

that cross of Calvary, who died as a substitute for our sins. Not only by water, but by water and blood.

So, this is a refutation of the Gnostic heresy, and it's a refutation of many of the cults that are with us today. Many of the people who come and knock at your door believe this same heresy, and especially the denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Really, that is marvelous when you start to think of it, that the one who hung on the cross of Calvary was not only the man, Jesus, but it was God, Jesus Christ.

That's enough to make me sober the rest of my life, to think that my God died for me there at Calvary. Now, God has not left himself without witness. You know, there's a principle in Scripture, in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall everything be established.

This is very interesting to me. We live in a day where one person can bring an accusation against another person, and it stands up at a court of law. It's crazy, if you don't mind my face.

I mean, you could be walking down the street perfectly innocent, and somebody might bring an accusation against you, and it'll stand up in a court of law today. I would say, no, no, in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall everything be established. And God is very careful to give witnesses.

What's he going to witness to? He's going to witness to the truth of eternal life. That's what he's going to witness to. And he's going to tell you that as we go along.

There are three who bear witness. The spirit, the water, and the blood. Now, the spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit of God witnesses through the Word of God.

If you want to know the truth, the time, and for eternity, you turn to the Word of God, and the Spirit of God speaks to you through the written Scriptures here. So, you have the witness of the Holy Spirit. You have the witness of the water.

You know, the Lord Jesus baptized there in the Jordan River, and God opens heaven and bears testimony to him. Pretty marvelous, isn't it? Jesus was about 30 years old then. God the Father had watched him down here on earth, watched that life live down here for 30 years.

And what was his verdict at the end? My beloved Son, in whom I have found all my delight. The eye of God couldn't find a single stain on his beloved Son. So, you have that marvelous witness to the person of Christ there at the baptism.

And then the blood is worked there on the cross of Calvary. Oh, the value of the blood of Jesus. I was reading this last week.

In fact, that verse in Revelation says, They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. That's wonderful.

You know, the blood of the Lamb silences every accusation that the devil can bring against the child of God. That's pretty wonderful, isn't it? Let me say that again. The blood of Christ silences every accusation that can be brought against a true believer.

Christ presents the value of his blood in heaven. And he says, I died for those sins. I paid the penalty for those sins.

Case is closed. And by the word of their testimony. You know, the early Christians were compelled to go up to the altar, the heathen altar of Caesar.

And they were said, now all you have to do is take a pinch of incense and put it on the altar and say, Caesar is Lord. All you have to do is say, Caesar is Lord. The early Christians would do it.

They wouldn't say, Caesar is Lord. And they wouldn't take that pinch of incense and put it on the altar. They said, Jesus is Lord.

They overcame by the word of their testimony. I'll tell you, when a person is really born again, it makes a difference in the life, doesn't it? It's a new, that's what it means when it says in the Bible, Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. There is a new creation.

All things are passed away. Behold, all things become new. And these people just didn't love their life unto death.

That's what the verse goes on to say. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony. They loved not their life unto death.

They paid for that confession, Jesus is Lord, by laying down their lives, by sealing their testimony with their blood. That's why I like to have those words, and have had on my license plate for many years now, Jesus is Lord. It's a great confession, and it makes a better driver out of you, too.

Because when you do something foolish, you're driving along, What does that guy behind me think now? Okay. So, you have the threefold testimony, the spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree as one. What do they agree? The great truth of the gospel, that God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world, that there's life in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9, If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. Well, this is an interesting verse. You can think about this the rest of the morning.

If we receive the witness of men, we do receive the witness of men. For instance, you have a checkbook, and you write out a check, and you sign your name to it, and you give it to somebody, and they accept it. And they believe that that worthless piece of paper is worth the amount of money that you wrote down.

When I say a worthless piece of paper, I mean that's all it is, is a piece of paper. They do that. We receive the witness of men.

We trust men. We go out on 580, or worse, on 880, and you don't know who's driving near you. Maybe he's driving under the influence, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Rodriguez finds some that are driving under the influence. Or maybe they're under drugs. You don't know.

Maybe they have the death desire. You don't know. But you just have to trust that all will be well.

And oftentimes, all is not well. We receive the witness of men. Listen, the witness of God is greater.

If God says something, you have the surest thing in the universe, the Word of God. God cannot lie. God is not a man that he should lie.

Neither the son of man that he should repent. God cannot lie. God cannot be deceived.

Nobody can trick God. He's all-knowing. And God certainly wouldn't deceive anybody.

He doesn't tempt anybody with evil. And if we can receive the testimony of our fellow men, which is iffy sometimes, you know, iffy. The witness of God is greater.

Nobody's ever believed in the Lord and been disappointed. We receive the witness of men. Years ago, when I was back at Emmaus Bible School, one day toward 5 o'clock at night, a very distinguished-looking gentleman came into the school.

And he introduced himself as Dr. Byron Weymouth. He was a neurosurgeon from Atlanta, Georgia. And he wanted to see the president of the school, who happened to be away in Canada at the time.

And so he said, well, my mother died. She was in Toronto, and she was a great admirer of the president of the school. And she left money to the school, and I've just come to arrange for the turning over of the money to the school.

I forget how many thousand dollars it was. It was a big thing. Well, he wasn't there.

Well, would you like to talk to his secretary? Yeah, well, he talked to the secretary. When would Dr. Harlow be back? Well, he'd be back the next day. So he sat around for a while and talked there.

He said, I'd like to give the school a gift while I'm here. He said, I'd like to give them a gift to the Journal of the British Medical Society. And so he took out his checkbook and wrote out a check to the British Medical Society, and the secretary typed the letter and sealed it and put a stamp on it.

Just before closing time, he remembered that, well, he asked if he could cash a check. Well, the checks are out. The money is out there at the information desk.

So we went out to the information desk, and I tell you, if your mother is leaving thousands of dollars to a school in her will, you're not going to quibble about cashing a check, are you? So they cashed a check for \$25 for him, and he went on his way. A couple of days later, the school got a notice that the check had bounced. There was no such account.

And a few days after that, the letter from the British Medical Society came back no such address. We received the witness of Nanny. Now, what a disappointment.

Of course, there was no mother. There was no inheritance. Nothing to it at all.

Just a great big lie. And he went to all that trouble to get \$25. I've been looking for Byron Weymouth ever since.

I'll never have come across him. If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater. I tell you, I don't think people realize today what a wonderful thing we have in the Word of God.

The unchanging, infallible Word of God. God says it of His Son. God the Father loves to bear witness to His Son.

What is the witness? He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. This is it. If you believe in the Son of God, that means committing yourself to Him, accepting Him as your Lord and Savior,

believing that He died to pay the penalty of your sins upon the cross of Calvary.

When you do that, you can know that you're saved. You can know it through the Word of God. And there's a witness in yourself, too.

A subjective witness that tells you, yeah, things are different now. Something happened, I know, since I put my trust in Jesus. As a witness in himself, he who does not believe God has made him alive.

This is very solemn, isn't it? A lot of people today don't realize that when they refuse the gospel, they're saying God is a liar. God doesn't like that. How do you like it? When you say something to a person and he says to you, I don't believe it, he's calling you a liar.

You don't like it. Well, you have made mistakes, so I lie. You've said things that weren't so, so I lie.

God never has. So it's a serious thing to call God a liar. He who does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son.

It's amazing, isn't it, when you stop to think of it. That God sent down his Son into this world for people who are really just pieces of dust. In comparison with the universe we live in, we're just specks of dust.

And we were bound for hell. Our sins were dragging us down to hell. And he sent his Son to die for us as a substitute, bearing the penalty of my sins.

And this is marvelous to me because, you know, when the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, he knew every sin I would ever commit. Every sin I would ever commit. Past, present, and future.

They were all future when he died for me on the cross of Calvary. He knew all about me. He knew all the worst about me.

There was plenty of worst, too. He died for me just the same. And his work on the cross of Calvary takes care of the penalty of all my sins.

It takes care of the penalty of all my sins. He paid the price. I'll never have to say it.

You say, what does that mean? You can go out and sin the way you want? No, I don't want. When God saved me, he took the want-to out of my life. I'm new.

A new person in Christ Jesus. It's really wonderful when you stop to think of it. He who believes in the Son of God has a witness in himself.

He who does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed the testimony that God has given him. God doesn't like it when he tells you something about Jesus and you don't believe it. And the marvelous thing is your whole destiny depends on what you do with Jesus.

You can be a Democrat or you can be a Republican. You can belong to all the churches in San Leandro. It doesn't make a bit of difference.

But what you think about Jesus, what you do with Jesus, is a great thing. It's a great thing. This is the testimony.

Here it is. This is the testimony. God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son.

So, eternal life is in a person. His name is Jesus. When you have Jesus, you have eternal life.

So, how do I get him? Well, you get him by repenting of your sins. By going before God and saying, look, everything you say about me is true and I really need to be saved. And I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for me on the cross of Calvary to pay the penalty of my sins.

And I do accept him as my Lord and Savior. I do accept him as my substitute. That's what it's talking about.

This is the testimony. God has given us eternal life. This life is in his Son.

Now, the gospel could hardly be more simple than it is in verse 12. He who has the Son has life. Every one of them a monosyllable.

There are no words that are less than a monosyllable, are there? He who has the Son has life. Ask yourself the question. Did you sit here this morning? Do I have the Son? Am I resting on some broken reed? Am I trusting my works to save me? Don't say that.

Am I trusting my church membership to save me? Don't say anything about church membership. Am I trusting my baptism to save me? I don't read baptism in this verse. I mean, baptism is a place after you get saved.

But that's not the way to be saved. Are you trusting your confirmations? Don't say anything about that here. Are you trusting the fact that your grandfather was a minister or a priest or a rabbi? Don't say anything about that here.

Are you trusting the fact that you raised a family for God? Don't say anything about that here. It says he who has the Son has life. And he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

That's why I said if you only had this on a desert island, this is the only part of the Bible you had on a desert island, you'd know how to get to heaven, wouldn't you? Know how to get to heaven. And be sure of it. And be sure of it.

God has made the gospel by grace through faith so that people might be sure of it. By grace means that it's a gift. And you can be sure when you receive the gift.

If it depends on you, if you have to contribute anything meritorious to your salvation, you can never be sure you're saved. It depends on your good work or your good character. But you don't know what it's going to be like 20 years from today.

But if salvation is a gift by grace through faith, then you can be sure you're saved. Say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I do accept you.

I accept the gift of eternal life through you. You can know you're saved. He who has the Son has life.

He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. What does that mean? Well, it's not good news. He who does not have the Son of God is doomed as far as eternity is concerned.

He has no hope, no harbor waiting where his storm-tossed vessel he might steer. Verse 13 is one of the most important verses in the Bible to me because after I trusted Christ as my Savior, I looked to my

feelings to tell me I was saved and I could get no assurance of salvation. And then the Spirit of God pointed me to verse 13 and showed me that assurance of salvation comes first and foremost through the Word of God.

That if you've trusted Christ as your Savior, then God is saying to you, you're saved. These things I have written to you. To who? Well, I said to me.

Who believe in the name of the Son of God? And I said to myself, do you believe in the name of the Son of God? I said, yes, the best way I know how. I trusted the Lord Jesus. I've turned my life over to him.

What does it say? That you may know that you have eternal life. Well, see, I was misreading it. I was reading that you may feel that you have eternal life.

It doesn't say that. It says that you may know that you have eternal life. God wants you to know when you have eternal life.

Why? Because you would never enjoy your salvation if you didn't know it. You'd be so busy holding on with both hands that you wouldn't have time to enjoy your salvation. God wants you to have a know-so salvation.

These things I've written to you. Believe in the name of the Son of God. That you may know that you have eternal life.

That you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. So, I've often told you, I know here in this chapel, how God brought this little booklet, Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment, to me. And George Cuttings says, it's the blood that makes you safe.

It's the word that makes you sure. And then I told you how Scofield said it was a help to me. Justification takes place in the mind of God and not in the nervous system of the believer.

It does. Justification takes place in the mind of God. What does that mean? It means when you bow the knee and trust the Lord Jesus as your Savior, something happens in heaven.

What happens in heaven? God reckons you to be righteous. He imputes his righteousness to you. He gives you a perfect standing before him.

All charges are gone like that. All charges are gone when you come to Christ. It's wonderful, isn't it? Justification takes place in the mind of God.

Do you feel it? You don't feel justification. Not in the nervous system of the believer. No, you don't feel it in your nervous system.

How do you know it? The Bible says it. But I'd rather feel it. Well, that's the trouble.

A lot of people would rather feel it than know it. I'd rather know it than feel it because my feelings are up and down. My feelings are like a roller coaster up one day and down the other.

I don't want to base my hopes for eternity on a roller coaster, do you? I want to have it sure. There's nothing as sure as the Word of God. I must go on.

This is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. We know that he hears us. Whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

Now, just let me qualify this. You can't take these verses alone on prayer and believe that anything you ask, period, God's going to give you. Because sometimes it wouldn't be good.

Sometimes your little child wants a sharp knife in the kitchen, but you don't give it to him. You give him a bar of Percy's chocolate instead. And you divert his attention from the sharp knife.

Well, God's not going to give something to you if it's not good for you. So I would say this. First of all, when we pray, it must be according to his will.

How do you know what's according to his will? The Bible tells you what's according to his will. And secondly, God doesn't coerce people. We're praying.

I told you I prayed 50 years for a fellow, and he died a couple of months ago without Christ, as far as I know. God doesn't coerce a person's will. But I believe every time I ever prayed for that guy, God brought some influence to bear on him, seeking to woo him and win him to Christ.

God will do his part. But he doesn't force people into the kingdom of God. The decision lies in a person's will.

You know, a lot of intellectual people and scholarly people would like to think it lies in their head. They think, oh, come on, you Christians. Pie in the sky.

And they just make a sound like foolish people believing all this. Huh. Is it foolish to believe God? It's not foolish to believe God.

And when I pray, I have confidence that God hears and answers my prayers. He hears and answers every prayer in exactly the same way I would answer it if I knew what he knows, if I had the power that he has, and if I had the love that he has. He answers every one of my prayers the way I would answer it if I had his wisdom, love, and power.

And I think this is true of these verses that we read. Okay, he says here in verse 16, If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask. He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.

There is sin leading to death. Do not say that you should pray for it. Now, please notice, in verse 16, it's obviously talking about a believer.

Why is it talking about a believer? Because his brother is brother. That means his Christian brother. And it means that if you see a brother and he's got away from the Lord and fallen into sin, he really knows the Lord and yet he's fallen into sin, you can pray for him and God recovers him, brings him back into fellowship with himself and with the church.

There is this restoration ministry through prayer. But when you come to the next verse, or the latter part of the verse, there is sin leading to death. I think you want, again, to consider this verse in the context.

He's talking about apostates in this book. These are people who made a profession of being Christians, and then they turned their backs against Christ. And when they became baptized, they just viciously

turned their backs against Christ, maliciously.

They trod underfoot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing. John says, I don't say that you should pray for that. Why? Because it's impossible to renew those people again to repentance.

That's why. There are people living today who knew the gospel, pretended to be Christians, then they vilely turned against Christ. They became enemies of Christ.

And my Bible says it's impossible to renew them again to repentance. But if you've never done that, and you've heard the gospel and you haven't accepted it, there's still hope for you if you will accept it. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

That's the sin of a believer, a true believer. There's sin not leading to death. We know that whoever is born of God does not sin.

Now, remember what we said in the previous chapter, in this connection, chapter 3, I should say. A word of explanation. It doesn't mean that a Christian never sins.

Because John has already said in chapters 1 and 2 that Christians do sin. And if you say, if you're a Christian and you say, I don't sin, I haven't sinned, I don't have sin in me, John says, the truth is not in you. You're not telling the truth.

You're calling God a liar. God says you do sin. God says you have sin.

But the point here is, does not sin is in the present continuous tense. It means does not go on sinning. It means sin is not the habit of his life.

He does sin. But sin does not have dominion over his life. Before he was saved, he lived in sin.

Now that he's saved, sin is exceptional, not habitual. That's the whole point of this verse. We want to make that very, very clear.

The Bible does not teach sinless perfection. It does not teach that a person in this life ever reaches the stage where he no longer sins. If you meet somebody who says that, he doesn't know what sin means.

He doesn't know the meaning of the word. If he knew the meaning of the word, he would never say something like that. He who has been born of God keeps himself, or better, he who has been born of God keeps him.

The one who's been born of God is the Lord Jesus, and he keeps the believer. The wicked one does not touch him. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. If you don't believe verse 19, read the newspapers. Listen to the news.

See it on television. That's what you'll see. The whole world lies under the wicked one.

Murder, violence, corruption, deceit, graft, sexism. The whole world lies under the evil one. It's getting worse.

It's getting worse. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse in the world in which we live. And a lot of the people of the world realize it, and they're fed up with it.

They're absolutely fed up with it. So the Bible is true, just as contemporary as when it was written. We know that the Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we may know him who is true.

We are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God in eternal life. I like that verse because, you know, it's one of the verses that I use to teach the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what it says. We are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. This.

What does this refer to? It refers to his Son, Jesus Christ. What does it say? It says this is the true God in eternal life. Wonderful.

The Bible's a wonderful book. The Lord Jesus is the true God, God the Son, in eternal life. And if you have him, you have eternal life.

It's just as simple as that. Verse 21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Oh, you say, well that's no problem for me. I don't bow down and worship graven images or any depiction of Christ or anything like that. It doesn't mean that.

Idols here is anything, an idol is anything that takes the place of Christ in your life. That's what it is. Steady yourself.

Could be your wife. Could be your husband. Could be your children.

Could be your car. Could be your home. Christ must come first in a person's life.

Anything that takes his place or any conception of Christ, and I think maybe that's the primary meaning here, the Gnostics had a different view of Christ, didn't they? An idolatrous view of Christ. Keep yourself from any wrong view of Christ or from anything that would ever take the place of Christ in your life. I like that story of Spurgeon.

I know some of you have heard it before, but some haven't. Spurgeon was on his way to a meeting one night. He went and picked up his girlfriend.

They had, of course, horse and buggy in those days. And they came to this huge auditorium where he was going to preach. And he pulled up the carriage outside there and he jumped out.

And he was thinking about souls and the salvation of souls. And he rushed into this auditorium and left her sitting in the carriage. Not a good Mother's Day message, is it? Anyway, she wasn't a mother yet.

And then when he got up to preach, he looked out over the audience. She wasn't there. She wasn't there.

And he realized what he had done. He made a mistake. He left her sitting in the carriage.

He paid no attention to her. And so when the meeting was over and he had dealt with souls and people had been saved, he got back into the carriage and he drove out to her house. He said, I'd like to see her.

And they said, she doesn't want to see you. She's upstairs. She was upstairs pouting.

He insisted that I want to see her. And she finally came down. And he said, look, I'm very sorry for what happened tonight.

He said, I shouldn't have left you sitting out there in the carriage. He said, I want you to know something. If we're going to be married, if we're ever going to be married, Christ must come first.

And you have to come second. And, you know, at the end of his marvelous ministry, and he had a marvelous ministry, Mrs. Spurgeon said she learned a valuable lesson that night. There was someone ahead of her in the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and his name was Jesus.

Christ must come first. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Let's pray.

And then Charlie's going to come and lead us in a closing hymn. Father, how we love your word, how it speaks to us every day, every hour of the day, how it influences our life and our behavior and our happiness and all the rest. We thank you for this simple presentation of the gospel.

I personally thank you most of all for verse 13 that tells me how I can know I'm saved, how I can know I'm sure of heaven, not through anything I do or am, but through the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just pray, Lord, that you'll drive the message home to hearts here today, those who might still be outside of Christ. Oh, Lord, how we long to see them just come the blood-sprinkled way, come in repentance, in true broken repentance and in heartfelt acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We just commit your word to you. We pray that you'll honor your word and honor your lovely son, the Lord Jesus, in his worthy name. Amen.

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