



unfailing **love**  
in **uncertain** times

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A Journey Through 1 John

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# FBC Dickson

## UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 1 JESUS, THE WORD MADE FLESH

### MAIN POINT

To come to a biblical understanding of who Jesus is.

### INTRODUCTION

Who is Jesus? That is a question all of us have wrestled with at some time or another. It's a question that many answers according to the world, but it only has one answer according to Scripture. He is God's Son, the divine second member of the Trinity, our Messiah, and our Savior. Throughout its history, the church has had to confront false teachings about the person of Jesus. No one knew better than John who Jesus was and is. It was John's mission to tell the world the Jesus is the Christ, and in Him you can have eternal life. The letter of 1 John was written to churches who were struggling and dealing with false teachings about the person of Jesus, so it is no wonder that John begins his letter with a strong affirmation of who Jesus is.

**What are some popular responses from the world about who Jesus is?**

**Why is it important for us as believers to be able to articulate a biblical view of the person of Christ?**

### UNDERSTANDING

Let's Discuss 1 John 1-4. There are 3 main truths from these verses to discuss

#### 1. Know Jesus the Word Made Flesh

##### **Read 1 John 1:1-2**

In these verses, John is affirming a vital truth to Christianity. Jesus is both God and man. John proclaims Jesus eternity in verse 1 when he says "what was from the beginning". Jesus has always existed as the Son. John affirmed this reality all through his gospels in recording several of Jesus' "I AM" statements.

##### **Read the I AM statements of John (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5)**

He also affirms the humanity of Jesus. Jesus was someone that John walked with daily. He heard him, saw him with his eyes, observed him, and touched him. John saw Jesus laugh, cry, eat, drink, sleep, and mourn. John was an old man by the time of this

letter. Almost 60 years had passed since Jesus ascended back to the Father. But he still vividly recalled his interactions with Jesus. He had personally seen Jesus crucified, he was an eye witness to the empty tomb, and saw Jesus ascend back to heaven. He personally had watched all his closest friends and fellow Apostles die martyrs' deaths. To know Jesus wasn't just head knowledge to John. He loved Jesus, so he couldn't help but testify about him.

The incarnation of the Son is a hard concept to grasp, but it is a biblical truth worth clinging to and sharing with others.

Discussion Questions:

**Why might it be hard for some to think of Jesus in human terms?**

**Why is the incarnation of Jesus a stumbling block for some?**

**How can we daily honor the biblical doctrine of who Jesus is, both God and man?**

## 2. Share Christ the Word Made Flesh

### **Read 1 John 1:3**

Evangelism has turned into a church buzzword. It often refers to programs or a formula we teach people to follow. We try to put evangelism in its own box like it is a part of what the church does, and then only a day or so a week. But to the disciples, sharing Jesus was an everyday part of their life. They wanted others to hear the words of Jesus, turn to him as Messiah, and be saved. To them, it was a sin to remain silent about the good news of Jesus. They wanted others to be in fellowship with Jesus like they were.

The word fellowship in verse 3 is the Greek word "koinonia". It means "sharing in common something significant or important". We often undervalue fellowship. We think of it as a gathering or a meal. To the disciples, fellowship went much deeper. The most important thing at the center of their fellowship was the gospel. True fellowship is gospel-centered. That means that at the heart of our fellowship with each other is the sharing of the gospel. We share it with the lost and we pour its truths into each other. Because we are in Christ, true Christian fellowship is also an eternal fellowship. We will be with Jesus and each other forever. Is there a more important fellowship you can invite someone into.

Discussion Questions:

**What reservations do you personally have about evangelism?**

**What barriers must we overcome in order to share the gospel effectively?**

**What aspects of Christian fellowship do you value the most?**

### 3. Find Joy in Jesus, the Word Made Flesh

#### **Read 1 John 1:4**

#### **According to John, what is the purpose of his letter?**

John says the purpose of his letter is joy, his and his hearers. The shared fellowship that they have with each other and with Christ is to be a source of great joy for God's people. There is joy in knowing Christ and making Him known both in our fellowship with each other and in sharing the gospel with others.

Joy is often misunderstood and undervalued. The true nature of joy is that it is a gift of God and a fruit of the Spirit. True joy is also not based on circumstances but on God's promises.

#### **Read James 1:2-4**

#### **According to James, how can trials bring joy into our lives?**

The true joy that God gives is also not partial, but it is complete. Our joy can be made complete even in the midst of suffering. As a matter of fact, our joy is made possible because of the suffering of Jesus. God often uses times of trial to make our joy complete. To be complete, means to "make full". It is a fulfilling joy that can only be found in knowing Christ.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

**What promises of God bring you joy?**

**What keeps our joy from being "complete"?**

## **APPLICATION**

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

**Are you abiding in Christ, the word so that your joy may be complete?**

**Who can you share Jesus with this week?**

**What in your life is causing your joy to be incomplete or lacking?**

## **COMMENTARY**

### 1 John 1:1-2

The phrase "from the beginning" is used in other places in John's gospel to refer to eternity past, but the phrase here refers to the beginnings of gospel preaching when the readers first heard about Jesus. The phrase also emphasizes the stability of the gospel message; its contents do not change, but remain stable from the very beginning; it is not subject to change or to current worldly fads or philosophical thinking. (taken from John MacArthur's *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*)

Jesus Christ, who is the Father's Son, has always existed with the Father as God. There has never been a time when the Son was not. Never. He was before the beginning, in the beginning, and from the beginning...This life is the life of undiminished deity made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. There never was a time when the Son was not, and there will never be a time when He will not be.

Historically, John was countering an early form of what is called "Gnosticism", a term based on the Greek word that means knowledge. They had 2 basic convictions. First, they believe that matter is evil. Second, they believed that salvation is by a mystical, even secretive, knowledge...it led them to deny with great fervency a true and genuine incarnation of the Christ. (take from *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus is 1, 2, and 3 John*)

### 1 John 1:3

"Fellowship does not mean social relations, but that his readers were to be partakers with John in possessing eternal life. That genuine Christians are never out of fellowship is clear, since this verse equates fellowship with salvation." (taken from John MacArthur's *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*)

"the fellowship that exists among believers of Jesus is far richer and deeper than that of a college fraternity or sorority. It is far richer and deeper than that of a favorite sports team or community club. It is far richer and deeper than even that of national identity or ethnic heritage. It is fellowship of family that transcends any and all artificial barriers that have afflicted the human race since the fall." (take from *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus is 1, 2, and 3 John*)

### 1 John 1:4

"This communion of believers with the Father and the Son, is begun and kept up by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The benefits Christ bestows, are not like the scanty possessions of the world, causing jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is all-sufficient, so that any number may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say, that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to lead others to partake of the same blessedness." (take from Matthew Henry's *Concise Commentary*)

# FBC Dickson

## UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 2 CONFRONTING SIN IN A CULTURE OF MORAL RELATIVISM 1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

### MAIN POINT

This lesson will help us all see the destructive nature of sin and to confront sin in our own lives

### INTRODUCTION

Why do we need a Savior? What is it about us that needs saving? Many people may ask these questions when you talk to them about Jesus. Sin is the simple answer to the question, but it goes deeper than that. It goes all the way back to the garden of Eden when the first man and woman chose to rebel against God. It was then that sin entered the world.

#### **How would you define sin? (Discuss)**

#### **How might you explain the concept of sin to someone who doesn't understand it?**

Sin can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God. It can also be defined according to John Piper as "any feeling or thought or action that comes from a heart (a condition) that does not treasure God above all things". Sin is something we all face and must deal with. It is something we desperately need deliverance from.

In today's lesson John had to teach the truth about sin. He deals with the nature of sin as well as its remedy. God has gone to great lengths to make sure sin doesn't have the final say in our lives.

### UNDERSTANDING

Confronting sin in the world around us and in our own lives is hard work, and we need the Spirit's help to do it. This passage from 1 John teaches us three valuable truths about confronting sin in today's culture.

#### 1. Confronting Sin Means Exposing it to God's Light

#### **Read 1 John 1:5**

This passage says "God is light". John often compares light and darkness in his writings. Light is often seen as something pure and often refers to holiness or

truth. Darkness is the opposite of light. It represents sin and falsehood. The book of Psalms refers to God as "light and salvation". Isaiah 60:1 says the glory of the Lord "shines". John, in his gospel, calls Jesus the "the True Light" and the "Light of the world".

Two truths about light are also true of God. Light gives life and light exposes darkness.

**In what ways is God like light?**

**How does his light expose darkness?**

God is holy and pure. He gives new life to those who trust in Christ. He also exposes the darkness of our own heart bringing us to repentance over our sin. John makes it clear, there is no darkness in God at all. God is perfect and holy and not even a shadow of darkness can be found in him.

God is everything sin is not, and he stands opposed to it. You can't possibly see how devastating the darkness of sin is until it is exposed to the holiness of the light of God. Sin is devastating like utter darkness, so we must expose it to the light of God and learn to walk in the light of God.

Discussion Questions:

**Have you ever experienced utter darkness like in a cavern or cave? how did that make you feel?**

**How comforting was it when the lights came back on?**

**In what ways might God "shine a light" on our sin?**

## 2. Confronting Sin Means Walking in the Light

**Read 1 John 1:6-10**

**Discuss:**

**According to John why is it impossible to both have fellowship with God and to walk in darkness?**

**In your own words, what does it mean to "walk in the light"?**

**In what ways does claiming not to have sin make God a liar? (see v.10)**

Some truths worth observing from this passage are, first, we must be honest with others about sin. The false teachers of John's day claimed to have fellowship with Christ, yet they walked in darkness. Their words and actions did not match up. They deceiving others about their own sin and downplaying the seriousness of sin. We see that in our

culture too. We often allow culture to dictate what is sin and what is not. But those who walk in the light are honest about sin, theirs and others. To claim the truths about Christ but to live a lifestyle out of sync with those truths is to lie about who we are and who Christ is. To walk in the light means we mean to tell the truth about sin and to lean on Christ to cleanse us from all sin.

Secondly, we are honest with ourselves about sin. Moral relativism teaches us to lie to ourselves about sin. "You are fine the way you are". "If it is right to you then it's right, don't believe what everybody else says". "Live your truth". If sin is relative then it becomes easy to justify anything and everything you say and do. Don't lie to yourself. Those who walk in the light are honest about their own sin and we confess it. And the good news of verse 9 is that if we confess it, Jesus stands ready to forgive.

Lastly, we must be honest about what God says about our sin. Scripture is clear in describing mankind's condition as having the stain of sin.

**Have volunteers read Psalm 14:3; Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23**

God's word is clear. We are great sinners in need of a great Savior. We dare not call God a liar by minimizing our sin. Walking in the light confronts sin in our lives because walking in the light reminds us of who we were when Christ rescued us, who we are now, believers in the midst of being remade by the power of Christ, and who he is making us, his perfected children that will dwell with him forever in His kingdom.

Discussion Questions:

**How can we lovingly confront sin in the lives of brothers and sisters in Christ?**

**How open are we to others who lovingly confront sin in our lives?**

### 3. Confronting Sin Means Placing All Our Hope and Trust in Christ Alone

**Read 1 John 2:1-2**

**Discuss:**

**What is an advocate?**

**In what way is Christ our advocate?**

There are two words in these verses that help us understand how Christ is for us in confronting our sin. The first word is "advocate". In the Greek the word is *parakletos*. It means "called to one's side". It pictures someone who pleads the cause of someone else before a judge. Someone who acts as legal council. Some translations use the word "helper" here. Christ is your legal defense before the judgment seat of God. And He is a very good attorney because unlike an earthly defense attorney, he can



guarantee your acquittal. Jesus is daily in your corner doing battle for you as you confront sin.

The second word is "propitiation". Some translations may use the word "atonement" here. The Greek word is *hilasmos*. It means to "appease or satisfy". What did the death of Christ satisfy and why does that matter for us? It satisfied God's wrath and punishment for our sins. It's important for us to understand that a very real transaction took place on the cross. The cross isn't just a symbol of sacrifice, it is the fulfillment of God's just penalty for sin.

### **Read Colossians 2:14**

We could never erase that debt. But Christ took it upon himself on the Cross. He took the punishment. He took the pain. He experienced the wrath of God on our behalf. He atoned for our sin. Christ was crucified so that we might, by placing our faith in him, be reconciled to God.

In a world where sin isn't taken seriously, we look to the cross and it says otherwise. We belittle the cross when we fail to see sin for what it is. The cross tells us everything we need to know about sin and about ourselves. The truth of Christ as propitiation, truly understood, should break us. The death of Christ wasn't the result of a world gone mad, but it was the result of my sin meeting God's love. In order to reconcile me, Christ had to be crushed. Do we mourn that? Do we rejoice in that? Christ has set us free from sin. It no longer has power over us.

So how do you confront sin in a culture of moral relativism? You shine a light on it, you walk in the light, and you run to and embrace the cross. Sin and death are very real, but they hold no power over those in Christ because He has defeated both.

Discussion Questions:

**How can we thank Jesus for being our advocate and propitiation?**

**When we do sin, how can the truth of Christ as advocate and propitiation bring you hope?**

## **APPLICATION**

**Is there a brother or sister in your life that needs to lovingly have sin confronted? How can you do that this week?**

**Is there a sin issue in your own life that needs confronted? Who can you talk to about that?**

**Who in your life needs to hear the truth of Christ as advocate and propitiation this week?**

# PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

### 1John 1:5

These ideas John comprehends: God is Light. Light physical, because (1) it was He who called everything first out of darkness, and (2) from whom proceeds all health and perfection; light intellectual, because (1) He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge, and (2) in His mind exist the ideals after which all things strive; light moral, because (1) His perfection shows that the difference between good and evil is not merely a question of degree, but fundamental and final, and (2) the life of Christ had exhibited that contrast sharply: once for all. Thus, on this declaration depends the whole doctrine of sin: sin is not merely imperfection; it is enmity to God. There can be no shades of progression, uniting good and evil: in Him is no darkness at all. Good and evil may be mixed in an individual: in themselves they are contrary. (taken from Ellicot's Commentary for English Readers on biblehub.com)

### 1 John 1:6-10

"Walk in Light" means to reflect God's perfection in the human sphere and includes both correct doctrine (truth) and moral purity (holiness). The symbolism of light as knowledge also implies that when Christians "walk in the light" their lives will be known, and will not contain hidden sins, falsehoods, or deception. Such walking "in the light" results in deep divine and human fellowship and progressive cleansing from all sin. (taken from ESV Study Bible, Crossway)

"without sin" in v.8 can mean "do not have sin". To "have sin" means to be guilty of sinful acts. Those who seceded from the community were not claiming to have a sinless nature but probably claiming that they had not actually sinned since coming to know God. (taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

v.10: "If we claim we have not sinned". Basically restates what is found in v.8 but indicates that such a claim involves more than self-deception. It implies also that God is a liar because he regards all people as sinners, for otherwise he would not have sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. (taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

### 1 John 2:1-2

2:1,2 When have an Advocate with the Father; one who has undertaken, and is fully able, to plead in behalf of every one who applies for pardon and salvation in his name,

depending on his pleading for them. He is Jesus, the Saviour, and Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed. He alone is the Righteous One, who received his nature pure from sin, and as our Surety perfectly obeyed the law of God, and so fulfilled all righteousness. All men, in every land, and through successive generations, are invited to come to God through this all-sufficient atonement, and by this new and living way. The gospel, when rightly understood and received, sets the heart against all sin, and stops the allowed practice of it; at the same time it gives blessed relief to the wounded consciences of those who have sinned. (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on biblehub.com)

And he is the propitiation for our sins - The word rendered "propitiation" (ἱλασμοῦς hilasmos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1 John 4:10 of this Epistle; though words of the same derivation, and having the same essential meaning, frequently occur. The corresponding word ἱλαστήριον hilastērion occurs in Romans 3:25, rendered "propitiation" - "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and in Hebrews 9:5, rendered mercy-seat - "shadowing the mercy-seat." The verb ἱλασκομαι hilaskomai occurs also in Luke 18:3 - God be merciful to me a sinner;" and Hebrews 2:17 - "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." For the idea expressed by these words, see the notes at Romans 3:25. The proper meaning of the word is that of reconciling, appeasing, turning away anger, rendering propitious or favorable. The idea is, that there is anger or wrath, or that something has been done to offend, and that it is needful to turn away that wrath, or to appease. This may be done by a sacrifice, by songs, by services rendered, or by bloody offerings. So the word is often used in Homer - Passow. We have similar words in common use, as when we say of one that he has been offended, and that something must be done to appease him, or to turn away his wrath. This is commonly done with us by making restitution; or by an acknowledgment; or by yielding the point in controversy; or by an expression of regret; or by different conduct in time to come. But this idea must not be applied too literally to God; nor should it be explained away. The essential thoughts in regard to him, as implied in this word, are:

(1) that his will has been disregarded, and his law violated, and that he has reason to be offended with us;

(2) that in that condition he cannot, consistently with his perfections, and the good of the universe, treat us as if we had not done it;

(3) that it is proper that, in some way, he should show his displeasure at our conduct, either by punishing us, or by something that shall answer the same purpose; and,

(4) that the means of propitiation come in here, and accomplish this end, and make it proper that he should treat us as if we had not sinned; that is, he is reconciled, or appeased, and his anger is turned away.

This is done, it is supposed, by the death of the Lord Jesus, accomplishing, in most important respects, what would be accomplished by the punishment of the offender himself. (taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

# FBC Dickson

## UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 3 EMBRACING RADICAL LOVE

1 JOHN 2:3-17

### MAIN POINT

Our obedience is rooted in our love for God. That love overflows into love for each other and a rejection of the love of the world.

### INTRODUCTION

When we hear the word obedience, it often brings up negative images. Especially when we apply that to Christianity. To say that God desires our obedience often brings to mind trying to please God by doing good works. It might lead us to thinking that if we could only do the right things, God would be pleased with us. If we were only religious enough, God would accept us. But in reality obedience is having a heart that treasures Christ above all things, and that realizes we are nothing apart from the work of Jesus on the Cross. Obedience is the overflow of love and joy in who Christ is and what he has done.

That is how John approaches obedience in this passage. For John, love and obedience are eternally and inseparably connected in Scripture. Jesus says in John 14:15 “if you love me you will keep my commands”. It is something John addresses in this letter. If someone claims to love God but does not do what he says, he is a liar. He reminds his readers that obedience to God is made possible by the fact that 1. Christ has died as propitiation for your sins, therefore, you are freed to obey God, and 2. Because we are in Him and He is in us, he empowers us to live a life of radical love for God and for others that leads to obedience.

**How do you teach your kids/grandkids obedience?**

**How should our love for God overflow into our obedience and love for others?**

### UNDERSTANDING

Holy Spirit empowered obedience should lead to a life of radical love for the saints and a radical rejection of the love of the world. Let's first discuss what obedience is and then talk about those two radical loves, one to embrace and one to reject.

1. Is our obedience a desire for God to be satisfied with us or is it an overflow of our satisfaction in Him?

## **Read 1 John 2:3-6**

### **Discuss:**

**How does John say we come to know God in v.3?**

**What "commands" is John referring to?**

**In v.4, what does John mean when he says God's love is perfected in us when we keep His word?**

**According to v.5-6, how can we know we are "in Him"?**

John is making a point here that radical salvation leads to radical obedience. To know God, is to obey him. Obedience is the overflow of joy that you have been saved by Christ and spared the wrath of God through his atoning death on the cross. In knowing and loving God, he enables us, by His Spirit to obey.

John says that to claim to know God, but to have no fruit of obedience or no love for the things or commands of Christ, is to be a liar. Something that should be said of the people of God is that they obey God. John says those who keep God's word that the "love of God is perfected in Him" and that those who remain in God, who follow God, "walk as Christ walked". So obedience isn't just the proof of our love for God, it is also the assurance of our salvation. How do you know you are "in Him", you walk as Jesus walked.

Jesus himself taught of this kind of obedience in his gospel

Read John 15:1-8

Those who seek to love God more will come to know Him more, and those who come to know Him more will love Him more. That is the heart of obedience. It is the result of knowing and treasuring who God is and what he did for us. This leads to a spirit-empowered walk (life) that looks like Jesus'. He is the pattern. He is the model. It is by abiding in Him and walking like Him that we can embrace the radical love John talks about next.

### **Discussion Questions:**

**What does it practically look like to walk as Jesus walked?**

**How can we encourage each other daily in this?**

## 2. Embrace Radical Love for Each Other

**Read 1 John 2:7-11**

**According to v.7, what is the old command John is referring to?**

**What do you think John means by the "new command"?**

**Read John 13:34-35 and ask again "What is the new command?"**

The command to love one another has been there since the beginning of their Christian experience. But it's not just old as in it goes back to the 30's AD, when Christ ministered. It is also old in that it goes all the way back to Moses and the Law.

**Read Leviticus 19:17-18**

We are called to trust Christ, but in trusting him we are enabled to walk as He walked. Which means that our affections are changed. We are transformed into loving people.

The command to love was always there, but Jesus, as with most things, raised the standard of love. We are not only to love but to love as He loved. Jesus personified the love of God and by His spirit has poured out that love on us. This type of love is a supernatural love only displayed by those who follow Him and who are drawn out of darkness into His light. Jesus talked about this special love at the end of his ministry on earth.

**Read John 17:24-26**

Those who display that they are still in the darkness are obviously not in the light. One of the ways that plays out is how you either love or hate your brother. Those who have no love for the church or for the people of God are not in the light. John leaves no gray area here.

**According to v.11, what does it mean to "walk in darkness"?**

Those who have a pattern of life that is hateful toward others are "in darkness". All throughout the Bible this is a metaphor for spiritual death, for lostness. Those who are in the dark: walk (or live their life) in the dark, don't know where they are going (directionless), and are blind. Living in darkness means there is an absence of God, and therefore, an absence of love, from their life. The problem is that they have become accustomed to the dark.

**How can we help those walking in darkness?**

**What practical ways to we exhibit radical love for each other?**

So to be in Christ, means to be in the light, which means a supernatural and deep love for those whom Christ died for. A sacrificial love. Love comes at a cost. When you experience this kind of love, it leads you to reject another kind.

### 3. Reject the Love of the World

**Read 1 John 2:15-17**

**What does John mean when he says "the world" in v.15?**

**What three things are of the world in v.16?**

**According to v.17 that is the problem with falling in love with the world?**

John spends v.12-14 reminding the people of who they are. He reminds them that they are children of God, children of the light. They have been forgiven in the name of Jesus, they have come to know God, which in and of itself is amazing. The unknowable God has made himself known in Christ and has shined a light on our dark hearts, so that we might be called his children. This is amazing!

The word "world" in v.15 is not referring to the material world, or the people of the world. What is talked about here is rejecting love for a world system that rebels against and rejects the things of God. John MacArthur says it is an "invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan". It is a system that opposes God, His word, and His people. In verse 16, John says that everything that belongs to the world is not of God. The world cannot give you what you long for. Reject it. He names 3 things here, 3 weapons so to speak, the world would use to draw away your affections from God.

The lust of the flesh:

The temptation of the flesh, the lure of the world, would drive us to seek to fulfill our desires in ways contrary to God's will and His word. So this isn't just speaking of sexual immorality, but any fleshly desire. John is saying that in Christ you already have everything you need to have all these desires met. But because we still have indwelling sin, we must recognize that sometimes we are tempted to pursue things that aren't good for us, even when they seem good at first.

The lust of the eyes:

This refers to what you see. Sometimes this world will use things that are attractive to draw our minds and hearts away from God. What you see has a profound effect on you. I'm sure all of us can picture something in our life we have seen and never been able to forget. Sight is a powerful thing. It is after all what lured Eve to the forbidden fruit.

The pride of one's lifestyle:

This is referring to being prideful or boastful about either what you have (possessions) or how you live, your lifestyle. We are tempted to make an idol out of our stuff, our achievements, and our position.

## **According to Galatians 6:14, what should be our only boast?**

Never allow God's good things, to take the place of God. The cross is the source of all our blessings. The cross is where our victory was achieved.

The ultimate reason according to v.17, to not give any of our affection to the world is because ultimately it will not last. The world, along with all its lusts, is passing away. It will not last. John reminds us to give all our hope and affection and love to God. He is eternal and any investment made in Him will never go away.

What good things of this world can we often allow to take our eyes away from Jesus?

In what ways can our lifestyles, the way we choose to live, be a stumbling block to us?

I hope that as we learn more about what it means to be satisfied in Christ, we will also learn more and more what it means to love our brothers and sisters and reject the love of the world that is passing away. Embrace the eternal. Embrace the walk Christ walked. The self-sacrificing, world-rejecting, eternal love of Christ. May that kind of love be found in you, and may that kind of love be shown to you.

## **APPLICATION**

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

**Ask God to give you a new found delight in His word and obeying it.**

**How can we pursue love in a church made up of so many diverse people?**

**How can we help each other not fall in love with the things of this world?**

## **PRAYER**

## **COMMENTARY**

1 John 2:3-11: (From Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

What knowledge of Christ can that be, which sees not that he is most worthy of our entire obedience? And a disobedient life shows there is neither religion nor honesty in the professor. The love of God is perfected in him that keeps his commandments. God's grace in him attains its true mark, and produces its sovereign effect as far as may be in this world, and this is man's regeneration; though never absolutely perfect here. Yet this



observing Christ's commands, has holiness and excellency which, if universal, would make the earth resemble heaven itself. The command to love one another had been in force from the beginning of the world; but it might be called a new command as given to Christians. It was new in them, as their situation was new in respect of its motives, rules, and obligations. And those who walk in hatred and enmity to believers, remain in a dark state. Christian love teaches us to value our brother's soul, and to dread everything hurtful to his purity and peace. Where spiritual darkness dwells, in mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened, and will mistake the way to heavenly life. These things demand serious self-examination; and earnest prayer, that God would show us what we are, and whither we are going.

#### 1 John 2:9-14 (Taken from ESV Study Bible)

"Hates his brother". John often writes in black and white terms for emphasis. "darkness has blinded his eyes", In contrast to "light", "darkness" and "blindness" in Scripture often represent rejecting God's truth and persisting in sin.

John knows his message is greater than the sinister realities against which he warns. "I am writing to you...I write to you", The emphatic, repeated direct address points to John's strong feeling and determination to bring assurance to his readers. He expresses his confidence in the role of the Father and the word of God in their lives. Some view the terms "little children", "fathers", and "young men" as symbolizing the stages of spiritual maturity in a Christian's life. Others think "little children" refers to all of John's readers, while "fathers" refers to older believers and "young men" to those newer in the faith.

#### 1 John 2:15-17 (Taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

v.15- "the world" refers to not the people of the world nor the created order, but to worldly attitudes or values opposed to God. "Anything in the world" refers to the constituent elements that make up the world described in v.16. If people love the world, they do not love the Father. There is no middle ground.

v.16- "the lust of the flesh" is a general category. The following are sub categories. "Lust of the eyes" are sinful cravings that are activated by what people see. "The pride of life" includes being puffed up in pride because of one's material possessions. The word translated as "life" can mean "livelihood, living, property, and possessions". Here it means possessions (the predominant use in the NT).

v.17- "does the will of God" is the opposite of all that is involved in loving the world. It includes believing in the Son and loving fellow believers. "lives forever" means that Jesus promised believers that they will live, even though they die, and that they will live forever.

From Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on same verses:

2:15-17 The things of the world may be desired and possessed for the uses and purposes which God intended, and they are to be used by his grace, and to his glory; but believers

must not seek or value them for those purposes to which sin abuses them. The world draws the heart from God; and the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God decays. The things of the world are classed according to the three ruling inclinations of depraved nature. 1. The lust of the flesh, of the body: wrong desires of the heart, the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame sensual pleasures. 2. The lust of the eyes: the eyes are delighted with riches and rich possessions; this is the lust of covetousness. 3. The pride of life: a vain man craves the grandeur and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this includes thirst after honour and applause. The things of the world quickly fade and die away; desire itself will ere long fail and cease, but holy affection is not like the lust that passes away. The love of God shall never fail. Many vain efforts have been made to evade the force of this passage by limitations, distinctions, or exceptions. Many have tried to show how far we may be carnally-minded, and love the world; but the plain meaning of these verses cannot easily be mistaken. Unless this victory over the world is begun in the heart, a man has no root in himself, but will fall away, or at most remain an unfruitful professor. Yet these vanities are so alluring to the corruption in our hearts, that without constant watching and prayer, we cannot escape the world, or obtain victory over the god and prince of it.

# FBC Dickson

## UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 4 ABIDING IN CHRIST IN AN ANTI-CHRIST CULTURE

1 JOHN 2:18-27

### MAIN POINT

To define the term “antichrist” and how it is used in two different ways in this passage, and to discuss the characteristics of “antichrist”. Also to encourage each other with the words of John about remaining in Christ and what he means by that, and how that helps us deal with and defeat the spirit of antichrist both in the church and in the world.

### INTRODUCTION

We often get wrapped up in the material world. The things we have or don't have. We get caught up in the things that appeal to our 5 senses: what we can touch, what we can taste, see, smell, and hear. But the Bible is clear that there is a supernatural world. A dimension we can't perceive with our physical senses, but is none the less very real and very active. We don't often spend a lot of time in our churches talking about angels or demons or the Devil. And I do believe an over fascination with this world can be unhealthy, but so is completely ignoring it. C.S. Lewis said in The Screwtape Letters “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

John here refers to the spiritual dimension that opposes Christ as an anti-Christ spirit. John here in this passage reveals that a true spirit of Antichrist is alive and well and intent on defaming the person and work of Christ and destroying the church. We will discuss what that means, how to identify it, and what it means to abide in Christ in the midst of an anti-Christ culture.

**Why don't we often think about supernatural things?**

**Before we get started, how might you define something that is "anti-christ"?**

### UNDERSTANDING

We will first look at the difference between the terms "Antichrist" and "spirit of antichrist". Then we will examine 3 characteristics of "antichrists" or false teachers followed by examining 3 characteristics of true believers.

## 1. The difference between "Antichrist and anti-christs".

**Read 1 John 2:18**

**Why does John refer to his readers as "Children"?**

**What is the "last hour" John mentions in v.18?**

First, note John's use of the term "Last Hour" here. New Testament authors, including John, used this term to refer to the end of days or the last days. Yet it has been 2000 years almost since the time of John. So how do we make sense of this? In the NT, the phrase "last days or last hour" refers to the time of the church after the resurrection of Christ. They were then and we are now in the last days. Why? Because Christ could come back at any time. His return is imminent. John is warning the people to stay alert. Satan is active is trying to deceive believers and undermine the work of the gospel.

So what is "Antichrist" vs. "antichrists"? The only difference between the terms in Greek, *antichristos* (literally anti-Messiah) is that one is singular and one is plural. "Antichrist" was a particular individual, often in NT Scripture, who would be possessed by Satan and would rise up in the last days and oppose the church and attempt to defame Jesus and assert himself as Messiah and worthy of worship. He will be the worst human enemy the church has ever faced. Many will die at his hand, but Christ ultimately defeats him and casts him into hell for eternity (Revelation 19:17-21).

The little a "antichrists" John is referring to have been around since the dawn of the church in the 1st century, and will remain until Christ comes back. These are false teachers. They propagate a false gospel that usually either attacks the person and work of Christ or distorts the requirements of salvation (Ex.: promote a works based salvation). Examples of this in church history would be the Arians, early gnosticism, marcionism, or the Judaizers. All of these attack the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ (and thus his work on the cross), or in some way distort the message of the gospel as it relates to salvation.

**How does the presence of "antichrists", false teachers, remind us that we are in the last days?**

**What are some modern day false teachings that are opposed to Christ and the gospel?**

## 2. Three Characteristics of "antichrists" or false teachings

**Read 1 John 2:19; 22-23**

**How would you explain John's phrase in v.19, "they went out from us, but they did not belong to us"?**

**According to v.22, what does the "antichrists" deny?**

The first characteristic of false teachings is that it is demonic in nature. Satan after all is the father of lies

Read John 8:44

The word Satan actually means “adversary”. Our enemy is very good at lying. It comes from his nature. It is who he is. The first lie every told was by Satan in the garden. His job is to defame the name of Christ, bring confusion to the gospel message, and cause doubt about the word of God. He is constantly at work attempting to deceive us with the false promises of a false gospel.

The second characteristic is that antichrists and false teachers either abandon or harm the church. Look at v.19 again. False teachers abandon the church, and, to John, this makes it clear that they never belonged to the church. As Baptists, we believe strongly in the assurance of salvation. Those who have been bought and paid for by the blood of Christ, who have repented and turned to him for salvation, will never defect from the Church or leave Christ. Jesus also teaches about those who would walk away from Him and the church.

**Read John 10:25-30**

**How does Jesus refer to those who refuse to believe in these verses?**

**How do true believers respond to the voice of Jesus?**

A true believer, in the hands of Christ, will persevere. Not because your good enough or strong enough, but because Christ, your Advocate and Propitiation, is on your side. You are his child, and you are safe in Him.

Contrast that with what John says in verse 19, “They, meaning false teachers or unbelievers, went out from us, but they did not belong to us”. These people haven’t just left a church and moved membership to another. They have defected from the local church and in doing so have spurned Christ. John says that those who do that were never in Christ to begin with. So we must be aware that not all who claim to follow Christ actually do, and not all local congregations are biblical churches. Our world and culture is full of buildings that have the word “church” on them but have nothing to do with what the Bible says a church is. Often false teachers will leave a congregation, either because they have selfish ambitions or because a biblical church has removed them for false teaching and sin, and they will start another “church”.

The final characteristic of false teaching is that rejects Jesus and His works. See v. 22 and 23 again. Antichrists deny that Christ was the Messiah and deny he was from the Father or that Jesus and the Father are one. They may have believed Jesus was important, but He wasn’t God. They saw him as significant and special but not as the Savior. Modern day equivalents of this are Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the prosperity gospel, and liberal (theologically not politically) or progressive Christians.

**To sum up, name again the characteristics of false teachers/teachings?**

**Why is it important for every believer to be able to identify false teaching?**

**What is the danger in false teaching for the church?**

### 3. Three Characteristics of True Believers

**Read 1 John 2:20-21; 24-27**

**What does John mean in v.20 when he says "all of you have knowledge"?**

**What does it mean to have "anointing from the Holy One"?**

The first characteristic of a true believer is that they abide in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The greek word used here for anointing is "chrisma" which is the root word we get the English word "charisma" from or the word "charismatic" which is often used to describe Pentecostal circles. The word here is just referring to the presence of the Holy spirit in the believers life.

Two very important things the Holy Spirit does for believers is that He guides us in all truth and He guards us from error. Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit all of them have knowledge. They have the knowledge that the Holy Spirit shared with John and that he shared with them. They also have the Holy Spirit in them as a guide and teacher to guide them in the truth. In the Spirit, the church had all the truth it needed. They, and we, just need to trust Him to guide us in it. As we do this, the Holy Spirit will never reveal anything to you or anyone else that is contrary to what God has already given us in His word. We must abide in the Spirit and trust the Word of God.

The second characteristic of a true believer is that they abide steadfast in the gospel. Look at verses 24-26 again.

**According to these verses, what does it mean to remain or abide in the gospel?**

It is important that we remember that the gospel, God's word, is a fixed truth. It is unalterable. Unchanging.

**Read Jude 3**

**What does Jude say about the origin of the gospel message here?**

**What does he mean by "contending for the faith"?**

Jude like John faced false teaching. And because people in the church were buying in he wrote to warn them. He reminded them that the gospel message came to them from the Apostles. He also told them they must contend for it. They must fight to preserve it and

protect it. He lastly reminded them that it was given "once for all". In other words, the gospel doesn't need anything added to it or taken away from it. It stands alone and sufficient for all things necessary to the faith. So we should remain in it.

The final characteristic of a true believer that John mentions is that they abide in the truth. This means to walk in the truth and live in it. Abiding in Christ is a lifestyle. It's something, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you do every single day. We need a hope that is greater than us and greater than this life. Our hope is glory. It is that one day we will see the face of Christ. That's what it means to abide in the truth. You walk in it. You live in it. If need be, you give your life for it. That's why false teaching is so bad and so damaging. It has eternal ramifications. It takes the things of this life, dresses them up, and offers them to us as if they can fix all our problems. False teaching says "Jesus is great, but you know what else you need?".

No matter what happens in this life, here is our hope. **THE GOSPEL IS ENOUGH. JESUS IS ENOUGH.** False teaching says you need one more thing. The gospel says, Jesus is all you need.

**How do we daily abide in Christ?**

**How does this help us combat false teaching?**

## **APPLICATION**

**How can I better identify false teaching?**

**Am I daily abiding in Christ and in His word?**

**Who in my life has fallen for false teaching and how can I help them?**

## **PRAYER**

Pray for conviction and boldness to confront "antichrists" in my life, and pray for strength to abide in Christ and His word.

## **COMMENTARY**

1 John 2:18

John warned against many antichrists. This is probably a reference to misguided or diabolical individuals who were guilty of the sins that he described and condemned. They opposed and sought to replace the true Christ. (taken from CSB Study Bible)

#### 1 John 2:19

"they went out from us...they were not really of us". The first characteristic mentioned of antichrists, i.e. false teachers and deceivers, is that they depart from the faithful. They arise from within the church and depart from true fellowship and lead people out with them. The verse also places emphasis on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Those genuinely born again endure in faith and fellowship and the truth. The ultimate test of true Christianity is endurance. The departure of people from the truth and the church is their unmasking. (taken from NASB John MacArthur Study Bible)

#### 1 John 2:20-21

That the minds of Christians are so enlightened that they have a new perception of the truth. They see it in a light in which they did not before. They see it as truth. They see its beauty, its force, its adapted less to their condition and wants. They understand the subject of religion better than they once did, and better than others do. What was once dark appears now plain; what once had no beauty to their minds now appears beautiful; what was once repellant is now attractive.

Their knowledge of truth is enlarged. They become acquainted with more truths than they would have known if they had not been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their range of thought is greater; their vision more extended, as well as more clear. (taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible from biblehub.com)

#### 1 John 2:22-23

The great and most hurtful lies that the father of lies spreads in the world, usually are falsehoods and errors relating to the person of Christ. The unction from the Holy One, alone can keep us from delusions. While we judge favourably of all who trust in Christ as the Divine Saviour, and obey his word, and seek to live in union with them, let us pity and pray for those who deny the Godhead of Christ, or his atonement, and the new-creating work of the Holy Ghost. Let us protest against such antichristian doctrine, and keep from them as much as we may. (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

A second characteristic of the antichrists is that they deny the faith (i.e. sound doctrine). Anyone denying the true nature of Christ as presented in Scripture is an antichrist. The denial of Christ also constitutes a denial of God himself, who testified to His Son (John 5:32-38, John 8:18) (Taken from NASB John MacArthur Study Bible)

#### 1 John 2:24-27



The truth of Christ, abiding in us, is a means to sever from sin, and unites us to the Son of God, Joh 15:3,4. What value should we put upon gospel truth! Thereby the promise of eternal life is made sure. The promise God makes, is suitable to his own greatness, power, and goodness; it is eternal life. The Spirit of truth will not lie; and he teaches all things in the present dispensation, all things necessary to our knowledge of God in Christ, and their glory in the gospel. The apostle repeats the kind words, little children; which denotes his affection. He would persuade by love. Gospel privileges oblige to gospel duties; and those anointed by the Lord Jesus abide with him. The new spiritual nature is from the Lord Christ. He that is constant to the practice of religion in trying times, shows that he is born from above, from the Lord Christ. Then, let us beware of holding the truth in unrighteousness, remembering that those only are born of God, who bear his holy image, and walk in his most righteous ways. (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 5  
HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS  
1 JOHN 2:28-3:3

## MAIN POINT

To examine the nature of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION

**How would you define hope?**

**What are some things you have hoped for or are hoping for?**

Hope defined is “to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true.” I believe for those who follow Christ a more accurate definition is “to expect with confidence.” R.C. Sproul defines hope like this, “Hope is called the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19), because it gives stability to the Christian life. But hope is not simply a “wish” (I wish that such-and-such would take place); rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.”

We have all battled hopelessness. Or at least had moments where our hope was clouded. We all need reminded of the hope we have in Christ. Hebrews 11:1 says that our faith is the “reality of what is hoped for.” Our faith is anchored in something that is not merely a wish or a desire, it is anchored in a reality, in truth. Our anticipation is confident. God himself through His word and His Spirit has assured us of something. And according to this passage in 1 John that something is the Return of Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING

John lists 5 truths in this passage hope brings or gives us as believers

1. Hope Gives Us Boldness to Stand Unashamed

**Read 1 John 2:28**

**According to this verse, what is the purpose of remaining in Christ?**

**What does it mean to have boldness at His coming?**

John is repeating his desire that they abide in Christ. In Scripture important things are often repeated. Abide, abide, abide. And just when you think you got it. Abide again.

Abiding in Christ increases our hope and longing for Him. Abiding in Christ gives us assurance, boldness, and confidence.

A Christian's hope is sure that Christ will return. All will experience this, all will bow, all will acknowledge him as king. For each individual, Christ's return will either mean judgement or redemption.

We can also hope that when he does return, we don't have to be ashamed before Him. Our hope rests in the fact that Christ has covered our shame. He nailed our sin to the cross, took God's wrath upon himself for us, so that we can stand unashamed before him. If you belong to Christ, God the Father will not turn you away, and in His arms is rest and peace and comfort, the removal of all pain and sorrow and depression and all other maladies this world inflicts.

What do you hope for most in Christ's return?

In what ways might we struggle with having boldness "before Him"?

## 2. Hope Frees Us to Pursue Righteousness.

### **Read 1 John 2:29**

According to this verse, righteousness is the fruit of abiding in Christ. To put it in the words of John MacArthur, our hope makes righteousness a habit. The word "born" here is the same Greek word Jesus used with Nicodemus in explaining to him that a person must be "born" again to enter the Kingdom of heaven. So, those born again, or born of Him, bear the fruit of righteousness because Christ is righteous.

If my hope rests in my own ability to pursue God and live for Him then that hope will fail. I have no hope in and of myself to be able do that. However, if my hope rests in Christ, and His righteousness, that hope will not only carry me through this life but throughout all of eternity. That hope never fails.

**What does it mean to practice righteousness?**

**How would explain being "born of God" to someone who is lost?**

## 3. Hope in God's Love That Has Saved Us

### **Read 1 John 3:1**

**What did your earthly father mean to you?**

**In what ways were you proud to be his child?**

**According to John, why does the world "not know us" as God's children?**

I can almost picture John's astonishment as he recalls this great truth. We are loved by a heavenly Father. John is utterly amazed at this concept. To be a child of God, is the

wildest thing in the world to Him. And what a great cure for hopelessness it is to know you are loved by the God of all the universe. We have a heavenly father. We bear His name. The love God has for his children is astounding. It is that love that enabled us to be called His child. It's his love that came first. It's his love that found us. It's his love that whispered our name and called us out of sin and death. It's his love that even now sustains us, protects us, guides us, teaches us, refines us, purifies us, disciplines us, and is perfecting us.

That is something to hope in. We long for the return of Christ because it will reunite us with our heavenly father. John tells us to place our hope in the fact that we are God's child. And if we are his child, we are loved by him. And if we are loved by him, he will one day bring us home. And there we will see him

**What does it mean to you that God is your Father?**

**How does knowing He is your Father help you in hard times and give you hope?**

4. Hope That We Will One Day Be with Christ and Like Christ

**Read 1 John 3:2**

**According to this verse, what hasn't been revealed yet?**

**What do think John means when he says we will be like Christ when we see Him?**

Romans 8:28-30 make it clear the primary purpose and goal of every believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Here John is explaining that same purpose. Here he offers hope by affirming what we will be one day. We are even now God's children, but what we will be hasn't been revealed yet. God's saving grace isn't just a rescue, it is a transformation of all you are: mind, body and soul. You are a new creation in Christ.

We hope in two resurrections. First we hope in the resurrection of Christ. Secondly we hope in our own resurrection. John says "we will be like Him". The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of our own resurrection.

Our belief in the resurrection of Christ is vital to our hope. Because He was raised we will be too. And what Christ is now in his resurrection body, we will be one day.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:43-44**

**How does Paul describe the resurrection body?**

So we await His return because then "we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is". We will not be fully like Christ because we are not divine; omnipresent, all knowing,

all powerful. But we will be like him in that, to quote the ESV study Bible, we will “be morally without sin, intellectually without falsehood and error, physically without weakness or imperfection, and filled continually with the HS never to grieve him again”. Our hope is fueled by the fact that we will see Him and in seeing Him we will be like Him.

What do you look forward to most about your resurrection body?

#### 5. Hope that Causes Us to Walk in Purity

#### **Read 1 John 3:3**

#### **What does the word "pure" mean?**

To live in anticipation of the return of Christ, to live with hope, means that it changes the way we live, it makes a difference in our Christian walk. As the people of the Lord, anxiously awaiting his return, we are called to walk in purity.

Purity defined is “to be free of contamination”. So what contaminates us before God? Sin. And who has removed that sin from those who believe? Christ by his death on the cross. One day we will be like him, but for now we pursue purity.

#### **Read Philippians 2:12-15**

#### **What is our role in pursuing purity?**

#### **What is God's role?**

According to v.15, what is God's purposes of enabling us to pursue purity here and now?

God enables us to do as he has called us to do. If he has called us to live in purity, he gives us the strength to do it. We are called to do good works, which the Lord has prepared ahead of time for us to do.

The kind of hope we have is an active hope that pursues righteousness. It's not the kind of hope that sits back and wishes for things to happen, but it's the kind of hope that knows for certain Christ is coming back, and if he is coming back I ought to be found doing what he has called me to do. And I have hope that he will give me the strength and courage required to do it.

## **APPLICATION**

**What may be holding back your hope?**

**How can my hope fuel my daily devotion to God?**

**What do I need to confess to God so I might be able to walk in purity?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

Write or insert any Bible study notes or commentary from your preferred sources.

### 1 John 2:28-29

Maintaining one's personal relationship with Christ will prevent straying into doctrine or conduct of which one will be ashamed at his coming. When he appears many will lack confidence and will shrink back from him, because he will come in judgment. (Taken from ESV Study Bible)

Everyone who does what is right has been born of him. The corollary is that those who do not do what is right, no matter what claims they make to a special anointing, have not been born of God. (Taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

### 1 John 3:1-2

Â Little does the world know of the happiness of the real followers of Christ. Little does the world think that these poor, humble, despised ones, are favourites of God, and will dwell in heaven. Let the followers of Christ be content with hard fare here, since they are in a land of strangers, where their Lord was so badly treated before them. The sons of God must walk by faith, and live by hope. They may well wait in faith, hope, and earnest desire, for the revelation of the Lord Jesus. The sons of God will be known, and be made manifest by likeness to their Head. They shall be transformed into the same image, by their view of him. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

### 1 John 3:3

Moral purity is meant here, which is confirmed by v.5. Our hope of being like Christ when he appears must express itself in an effort to purify ourselves to be like him now. (taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

If you believe that Jesus is coming and that someday you are going to be like Him, that will cause you to live a pure life down here. I know of nothing that is such a great incentive for holy living. We are not wonderful now, but we shall be wonderful someday. (taken from J. Vernon McGee's Thru The Bible Commentary Vol. 5)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 6  
WHY CHRIST CAME  
1 JOHN 3:4-10

## MAIN POINT

To examine why Christ came to earth.

## INTRODUCTION

The last lesson John pointed his readers toward the 2nd coming of Jesus to rekindle their hope. In this lesson, we will see John point his readers back to the first coming of Jesus to remind them why Christ came the first time.

### **Why is it important to remind ourselves often of why Christ came the first time?**

Before John reminds his readers of why Christ came, he first warns them that their life not be marked by habitual sin.

### **Read 1 John 3:4**

### **How does John define "sin" in this verse?**

Sin is our great enemy. It is our primary problem. John here defines sin as lawlessness. This means "against the law of God". Sin is anything not compatible with God's laws or God's standards. In its truest sense, sin is rebellion. Rebellion against God and his ways, will, and law. One writer defines sin as "cosmic treason against the Sovereign of the universe".

You can't begin a conversation of why Christ came without a deep understanding of our sin. Because that is the primary reason he came.

## UNDERSTANDING

This passage gives us 3 primary reasons Christ came.

### 1. To Defeat Sin on the Cross

### **Read 1 John 3:5-6**

### **How did Christ "take away sins"?**

## **What do you think in v. 6 John means when he says "everyone who has been born of God does not sin"?**

There are two primary truths from verses 5 and 6 focus on here. First, Christ died so all our sins might be forgiven. Christ came to take away sins. This was the message heralded from the very beginning of John the Baptist's ministry "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". Christ's death paid our ransom. For those in Christ, their sins aren't counted against them because Christ has already been punished for them. Only Christ could do this. Why? Because there is no sin in Him. He was sinless. He is righteous, he is pure.

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:21**

## **What do we gain by Christ taking on our sin on the cross? What does that mean for us?**

Secondly Christ died to break our bondage to sin. Follow the logic of John here. Because Christ destroyed the work of sin, because Christ himself is sinless, therefore, his people should not live lives of habitual sin. The influence that sin had over us has been broken. We are no longer slaves of sin but slaves of righteousness. Before trusting in Christ our struggle was against God and His law. Now our struggle is against sin. To continue to abide in sin (habitually) is a sign that someone was never in Christ. It sounds harsh, but to John those who lived lives of unrepentant sin were not in Christ.

How do these two truths help us in our battles with sin?

### 2. To Destroy the Works of Satan

### **Read 1 John 3:7-8**

## **Who does John identify those who practice habitual sin with in v. 8?**

### **So what works of the Devil did Christ destroy?**

John says in v.7 "let no one deceive you". John knew that people were being led astray by false teachers. They were perverting the fundamentals of the faith. This is dangerous because bad theology leads to bad practice. Doctrinal impurity leads to moral impurity.

John calls God's people to a higher standard. He tells them to do what is right, and thus prove that they belong to Christ. If the Righteous One, Christ, has changed your heart, then righteous words and actions should flow from that. Christ is the pattern we should mimic.

John equates habitual sinning to being aligned with Satan. The source of sin and false teaching is the Devil. He sinned from the beginning. Satan is the original rebel. To make a practice of sin is to live a life resembling the original sinner, Satan. Satan has nothing to lose. He is doomed, and there is no hope for Him. His only job is your destruction. He has nothing else left to do with the time he has left but to defame the



name of Christ and destroy the church, God's people. And he is restless in doing this. But Christ has defeated this enemy of God's people.

### **Read Genesis 3:14-15**

**What was God's curse on the serpent?**

**What would come and ultimately defeat that serpent one day?**

Satan has been a crushed foe since the beginning of time. Christ's death on the cross fulfilled this promise. Yes Satan struck His heel, but Christ crushed His head. So sin no longer has power over a believer, and neither are we subject to the tyranny of Satan.

**How does the reality of Satan's defeat motivate us in pursuing righteousness?**

### 3. To Impart a Distinguishing Love

#### **Read 1 John 3:9-10**

**In verse 9, why does John say that a true believer's life can't be defined by habitual sin?**

**How should our love for each other distinguish us from the world?**

John is making the case in this whole passage that those who are God's children do not go on sinning. That is they don't continue in a life of sin. The work of Christ on the cross frees us and the work of the Spirit in our hearts enables us to live rightly. That's what "born of God" means. We can't continue in sin because we have experienced a new birth. John is saying that a believer cannot continue in his sin because God himself has taken up residence in them. You once loved sin, now you loathe it.

And one of the primary evidences that you are indeed a child of God who has experienced the new birth and is no longer bound by sin is this: you love the brethren. Our love for each other is a distinguishing mark and a distinguishing love different from the world. This is exactly what Jesus desired for his people.

#### **Read John 15:9-17**

What does this love look like? It sacrifices for the good of others. It warns them of sin and helps pull them out of it when they fall. It mourns with those who mourn and rejoices with those who rejoice. It takes food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. It speaks truth in love and calls sin sin for the sake of each other's eternal soul. It comforts the sick and dying. It prays for and visits the persecuted and suffering. It links arms with other brothers and sisters for the sake of the Great Commission.

## APPLICATION

**Christ has defeated your two greatest enemies. How does that motivate you daily?**

**How can we encourage each other with these truths?**

**How does Christ imparting a distinguishing love in his people help unify the church?**

## PRAYER

Write a prayer for your small group here.

## COMMENTARY

### 1 John 3:4-6

The verb "commits" in the Greek conveys the idea of making sin a habitual practice. Although genuine Christians have a sin disposition, and do commit and need to confess sin, that is not the unbroken pattern of their lives. A genuinely born again believer has a built-in check or guard against habitual sinning due to a new nature. "Sin is lawlessness". The first reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because sin is incompatible with the Law of God which they love. The term "lawlessness" conveys more than just transgressing God's law. it conveys the ultimate sense of rebellion, i.e., living as if there was no law or ignoring what laws exist. (Taken from John MacArthur, the MacArthur Bible Commentary)

Jesus appeared in order to take away sins, not only so that sin might be forgiven but also that it might cease to exercise its tyrannical bondage. "in him there is no sin", is a reminder that God is light and his Son embodies his sinlessness. (Taken from ESV Study Bible)

### 1 John 3:7-8

Beware of self-deceit. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, and to be a follower of Christ, shows an interest by faith in his obedience and sufferings. But a man cannot act like the devil, and at the same time be a disciple of Christ Jesus. Let us not serve or

indulge what the Son of God came to destroy. (Taken From Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

"Of the devil", this phrase gives the source of the false teachers' actions. The term devil means "accuser" or "slanderer". No only does Satan ("adversary") oppose God and His plan, but he is the originator and instigator of sin and rebellion against God and His law. Therefore, all of the unsaved are under the diabolic influence of Satan. Their sinful lifestyle reflects their satanic origin. John contrasts the children of God with the children of Satan in terms of their actions. While those who are truly born again reflect the habit of righteousness, Satan's children practice sin. (Taken from John MacArthur, the MacArthur Bible Commentary)

### 1 John 3:9-10

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin - This passage must either mean that they who are born of God, that is, who are true Christians, do not sin habitually and characteristically, or that everyone who is a true Christian is absolutely perfect, and never commits any sin. If it can be used as referring to the doctrine of absolute perfection at all, it proves, not that Christians may be perfect, or that a "portion" of them are, but that all are. But who can maintain this? Who can believe that John meant to affirm this? Nothing can be clearer than that the passage has not this meaning, and that John did not teach a doctrine so contrary to the current strain of the Scriptures, and to fact; and if he did not teach this, then in this whole passage he refers to those who are habitually and characteristically righteous. (taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

Renouncing sin is the great proof of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ. Beware of self-deceit. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, and to be a follower of Christ, shows an interest by faith in his obedience and sufferings. But a man cannot act like the devil, and at the same time be a disciple of Christ Jesus. Let us not serve or indulge what the Son of God came to destroy. To be born of God is to be inwardly renewed by the power of the Spirit of God. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion is not an art, a matter of dexterity and skill, but a new nature. And the regenerate person cannot sin as he did before he was born of God, and as others do who are not born again. There is that light in his mind, which shows him the evil and malignity of sin. There is that bias upon his heart, which disposes him to loathe and hate sin. There is the spiritual principle that opposes sinful acts. And there is repentance for sin, if committed. It goes against him to sin with forethought. The children of God and the children of the devil have their distinct characters. The seed of the serpent are known by neglect of religion, and by their hating real Christians. He only is righteous before God, as a justified believer, who is taught and disposed to righteousness by the Holy Spirit. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. May all professors of the gospel lay these truths to heart, and try themselves by them. (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 7  
LIVE LOVE: TRUTH IN ACTION  
1 JOHN 3:10-18

## MAIN POINT

The essence of true love is a love for the truth of God that leads to right actions and deeds.

## INTRODUCTION

Crises have a way of displaying both the loving nature of people and also exposing the ugly selfishness contained in every human heart. For many during a time of crisis, love is on display. They are checking on their neighbors and helping them. Others during a time of crisis are selfish. They think only of themselves and buy up and hoard supplies everyone needs causing many to have to go without. Stress exposes our hearts.

**How do you respond to stress or crisis?**

**What or who do you turn to during those times to ease that stress?**

## UNDERSTANDING

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

The answer to dealing with any kind of stress in our lives is love. Love is a central theme in 1 John as we have already seen and will see even more. A variation of the Greek word for love is used well over forty times in the letter of 1 John alone. In today's lesson we will focus on three specific aspects of love mentioned in this passage in 1 John.

1. Love's Message Has Been Declared from the Beginning

**Read 1 John 3:10-11**

**What is the message that the church had heard from the beginning?**

**Why does God have to "command" love?**

We see from verse 10 that love for each other is a sign to the world that we are of God. We show that we are children of God by faithfully loving each other. We are co-heirs with Christ. Our love for each other should run deep. Love is the message John has been proclaiming to the church since its beginning. The love of God displayed in the

death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, is the message they had heard from John. It's the message God used to draw them to repentance.

John's message of love is not unique to John. It's all over Scripture.

### **Read Romans 12:10, Galatians 5:13, and 1 Peter 1:22**

The gospel of the Lord Jesus takes a people who at one point were natural enemies and it unites them in love. It is a love that transcends all barriers the world would put between us. That's the message the Apostles have been declaring since the beginning of the church, and we continue in that message today.

**When was a time in your life when the supernatural love of God was on display?**

**How can we promote this kind of love in our church/groups?**

#### 2. Love's Absence is Hatred Leading to Death

### **Read 1 John 3:12-15**

**According to v.12, why did Cain murder Abel?**

**How does that explain the reality of the world's hatred for the things and people of God?**

John begins this passage by providing an example of hatred towards your brethren that all would know of, Cain, Cain was an ultimate example of hatred because he murdered his brother. What makes the example of Cain key to understanding this passage of 1 John is this, Cain presented himself outwardly as a God-worshipper. Even though he presented himself as a worshipper, even bringing and offering to God, he was evil at heart.

The Greek word translated as “murderer” in verse 12 is a particularly gruesome word. It means to slay, slaughter, or butcher or to be put to death by violence. Cain hated his brother because Abel was righteous. Cain was evil. That's why his offering wasn't accepted and Abel's was. If Cain hated Abel because he was righteous, then the world will hate those who follow Jesus for the same reason.

The system of the world is at odds with the imputed righteousness given to those who have trusted Christ for salvation. Believer, the very gift God has given you to justify you and make you right before Him is the very thing the world hates about you. Through faith you have been made right with God, but you have been put at odds with the world. But we are not to return this hate with more hate. No, we put the love of God on full display. I hope we see how seriously God takes love for each other. To harbor hatred in your heart for brothers and sisters in Christ, to John, was equated to murder. May we desire to be conformed to the image of Jesus more and more every day. May we live truth as love in action.

**Read Matthew 5:21-22**

**How does Jesus define murder?**

**How can we encourage each other as we deal with hatred from the world?**

3. Love's Evidence is Sacrificial Living

**Read 1 John 3:16-18**

**According to John, what is the evidence that God's love is in us?**

**What does sacrificial living look like?**

According to John, there is a very definitive test that reveals whether someone has come to truly know love. It is the test of sacrifice and suffering. Christian love is distinguishable in the world because it is self-sacrificing. The world measures status by what you acquire. The kingdom of God measures status by what you are willing to give away.

Jesus, of course, is the greatest demonstration of sacrificial love. We might be offended when we hear Jesus calling for us to lay our own lives down if he hadn't been willing to do the same. But he did. He doesn't just call for us to suffer. He suffers with us. He doesn't just call for us to deny ourselves. He denied himself first.

Being willing to die, is what is called for here in these verses, but verse 17 shows how this can play out more practically. A person who loves the way Jesus did would never see his brother or sister in need and turn a blind eye to them. James says the same thing in his letter.

**Read James 2:15-17**

So there are two types of sacrifice required of those who truly love Jesus and follow his example: the sacrifice of dying and the sacrifice of giving. It's a noble thing to be willing to die in service of the gospel. But it is equally honorable to give sacrificially of yourself for the good of others. What good is it to tell someone you love them enough to die for them, but turn a blind eye to their needs and suffering. If you know of a brother who has no heat in the winter because he can't pay his electric bill, and you have the means to help him but don't, then John would say that the love of Jesus is not truly in you no matter what you may say. If a widow in your church is suffering from loneliness and you are not willing to sacrifice time to fellowship with them, then John would likewise say that the love of Jesus is not evident in your life.

**What hinders us from this type of sacrificial living and giving?**

**What ways can we practically make evident the sacrificial love we have for each other?**

True love is truth in action. Live what you believe. In uncertain times, it isn't enough to just say what you believe. You must demonstrate it. You must live a radically sacrificial life. Living the gospel means being willing to suffer and die, but it also means having open hands and hearts for those around you.

## APPLICATION

**Is there any hatred or bitterness in my heart I need to repent of in order to love like Jesus has called us to?**

**Is there anything I am holding on to that I need to lay down to live more sacrificially for the sake of the gospel?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

Write or insert any Bible study notes or commentary from your preferred sources.

### 1 John 3:10-11

We should love the Lord Jesus, value his love, and therefore love all our brethren in Christ. This love is the special fruit of our faith, and a certain sign of our being born again. (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

This love is to be the mark of Christ's disciples. John says "what I am telling you is not new. You have heard this from the beginning. The Lord taught it to us, and all the apostles have taught this. We have heard from the beginning that we should love one another". Love of other believers is something that is woefully lacking today in many places. (Taken from J. Vernon McGee's Thru the Bible Commentary, Vol. 5)

### 1 John 3:12-15

"Do not be like Cain", this alludes to Genesis 4:1-16 which recounts Cain's murder of Abel because Abel's offering was accepted by the Lord while Cain's was not. (It may be

inferred from Genesis 4:7 that the Lord did not accept Cain's offering because Cain was an evildoer). (Taken from Zondervan NIV Study Bible)

Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He acted under the influence of envy. He was dissatisfied that his own offering was not accepted, and that his brother's was. The apostle seems desirous to guard those to whom he wrote against the indulgence of any feelings that were the opposite of love; from anything like envy toward more highly favored brethren, by showing to what this would lead if fairly acted out, as in the case of Cain. A large part of the crimes of the earth have been caused, as in the murder of Abel, by the want of brotherly love. Nothing but love would be necessary to put an end to the crimes, and consequently to a large part of the misery, of the world. (Taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

Do not be surprised or caught off guard when people of this world, people like Cain, hate you. It is their nature. However, don't you be like Cain. Don't descend to their level. Resist that primal urge to return hate with hate, murder for murder. The gospel has changed you, and love is at the heart of the gospel message. Where the gospel has taken root, love will be the natural fruit. (Taken from Christ Centered Exposition Commentary of 1 John)

### 1 John 3:16-18

Thus, the Saviour laid down his life for the good of mankind; thus the apostles exposed their lives to constant peril in extending the principles of religion; and thus the martyrs surrendered their lives in the cause of the church and of truth. In like manner, we ought to be ready to hazard our lives, and even to lay them down, if in that way we may promote the cause of truth, and the salvation of sinners, or serve our Christian brethren. In what way this injunction was understood by the primitive Christians, may be perceived from what the world is reported to have said of them, "Behold, how they love one another; they are ready to die for one another."

Perhaps the following would embrace the principal instances of the duty here enjoined by the apostle:

(1) We ought to have such love for the church that we should be willing to die for it, as patriot is willing to die for his country.

(2) we ought to have such love for Christians as to be willing to jeopardize our lives to aid them - as in case of a pestilence or plague, or when they are in danger by fire, or flood, or foes.

(3) we ought to have such love for the truth as to be willing to sacrifice our lives rather than deny it.

(4) we ought to have such love for the cause of our Master as to be willing to cross oceans, and snows, and sands; to visit distant and barbarous regions, though at



imminent risk of our lives, and though with the prospect that we shall never see our country again.

(5) we ought to have such love for the church that we shall engage heartily and constantly in services of labor and self-sacrifice on its account, until, our work being done, exhausted nature shall sink to rest in the grave. In one word, we should regard ourselves as devoted to the service of the Redeemer, living or dying to be found engaged in his cause. If a case should actually occur where the question would arise whether a man would abandon his Christian brother or die, he ought not to hesitate; in all cases he should regard his life as consecrated to the cause of Zion and its friends. Once, in the times of primitive piety, there was much of this spirit in the world; how little, it is to be feared, does it prevail now! (Taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

# FBC Dickson

## UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 8 THE LIFE-GIVING BENEFITS OF LOVE S1 JOHN 3:19-24

### MAIN POINT

God, through love, gives us life. This lesson examines three aspects of the life-giving benefits of God's love to the restless human heart.

### INTRODUCTION

The human heart is complex, it is vulnerable, but it is a vital part of who we are. Jesus famously said in Matthew 12:34, "the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart". We have a hard time hiding what is really in our hearts. Our hearts help us make moral choices. It allows us to express emotions. We have even developed sayings and platitudes such as "follow your heart" or "the heart doesn't lie". The problem is that the human heart has been affected by sin. It can often lead us astray or confuse us. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "the heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable; who can understand it?"

**Why shouldn't we just "follow our hearts"? What is the danger in that?**

**What does Jeremiah 17:9 and Matthew 12:34 reveal about our hearts?**

But there is good news for the afflicted heart. God knows all and God sees all. God's word and His Spirit offer us assurances as his children.

### UNDERSTANDING

Let's review the three aspects of the life-giving benefits of God's love

1. God's Love Assures Us of Our Salvation

**Read 1 John 3:19-20**

**What does John mean by "belong to the truth"? (see v. 18)**

**According to John what does our hearts/consciences do to us sometimes?**

**In what ways does our hearts condemn us? What does that mean?**

Verse 19 refers back to verse 18. Truth is meant to be lived out. What you truly believe in your heart will manifest itself in your daily actions and speech. Service means always putting others before yourself. It sometimes means doing the ordinary or mundane or the trivial. Service requires love and humility. When we serve in humility our hearts are assured that we belong to God. But our hearts are still a fickle organ. Even in the midst of selfless service our hearts can still be afflicted by doubt. But John in verse 20 says not to worry. Even if our hearts still condemn us, God is greater than our fickle, afflicted hearts. God knows who you truly are. Not only does he know us, he desires for us to have assurance.

### **Read Romans 8:1**

#### **What assurance does this verse offer our hearts?**

So sometimes we may have a guilty conscience, but God does not want that for you. This is where God's truth and his promises come in. Even when our hearts attempt to convince us we are guilty, God's word reminds us that Christ died as propitiation for our sins and stands even now as our Advocate. Christian, God knows all things, and He is greater than our hearts. This doesn't mean that our hearts lie to us all the time. If you are in Christ, then He is in you. He gave you the Holy Spirit to guide you, teach you, and convict you. So if you have a guilty conscience because of sin, your heart, rightly convicted by God, can lead you to repentance. God is at work in our hearts in both ways. Assuring our doubting hearts that we belong to Him while at the same time calling out the sin still in our hearts and leading us to repentance.

#### **What promises of God help assure you of your salvation?**

#### **Why is assurance of salvation so important for our daily lives?**

#### 2. God's Love Gives Us Confidence in Prayer

### **Read 1 John 3:21-22**

**According to this passage, what is the prerequisite to receiving "whatever we ask" of Him?**

#### **What does it mean to pray to God "confidently"?**

John here highlights the confidence we can have before God's throne. We can approach God's throne with a clear conscience. Not only that but we can have confidence that when we speak to God, he listens. Prayer is an amazing privilege that so many of God's children take for granted. He doesn't just desire for us to come to him in prayer, he delights in it.

#### **If this is true, then why is prayer so neglected in our daily devotion?**

We don't understand the blessing we have in prayer. If we did, we wouldn't neglect it so much. So, why don't Christians pray? There could be many reasons, but for the sake of

sticking to John's argument here, he says even a guilty or doubting conscience can lead to a less vibrant prayer life. In other words, we don't tend to call on God when we are carrying the burden of a condemning conscience. But this is the beautiful thing about the love John is talking about. We can rest in the fact that God loves us. If we are his, we no longer stand condemned before him. When we recognize this truth, it frees us to love more deeply and serve more joyfully. It also leads us to pray more confidently. God hears you. His grace is louder than the voices of condemnation in your own head. We can pray with a clear conscience before God.

**How can we make prayer a priority daily?**

**What daily practices help enhance your prayer life? (meaning posture, time of day, place, etc.)**

3. God's Love Provides the Loving Reassurance of His Holy Spirit

**Read 1 John 3:23-24**

**What does John say we have been commanded to do in v.23?**

**What does God promise to do for those that keep those commands?**

The greatest benefit of God's love for us is that He has chosen to abide in us. There are two primary commands God has given us according to these verses: to believe in the name of his Son and to love one another. But what does it mean to believe in Jesus' name? Jesus' name means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation". Jesus name in Aramaic was Yeshua, the same name we derive the name Joshua from. So, to believe in the name of Jesus means we believe he was the one sent by God to save. He is the one who brings salvation. Secondly we are commanded to believe Jesus is the Son, the second member of the Trinity. Jesus was unique in his relationship with the Father. In being the Son, that means he is the eternally existing Son. He is the eternal word, the logos, of John 1:1, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God".

We are also commanded to believe Jesus was the Christ, the anointed one of God. He was the long awaited and prophesied for Messiah of the Old Testament. The seed of Abraham, that would bless the nations. The king in the line of David who would rule forever. The suffering servant of Isaiah and the initiator of the new covenant in Jeremiah. When you put all this together you see that we are commanded to believe all Jesus says he is: salvation sent from God, the Son, and the anointed Messiah. Any gospel message that doesn't proclaim the totality of who Jesus is is a false gospel.

Â Those who remain in the truth of who Jesus is, God himself remains in them. This is a gracious gift of God. The keeping of God's commands can never be separated from abiding in God. You can't obey is He is not abiding in you. God's love for us makes love for him and obedience to his commands possible.

**What does it mean for God to remain in us?**

**How do we "remain in Him"?**

**In what ways does it encourage you to know that God has chosen to abide in you by His Spirit?**

The truth of God's abiding presence in us daily reminds us of His unfailing love for us. We belong to Him, and He belongs to us. We are his children, and He is our father. He invites us to pray to Him. He delights in hearing our voice. He takes joy in reassuring our hearts of His mercy and grace towards us. He desires to heal our condemning consciences and to affirm us as his children through the abiding presence of His Spirit in us. What a glorious truth to hold on to when times are so uncertain.

## APPLICATION

**How can you help a fellow believer who may be suffering from a doubting conscience and struggles accepting assurance of their salvation?**

**What is needed in your prayer life in order for it to be more confident?**

**How can you make abiding in Christ a daily habit?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

1 John 3:19-20

Our consciences are often restless and troubled in view of past guilt; but, in thus furnishing the evidence of true piety by love to others, we shall pacify an accusing mind, and conciliate our own hearts, and persuade or convince ourselves that we are truly the children of God. See Robinson, Lexicon. In other words, though a person's heart may condemn him as guilty, and though he knows that God sees and condemns the sins of his past life, yet the agitations and alarms of his mind may be calmed down and soothed by evidence that he is a child of God, and that he will not be finally condemned. A true Christian does not attempt to conceal the fact that there is much for which his own heart and conscience might justly accuse him but he finds, notwithstanding all this, evidence that he is a child of God, and he is persuaded that all will be well. (Taken from Barnes' Notes on the Bible)

**Whenever our hearts condemn us.** Whenever one has an inward conviction of sin. It is vital in such times to have a living faith; the proposition that God is greater than our heart grants us assurance that he has forgiven us through the atoning work of Christ. (Taken from ESV Study Bible)

### 1 John 3:21-22

This passage has been interpreted in terms of believers assurance in two ways: 1.) If our consciences condemn us, God is kinder than our consciences, and if they do not condemn us, we have confidence that God will hear our prayers. 2.) If our consciences condemn us, God is more rigorous than our consciences, but if they do not condemn us, then we have confidence that God will hear our prayers. Alternatively, the passage may be interpreted in light of Deut. 15:7-9, which warns the Israelites about hardness of heart toward needy people. John insists our mean-spirited hearts must be persuaded to make the sacrifice because we will not escape God's notice. If we do respond generously, we experience confidence in prayer. (Taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

"Confidence toward God". Love banishes self-condemnation. When a Christian recognizes in his life the manifestation of love in deeds and actions, it results in confidence about his relationship with God. (Taken from The MacArthur Bible Commentary)

### 1 John 3:23-24

When believers had confidence towards God, through the Spirit of adoption, and by faith in the great High Priest, they might ask what they would of their reconciled Father. They would receive it, if good for them. And as good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, particularly to the brethren, must be in the hearts of those who go to God and heaven. He who thus follows Christ, dwells in Him as his ark, refuge, and rest, and in the Father through him. This union between Christ and the souls of believers, is by the Spirit he has given them. A man may believe that God is gracious before he knows it; yet when faith has laid hold on the promises, it sets reason to work. This Spirit of God works a change; in all true Christians it changes from the power of Satan to the power of God. Consider, believer, how it changes thy heart. Dost not thou long for peace with God? Wouldst thou not forego all the world for it? No profit, pleasure, or preferment shall hinder thee from following Christ. This salvation is built upon Divine testimony, even the Spirit of God. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

God's Command is that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. Every word in this command is significant. This is the first of nine occurrences of the word "believe" in 1 John. It means, "to trust or rely on". Jesus "name" conveys His person and work and all that He is and accomplishes. That Jesus is the "Son" emphasizes His eternal deity and unique relationship to the Father. "Jesus" is His human name, equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua. It means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation". And "Christ" means "Anointed One", the Messiah of God. (Taken from Christ Centered Exposition Commentary on 1 John written by Danny Akin)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 9  
STANDING FIRM IN THE TRUTH  
1 JOHN 4:1-6

## MAIN POINT

Realizing the reality of spiritual darkness and learning to stand firm on the truth of God's word.

## INTRODUCTION

Spiritual warfare and spiritual darkness were just as present in John's day as it is for us today. There were many false prophets in the world then, and there are many still today. It should be heart breaking to us as believers when people are given false hope by a false message.

**Have you ever experienced a spiritually dark time or know someone deceived by a message of false hope?**

**As a reminder from a previous lesson, what is the "spirit of antichrist" in the world?**

**How does this spirit of deception affect the church?**

## UNDERSTANDING

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

In this lesson we will examine 3 actions we must take in order to stand firm in the truth.

1. We Test Every Spirit (v.1)

**Read 1 John 4:1**

**By what means do we "test the spirits"?**

**What are some characteristics of "false prophets"?**

John spent a lot of time talking about the Holy Spirit in chapter three. But here he makes clear that there are other spirits at work as well. We are not to believe them all. Behind every prophetic word is a spirit. There is the Spirit of truth from God, and there is the spirit of deception from Satan. It is not only right, but biblical to have a healthy skepticism regarding anyone who claims to speak the truth of God.

Fortunately, God has not left it up to our intellect alone to determine what is from him and what is not. He gave us his word. John says to “test spirits to determine if they are from God”. We are commanded, not recommended, to test every spirit, every teaching regarding God, his word, and his work. But How do we test spirits? I think a great example can be found in Acts 17.

### **Read Acts 17:10-15**

**How do these verses describe the Bereans?**

**How did they receive Paul's message?**

**What does this teach us about testing the spirits?**

Never take anyone for just their word. Compare what is being taught to what we know God has already revealed to us in his word. God would never send a message contrary to what he has already revealed in his word. Test everything! Along with this command comes another implied command. If we are supposed to test every spirit, then we must be deeply immersed in the truth of His word. So many are led astray because they lack an elementary understanding of the gospel. We must read God’s word often and carefully and trust His Spirit to guide us and protect us from ungodly deception.

**What harm is caused to the church when we fail to "test the spirits" as we are commanded?**

**How do you maintain a discerning spirit in your own life?**

2. We Affirm A Better Confession (v.2-3)

### **Read 1 John 4:2-3**

**According to John, how do we "know the Spirit of God"?**

**Why is confessing "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" so important to our faith?**

There are certain aspects of the person of Jesus that cannot be denied. One of those things is his incarnation. The Messiah, the Anointed One of God, came in the flesh and his name was Jesus.

The word “confesses” in verse 2 is the Greek word *homologeo*, which is a combination of the Greek words *homou*, meaning same or together, and *logos*, meaning of speech. So *homologeo* means to speak the same as another, or to assent or agree. It can also mean to profess or to declare openly, to speak freely. What John is saying here is that the way to know if a message or person is truly of God and from God is that that person confesses the same thing as the Spirit.

*Homologeo* is a Greek word used in other New Testament passages as well



**Read Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 13:15 for examples of the uses of *homologeō*.**

In testing the spirits, we are only to give ear to the ones that make the true and right confession about the person of Christ. The early church did not have the totality of the New Testament to rely on like we now have. What they did have were early church confessions and creeds that promoted and solidified right doctrine, particularly pertaining to the person and work of Jesus. Many of these creeds are actually recorded for us in the New Testament.

Examples:

*“He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” - 1 Timothy 3:16*

*“...maranatha that is , Lord come” 1 Corinthians 16:2*

*“Jesus is Lord” - recorded in Romans 10:9*

*“that Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

I could also cite many other creeds and confessions such as the Apostle’s Creed of the early 3rd century or the Nicene Creed of the 4th century. The point is that the early church relied on confessions and creeds to judge truth. In order to be from God, you must confess the right things about Christ. It is the same for us. We must only accept right confessions about Jesus in our own lives and in the life of the church.

**What confessions or Scriptures did you memorize early in life that have helped you "test the spirits" later in life?**

**How can we promote right confessions in our homes? Our church?**

**Why have so many people strayed from the use of catechisms and confessions to teach children truth?**

3. We Trust a Greater Spirit (v.4-6)

**Read 1 John 4:4-6**

**Who have we conquered according to v.4?**

**How have we conquered them?**

**In what ways does the Holy Spirit aid us in "testing the spirits"?**

It is good and right to acknowledge the spirit of antichrist in this age. But there is no reason to fear it. Why is this? According to verse 4, we have conquered them. The Greek word translated as conquer here is used 28 times in the New Testament. It is translated primarily as overcome in many places. It means to carry off the victory, to win the case, and to maintain the cause. We as believers have rejected, and thus conquered, the false prophets and antichrists in the world. We have made the better confession, Jesus in Lord. But we haven't done this in our own power. John makes it clear that we have overcome because "the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world". Who is this one? God's very Spirit that abides in you. He is greater. The Holy Spirit dwells in each believer and is a built-in alarm for false teaching.

John gives God's people a reminder in verse 5. Those who come bearing falsehoods about the person and work of Christ are from the world. When the messengers of the world speak, the people of the world listen. We shouldn't be surprised the world would listen to and embrace the message of false teachers. Lost people act lost and live lost. They don't know Christ. His word and His Spirit are not in them. This is a warning for all believers. Anytime someone claiming to come from God speaks a message that is wholeheartedly embraced by the world, that should alarm us. The church of the Lord Jesus ought not embrace a message that the world has no problem with. The cross and the gospel offend. The message of Jesus will always be at odds with the world.

**How can we daily conquer the false messages of the world?**

**In what ways are we already conquerors? How does that truth help us combat false teaching?**

**What should we do if we see a brother or sister being led astray by a false message?**

## APPLICATION

Are you daily in God's word so that you might more accurately "test the spirits"?

What is one thing you can do this week to better prepare yourself against false messages?

How can you help promote healthy discernment in your home? the church?

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

### 1 John 4:1

"do not believe every spirit". The mention of the Holy Spirit in 3:24 prompts John to inform his readers that other spirits exist (i.e. demonic spirits) who produce false prophets and false teachers to propagate their false doctrine. Christians are to have a healthy skepticism regarding any teaching, unlike some among John's congregations who were too open-minded to anyone claiming a new teaching regarding the faith. Christians are to be like the Bereans who, as students of the Word, examined the Scriptures to determine truth and error. The word "test" is a metallurgist's term used for assaying metals to determine their purity and value. Christians must test any teaching with a view to approving or disapproving it, rigorously comparing any teaching to the Scripture. By juxtaposing "spirits" with "false prophets", John reminds his readers that behind human teachers who propagate false doctrine and error are demons inspired by Satan. Human false prophets and teachers are the physical expressions of demonic, spiritual sources. (Take from The MacArthur Bible Commentary)

Â Because the Gnostics and other heretics, in the first age, to gain the greater credit to their erroneous doctrines, assumed to themselves the character and authority of inspired teachers, John put his disciples in mind, (1 John 2:27,) that they had an unction from the Holy Spirit, by which they were enabled to judge with certainty, both of teachers and of their doctrine. He therefore, in this chapter, commands them not to believe rashly every teacher who pretended to be inspired, but to try the inspiration by which any preacher professed to speak, whether it was from God or from evil spirits; that after trial they might know whom it was their duty to attend to, and whom they ought to disregard and reject. And to secure them, as far as possible, from being deceived, he especially desires them to consider whether the teacher, who came to them, pretending to inspiration, held the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, which all the teachers, really inspired of God, regularly and uniformly maintained. His words may be paraphrased as follows: Believe not every spirit- By which any teacher is, or professes to be, actuated: or, believe not every teacher who pretends to be inspired by the Spirit of God; but try the spirits - Namely, whether they are of God- By the rule which God hath given. We are to try all spirits by the written word: To the law and to the testimony! If any man speak not according to these, the spirit which actuates him is not of God. Because many false prophets- Or false teachers; are gone forth into the world- With an intention to draw disciples after them. (taken from the Benson Commentary)

### 1 John 4:2-3

John establishes a doctrinal standard, specifically a Christological one, for testing spirits. If a spirit (or a person moved to speak by such a spirit) does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, that spirit or person is misleading God's people. Apparently many false teachers were saying that Jesus only "appeared" to be human. This was probably based on a false idea that the material creation was inherently evil and therefore physical bodies were evil.

Whoever refuses to acknowledge that Jesus is God the Son, "who has come in the flesh" is not of God. Anyone can talk about Jesus and even believe that he lived on earth, as other religions, cults, and philosophies often affirm. But unless such people affirm both

the full deity and fully humanity of Jesus, they are not truly "confessing Jesus" but, as John states in unequivocal terms, they are under his influence of the spirit of the antichrist. (take from ESV Study Bible)

But try the spirits whether they are of God - There were those in the early Christian church who had the gift of "discerning spirits," (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:10), but it is not certain that the apostle refers here to any such supernatural power. It is more probable, as he addresses this command to Christians in general, that he refers to the ability of doing this by a comparison of the doctrines which they professed to hold with what was revealed, and by the fruits of their doctrines in their lives. If they taught what God had taught in his word, and if their lives corresponded with his requirements, and if their doctrines agreed with what had been inculcated by those who were admitted to be true apostles, 1 John 4:6, they were to receive them as what they professed to be. If not, they were to reject them, and hold them to be impostors. It may be remarked, that it is just as proper and as important now to examine the claims of all who profess to be teachers of religion, as it was then. In a matter so momentous as religion, and where there is so much at stake, it is important that all pretensions of this kind should be subjected to a rigid examination. No one should be received as a religious teacher without the clearest evidence that he has come in accordance with the will of God, nor unless he inculcates the very truth which God has revealed. See the Isaiah 8:20 note, and Acts 17:11 note.

Because many false prophets are gone out into the world - The word prophet is often used in the New Testament to denote religious instructors or preachers. See the notes at Romans 12:6. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 2:1. Such false teachers evidently abounded in the times here referred to. See the notes at 1 John 2:18. The meaning is, that many had gone out into the world pretending to be true teachers of religion, but who inculcated most dangerous doctrines; and it was their duty to be on their guard against them, for they had the very spirit of antichrist, 1 John 4:3. (Taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

#### 1 John 4:4-6

"have overcome [conquered] them". means they have rejected the heretical teaching of the antichrists (i.e. the secessionists). "the one who is in you" refers to the Holy Spirit. "the one who is in the world" is the spirit of antichrist, the devil, who is active in the inhabited earth. The spiritual security of believers rests ultimately upon the Spirit's work within them, and there is no power greater than the Spirit of God that can destroy his work. This is a firm basis of Christian assurance.

"they are from the world" refers to the secessionists who by rejecting the gospel have thrown their lot in with the world. "Speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them" is referring to the heretical teaching, shaped by worldly categories, which is more plausible to many unbelievers than the truth of the gospel. (Taken from Zondervan NIV Study Bible)

The sum of revealed religion is in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person and office. The false teachers spake of the world according to its maxims and tastes, so as not to offend carnal men. The world approved them, they made rapid progress, and had many followers such as themselves; the world will love its own, and its own will love it. The true doctrine as to the Saviour's person, as leading men from the world to God, is a mark of the spirit of truth in opposition to the spirit of error. The more pure and holy any doctrine is, the more likely to be of God; nor can we by any other rules try the spirits whether they are of God or not. And what wonder is it, that people of a worldly spirit should cleave to those who are like themselves, and suit their schemes and discourses to their corrupt taste? (taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 10  
CELEBRATE JESUS, TRUE LOVE INCARNATE  
S1 JOHN 4:7-19

## MAIN POINT

To discuss the incarnation of Christ, who is love, and the implications of the incarnation for us.

## INTRODUCTION

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

We often use the word incarnate or incarnation at Christmastime. It is after all what the whole season is about. A time to reflect on, celebrate, and stand in awe and wonder at the incarnation. Defined incarnate means “to be made manifest or comprehensible”. Or “to be invested with bodily or human form”. As it relates to Jesus, when we use the word incarnate or incarnation, we are speaking about him being the fleshly embodiment of deity in earthly form. The person of Christ unifies divinity and humanity.

The passage we are looking at in this chapter also says that God is love. He is the manifestation of love. So if God is love, and Christ is God, then Jesus is love made flesh. Love incarnate.

**In what ways does your family acknowledge or celebrate the incarnation of God in Christ?**

**Why is the incarnation important for Christian doctrine?**

## UNDERSTANDING

Before we discuss this passage let's first do a quick word study.

Word Study:

*Agapao* (agape): Greek word used 21 times in these 13 verses.

- Means "love, affection, or benevolence". Often used to describe the deep love God has for his people and for His Son.

Let's now discuss how God's *agapao* love for us was manifested in Christ and what are the implications for us.

## 1. True Love's Origin

### **Read 1 John 4:7-8**

**According to John, where is love from?**

**What does John mean when he says "God is love"?**

John spells out the origin of love is God himself. This is interesting. Love isn't man made. It didn't originate in our hearts. We often define love in terms of just pure sentiment or in sexual terms. Here John says love has a divine origin. It comes from God, who is love. What does this mean? John Piper says it well when he says "love is from God the way heat is from fire, or the way light is from the sun. Love belongs to God's nature. It's woven into what He is. It's part of what it means to be God. The sun gives light because it is light. And fire gives heat because it is heat". Verse 7 also makes clear that that in order to truly love, one must be born of God. Love is the chief evidence you know God and have been born again. To be born again, is to be changed from the inside out by the power of God. His spirit does a work in your heart enabling a new kind of love. This radical type of love is such a distinguishing characteristic of a true believer that in verse 8 John goes so far as to say that if someone doesn't exhibit this type of love, they do not know God.

## 2. True Love's Revelation (v.9)

### **Read 1 John 4:9**

**How was God's love revealed to us?**

**What does John means when he says "so that we might live through Him"? How do we live through Christ?**

John says that the only way we can come to know the radical, self-sacrificing love of God is for him to reveal it to us. This is a theme in all of Scripture. God can't be found by human means. He must be revealed by divine ones. God isn't discovered, he makes himself known. So it is with his love.

The word "revealed" in v.9 means to "make known", "to be made visible", "to be made clear or put on display". The primary way God has revealed his love to us is through the sending of His Son. Jesus is the means by which the essence of God's love for us is made visible. In Christ, God has put His love on display. Hebrews 1:3 also makes this clear.

### **Read Hebrews 1:3**

**In what ways is Christ the "exact expression of God's nature"?**

Christ was the final and fullest revelation of God. He radiated the glory of the Father and was by His very nature God. God's love is so deep that he was willing to send that

unique Son, the eternal, pre-existent, and divine Son, into a world cursed by sin to dwell among sinners. The next few verses explain why.

In what other ways has God revealed his love to us?

### 3. True Love's Demonstration (v.10-12)

#### **Read 1 John 4:10-12**

**According to John, what is the primary way God demonstrated his love for us?**

**Why is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus the greatest demonstration of God's love?**

John says three very important phrases in verse 10. First, he says, “not that we loved Him”. God’s love for us wasn’t prompted by our love for Him. He didn’t see us longing for him or reaching out in love for Him and then decide to love us in response. Our sinful hearts were not capable of the kind of love God has. The bible says that before salvation we had no love for God, we were enemies of God, and haters of righteousness who prefer the dark to light. We did not love first. The second truth of verse 10, “He loved us”. God’s love pre-empted ours. His love enabled ours. He who is love, loved first. Not only that but his love led him to do something so wild, so drastic, and so magnificent to redeem us that we never would have imagined it. This is the third truth, He “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”.

Jesus offered himself as payment for our sins, taking our curse. God sent his Son, born of a virgin, for the purpose of being our propitiation, our atonement. 2 Corinthians 5:19 speaks of this as well.

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:19**

**How did God reconcile the world to Himself?**

**What does it mean to you that because we are in Christ, God no longer holds our trespasses against us?**

If God loves us in this way “we also must love one another”. God’s love is not only our example but the motivating factor behind our love for each other. Our love of others is a response of gratitude to God for His love for us. In verse 12, John makes a very distinct point about the church. All of us should pay attention here. The love of God, great as it is, is invisible. No one has seen God. But when we love each other as we ought and when we practice agapao, it is proof that God is indeed among us and that His love is real. We are the only visible demonstration of God loves this lost world sees. In us, God’s love is perfected or brought to completion.



**In what ways specifically is God's love made complete by our love for each other?**

**What does our love for each other demonstrate to the world about God?**

4. True Love's Implications (v.13-19)

**Read 1 John 4:13-19**

**How is the Holy Spirit in us evidence of God's love?**

**How does God's love give us confidence in the day of judgment according to v.17?**

**What is the connection between love and fear in v.18?**

*There are 3 implications mentioned in these verses.*

Â The first implication is assurance of salvation. When you love as God loves, this is evidence in your life that you have His Spirit, that He abides in you. To love as God loves requires the power of God. The fact that this love abides in us is our assurance of salvation. To love this way, means He is with you. And if He is with you, you are his and belong to Him. God abides in those who confess Christ. If you are a believer today you also have come to know and believe the love God has for us in Christ. You know this because His love is in you, and it will remain in You because you are His. This is the truth the Holy Spirit constantly reminds us of. As the Holy Spirit reminds us that He is in us, our salvation becomes a settled issue in our hearts. God's love in you doesn't stir up doubt about your salvation, but it reassures with hope and love that you are his.

**In what ways does the Holy Spirit assure us of our salvation?**

The second implication comes from verse 17. We can be confident in the day of judgment. John is speaking about how we should view the day of judgment. We should view it both positively and negatively. In other words, because of God's great love we can be confident (positive) in regards to the day of judgment, and not fear it (negative) at the same time. The judgment of God is very real. It will happen. Just as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow Christ will return, and judgement will happen. Jesus spoke forcefully and often about the day of judgment. When you think about it, the purpose of spreading the gospel is so that people may be made right with God and thus be prepared for that day. John says not only can we be prepared, but we can be confident. Why? John says, "for we are as He is in this world". What does he mean by that? The best I can surmise is that if you are in Christ, if you are abiding in the love of God and He is abiding in you, then you stand in relation to God in the same way Christ does. He treats us in the same way as His son.

The third implication from this text is that we can have fearlessness in life. The same agapeo love that builds our confidence in light of judgment also banishes fear from our

daily lives. This passage isn't talking about natural fears. Fears such as don't pet bears or swim with sharks or walk up on a pack of wolves. Don't play with a brown recluse. Don't kiss someone with the flu and don't sky dive without a parachute. It's good to fear those things. Your life depends on it. I also don't think this is talking about a healthy fear of the Lord. We should have awe and reverence for Him. What is this passage talking about? I think it means no fear of death, wrath, or final judgment. As believers, we do not have to fear being cast out by God, rejected by God at final judgment, or facing the wrath of God.

Perfect love casts out fear because perfect love has already conquered death, hell, and the grave. Perfect love casts out fear because it has already stood in our place, taken our judgment, and declared us righteous by faith in Jesus.

**How does it help us face life knowing we don't have to fear final judgment?**

**How can we best display our confidence and fearlessness to the lost?**

**Can you think of any other implications of God's love for you?**

The origination of love is God Himself. In grace, he gave that love a face in Jesus. Jesus by his life, death, and resurrection demonstrated that love for us. In Him, we can be assured of our salvation. In Him, we can stand confidently as we await the day of judgement. In Him, we can live the life God has called us to live without fear of being rejected on that final day. The love that became incarnate in the person of Christ now lives in us, and that should lead us to a life of deeper love and obedience towards God.

## APPLICATION

**How can you display the agapao love of God to others this week?**

**Have you take time to thank God for displaying his love for us by sending Christ?**

**Are you or someone you know having doubts about their salvation? how can you use this passage to help reassure them (yourself)?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

1 John 4:7:

“Dear friends” introduces a new subject, and it reestablishes warmth and affection following a very pointed and direct discussion. He loves them and will now challenge them to love others as well.

Love flows from or out of God and has God as its source. Not only is this true of God, but all who love have been born of God. John is referring to a particular kind of love that is found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ. The perfect tense of “born” would include the initial rebirth of Christians and the continuing effects this would have in their life, and the present tense of “know” emphasizes that Christians are continuing to grow in knowledge of God. In other words, it is not the Christian’s ability to love that causes the new birth, but his ability to love flows from his regeneration in Christ.

#### 1 John 4:8-9.

John turns from the positive expression of truth to its negative expression. He adds emphasis to the point in v. 7 by stating the converse. Those who do not love do not know God. The absence of love in the life of an individual proves that he does not know God. The one who does not love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God. The reason this is true is because God is love. John has already stated that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and that God is light (1 John 1:5), and now he gives one more encompassing statement regarding the nature of God. In this context John is saying that to know the love of God is to manifest His love. Without this manifestation one could not possibly know, or ever have known, God or His love.

Because His very nature is love, mercy and goodness flow from God like a beautiful river, as sunlight radiates from the sun. Love has its ultimate source and origin in God. It is not an abstract concept but concrete action, as John will now explain. John states that believers are to love, first, because love is the very nature of the God (v. 8) to whom they belong and of whom they are partakers and, second (v. 9), because of the incredible manner in which God’s love was displayed. The sentence structure accentuates the nature and uniqueness of Christ. God sent His Son. The corresponding noun is typically rendered “apostle” and indicates one who is sent on a mission with a purpose, as a representative of another. This purpose is that we might live through Him. Life through and in the Son is a subject that greatly interests John. He refers to it no fewer than six times in vv. 9-16. The perfect tense of “sent” emphasizes the permanent consequences of this act. The verb “live” implies that those to whom the Son was sent were in a condition of spiritual death, and His mission was to impart life to them. This life only occurs through Him since He is the true and only mediating agent between God and man (see 1 Tim. 2:5).

#### 1 John 4:10.

The purpose in sending the Son is not the incarnation but the “atonement” God sent His Son to die. Further, God’s love is primary, not ours. The death of Christ is extolled, not the birth. John, in concluding the verse with the phrase “our sin”, is keenly aware of his own need as well as ours for this propitiatory act. Our act was to sin. God’s was to

love and send. Man in his natural condition does not love God nor His Son whom He sent. But clearly and amazingly, God loved us. And what incredible and unfathomable love it is: He sent His Son, and He sent Him to die for us. Love is always demonstrated by actions. It is not abstract; it is never complacent or static.

John has already given the purpose for this demonstration of love: (1) to take away our sins (1 John 3:5) and (2) to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This marvelous act was prompted not by man's love for God but God's love for man. Left to ourselves, we would not love Him. We would hate Him and oppose Him. It took His boundless, sacrificial love to break our hearts of stone and bring us to Himself. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in Him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

#### 1 John 4:11-16:

John now builds on his original admonition to love one another (v. 7). For the sixth time He uses this compassionate and affectionate greeting "Dear friends" to exhort his readers. John is not so much introducing a new subject as he is adding to his prior discussion. Once one begins to understand the incredible price paid for sin and the magnitude of personal sin, he will understand the love of God and demonstrate it himself (John 13:31-35). The love God has shown becomes the motive for our responding to others properly. John is insisting that loving God and loving others cannot be divorced, which is exactly what Jesus taught in Matt 22:37-40. John is writing to those who are recipients of God's love. Since God has loved them in this way, they have no option but to do the same. John used the phrase, "no one has ever seen God" to refer to God the Father in His heavenly splendor, but God the Son makes the invisible Father clearly known (John 1:18). John's readers probably never saw Jesus in the flesh. False teachers, however, claimed to have made heavenly journeys during which they saw God in heaven. This is impossible. God cannot be seen. Such testimony is based on more than eyewitness. It comes through eyes of faith. After the resurrection the apostles testified to the church. Then the church accepted and repeated their testimony. We do the same.

Third, you do not have to see the earthly Jesus to testify about what God has done through him. You need only hear and believe in the testimony to him from Scripture and from faithful followers. Such testimony is both verbal testimony and God's love exercised through our lives. Testimony about Jesus tells more than what Jesus did-save from sin. It also tells who he is - the Son of God. Again, all this goes against false teachers. They apparently claimed Jesus could not be human, thus could not die on the cross.

God is love and that the person who lives in love lives in God, and God in him. This is the test of true Christianity in the letters of John. We must recognize the basic character of God, rooted in love. We must experience that love in our own relationship with God.

1 John 4:17-18:

The judgment seat of Christ received brief mention in 2:28 and now reappears briefly to assure us we can face Christ on that day with confidence. Such confidence comes because we live in love toward God and one another. The person who does not live in love toward his brother may experience shame (2:28). However, if we live in love toward our brothers, we will have confidence when we face Jesus because in this world we are like him. No one who was like Jesus in this world can fear approaching Jesus' judgment seat. Fear expects punishment. One who loves expects to receive love.

1 John 4:19-21:

God first loved us and made a relationship with him possible. The text drives home its refutation of the antichrists and false prophets. We cannot claim we love God and then show that we hate our brothers. This only proves one thing: we are liars. It is difficult to prove whether or not we love God based on our actions toward him because we cannot see him. Love for God is reflected in love for his children, our brothers and sisters, whom we can see. Therefore, God gave us this verifiable command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Jesus stated the principle in other words: whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me (Matt. 25:40).

**\*All Commentary taken from Smallgroup.com**

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 11  
WALK IN LOVING OBEDIENCE  
S1 JOHN 4:20-5:5

## MAIN POINT

Loving God means loving each other and obeying His word, and ultimately God's love helps us overcome the world.

## INTRODUCTION

Greg Laurie, pastor of multisite church Harvest Community Fellowship in Riverside California, says that our love for God needs to be emotive and intelligent". What he means is that we love God with our heads and our hearts. Our minds and our emotions. This sounds a lot like Moses' teaching in Deuteronomy 6:5 when he told the people to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength".

### **What does it mean to love the Lord with "all your strength"?**

We love God best by loving him with everything that we are. We don't just love in thought or emotions only, but we also love in deed. We love God through obedience. Ultimately the love we have for God helps us overcome the world.

### **What are some things you've had to overcome in this life?**

### **How did God help you through that?**

## UNDERSTANDING

The Apostle John in this passage lays out three concrete actions that demonstrate our love for God.

### 1. Loving God Means Loving Each Other (v.20-21, 5:1)

### **Read 1 John 4:20-21**

**What is the reasoning John gives in v.20 as to why if a person fails to love their brothers and sisters in Christ they also do not love God?**

**According to v.21 what is the command John is referring to?**

**Why do you think God has to command us to love each other?**

Love for each other is a clear principle in John's writing. It is impossible to say your love God with your mouth while you hate a brother or sister in Christ. If you follow John's logic here, it seems he is saying that the harder love should be loving the one you can't see. If a person can't possess the easier love for people they are in contact with daily, then how can they possess the harder love for a God they can't. John really can't put it any simpler than he does in verse 21. To love God is to also love His people. Loving God and loving your brothers and sisters in Christ can never be separated from each other.

This doesn't mean that we do not love those who are not saved. Certainly not! I believe the calling of the Great Commission means that we have such a deep love for Christ that that love overflows into a love for the lost and dying.

### **Read 1 John 5:1**

#### **What is the belief that all true Christians share in common according to this verse?**

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. That is a very simple statement, but it is very deep. Everything about the Christian experience comes back to Jesus. Everyone who is to be born of God must confess Jesus as the Messiah. Those born of God don't just believe in Christ once upon a time. They continually believe. Everyday. We are called to exhibit an active, daily faith in Jesus as the Christ.

We have experienced the new birth. We are new, and we are being transformed daily. To be born of God means we bear the birthmark of that transformation. We are identified with Christ and unified with his people. Those who are born of God love others who have been born of him.

How do we actively and practically demonstrate love for brothers and sisters in Christ?

#### 2. Loving God Means Obeying His Word (5:2-3)

#### **What are God's commands to us that we are to obey?**

#### **How does our obedience demonstrate our love for each other?**

#### **According to v.3, how should we as Christians view the commands of God?**

In addition to loving His people, we are also commanded to show our love for God and for others by obeying His word. This is an interesting concept here in verse 2. John is saying that one of the ways we best love each other is by obeying God's commands. Our personal obedience is a display of our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. The ESV Study Bible says that this is true because our love for "God's commandments shows believers the true way to do good for others. Love and law are complementary".

Those who love God are by definition commandment keepers. It is also part of our mission given to us by Christ. We are commanded to go to all the world telling them the

good news of Jesus and teaching them all things he has commanded. A key part of discipleship is teaching people all that Jesus said to do. We don't do this just so believers can know what Jesus said to do, but so that they might actually do it!

John says in verse 3 that obedience built on love for God and others is no burden at all. How can John say this? I can think of two reasons. First, when compared to the manmade religious traditions of the Jewish leaders the commands of Jesus were burden free.

### **Read Matthew 11:28-30**

#### **What does Jesus mean when he says his yoke is easy and his burden light?**

Secondly, the good news of the gospel is that there is freedom from our burdens. This freedom makes loving obedience a delight. For the Christian, delight and obedience go hand in hand and love is the motivating factor. It should also go without saying that we can't obey God's commands if we aren't daily in God's word.

#### **How do you regularly remind yourself of God's commands?**

#### 3. Loving God Means Conquering (Overcoming) the World (v.4-5)

### **Read 1 John 5:4-5**

#### **What does it mean to "conquer" or "overcome" the world?**

#### **How have we conquered the world?**

This word conquer in the Greek is *nikao*. This word is translated in other places as overcome or to prevail. The meaning is simply someone who is victorious over their foes or to carry off the victory. The picture is of a soldier winning a battle and carrying off the spoils of his victory. He has overcome and prevailed, thus all that comes with victory belongs to Him. The tense of the word in Greek also gives the indication that we are conquering continually. In other words, conquering the world is a daily habit for those who love God and his people. Because we are in this world we are constantly having to wage battle against it. But because we are in Christ we are daily and continually victorious over it.

By trusting in Christ and declaring him Lord over your life, you have instantly become an overcomer. We are overcomers because by faith we are now hidden in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the one who overcame death, hell, and the grave, for us. Ultimately all those who overcome the world daily now through faith will one day triumphantly overcome the world once and for all at the return of Christ when all who have trusted him will be raised to eternal life.

#### **How does knowing that in Christ you have overcome the world help you better understand what it means to be in the world and not of it?**



## APPLICATION

**If your love for God on display in the way you love your brothers and sisters in Christ?**

**What hinders you most in your obedience to the word of God?**

**How can you daily practice overcoming the world?**

## PRAYER

Write a prayer for your small group here.

## COMMENTARY

Write or insert any Bible study notes or commentary from your preferred sources.

### 1 John 4:20-21

The Godward and human-directed aspect of love cannot be divided. They cannot be separated. They really are the bookends of all the commands. Our ability to actually love God is wedded to the reality of our love for fellow human beings. And such a love is not sporadic or periodic. It is not occasional. It is continual. (Taken from Christ Centered Exposition Commentary of 1 John)

The love of God in Christ, in the hearts of Christians from the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion. This must be tried by its effects on their temper, and their conduct to their brethren. If a man professes to love God, and yet indulges anger or revenge, or shows a selfish disposition, he gives his profession the lie. But if it is plain that our natural enmity is changed into affection and gratitude, let us bless the name of our God for this seal and earnest of eternal happiness. Then we differ from the false professors, who pretend to love God, whom they have not seen, yet hate their brethren, whom they have seen. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

### 1 John 5:1

The term believes conveys the idea of continuing faith, making the point that the mark of genuine believers is that they continue in faith throughout their life. Saving belief is not simply intellectual acceptance, but whole-hearted dedication to Jesus Christ that is permanent... "born of God", This is a reference to the new birth and is the same word that Jesus used in John 3:7. The tense of the Greek verb indicates that ongoing faith is the result of the new birth and, therefore, the evidence of the new birth. (Taken from MacArthur Study Bible NASB)

### 1 John 5:2-3

Love for God is not separated from keeping his commands. God's commands teach his people how to do what God accepts as pleasing. Knowledge of God transforms the human will, making what was once a burden light and easy to carry. (Taken from CBS Study Bible)

### 1 John 5:4-5

Self-denial is required, but true Christians have a principle which carries them above all hindrances. Though the conflict often is sharp, and the regenerate may be cast down, yet he will rise up and renew his combat with resolution. But all, except believers in Christ, are enslaved in some respect or other, to the customs, opinions, or interests of the world. Faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armour by which we overcome. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and in opposition to the world. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts by which the world obtains sway and dominion over souls. It has the indwelling Spirit of grace, which is greater than he who dwells in the world. The real Christian overcomes the world by faith; he sees, in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this world is to be renounced and overcome. He cannot be satisfied with this world, but looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing toward heaven. We must all, after Christ's example, overcome the world, or it will overcome us to our ruin. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Bible)

"overcomes". John clearly defines who these overcomers are: they are all who believe that Jesus is God's Son, and all that means...the word [overcome] reflects a genuine superiority that leads to overwhelming success. The victory is demonstrable, it involves overthrowing an enemy so that the victory is seen by all. (Taken from MacArthur Study Bible NASB)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 12  
DEFEND THE CERTAIN TESTIMONY THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST  
1 JOHN 5:6-12

## MAIN POINT.

To discuss 6 witnesses that bear testimony that Jesus was the Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

**What is a witness?**

**Why is a witness so valuable when it comes to providing reliable testimony?**

In this passage of 1 John, the Apostle is going to mention six witnesses that testify to the truth about Jesus. It's not that Jesus' testimony about himself needed corroboration. He was God in the flesh, and as God, he cannot lie. But nonetheless, we see John identify these witnesses. All of them help shed light on the person and work of Christ and verify that he was indeed the flesh and blood Son of God. For the sake of our discussion I will group them in three groups as John discusses them in this passage.

## UNDERSTANDING

There are 3 groupings of witnesses listed in this passage

1. The Water, the Blood, and the Spirit (v.6-8)

**Read 1 John 5:6-8**

**What do you think John means by "water" and "blood"?**

**What is it about the Spirit that John points out that makes His testimony trustworthy?**

**What is the significance of 3 witnesses mentioned in v.7? (Hint: read Deut. 17:6)**

*The Water:*

The word "water" in this passage probably refers to Christ's baptism. If so, how does the baptism of Jesus testify to the truth of who he is?

## **Read Matthew 3:13-17**

### **What was unique about the baptism of Jesus?**

### **What is it about this event that bears testimony to who He is?**

This baptism provided an opportunity for the true identity of Jesus to be revealed. It is a unique moment. Just picture in your mind what John and the people saw here. As Jesus came up from the water, the heavens open. That in and of itself is amazing. The portals of the invisible Kingdom of Heaven open, and for just a moment mere mortals get a small taste of the divine realm. As the heavens are opened, we see the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descend on Christ. Then the most amazing things happens, God speaks! He declares Jesus to be the Son, and He expresses His divine delight in Him. All of the Trinity are present in this moment of commission for Jesus. His earthly ministry begins here, and both the Spirit and the Father have testified and bore witness that Jesus is the Son, the second member of the Trinity.

### **In what ways does our baptism testify to the truth of who Jesus is?**

### **How does it testify to what He has done for us?**

The act of baptism itself testifies to who we now are in Christ. We are dead to sin and alive with Christ. And just as the Trinity was present at Jesus' baptism, so we also baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The baptism of a new believer in Christ is their first public testimony to who they now are. It is a beautiful picture and a powerful witness.

### *The Blood:*

The second witness John names in verses 6-8 is the blood. Most scholars believe this refers to Christ's atoning death on the cross. So how does His death bear testimony to who He is? What Jesus actually accomplished on the cross is a testimony to who he was.

### **So in your words, what is atonement?**

For our sake, I will simply define atonement this way: a "biblical doctrine that God has reconciled sinners to Himself through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ." The idea is that of an exchange. In order for sinful man to be made right and reconciled to a holy God, something must be offered in his place. His sin must be atoned for in order to be accepted by God. (you can read Leviticus 16 for a detailed description of Old Testament Day of Atonement) . Jesus saw Himself as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament law. He saw himself as being that perfect sacrifice required for man's sin. But how do we know that God saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the atonement? The testimony of the cross bears witness to this. As Jesus died he cried "It is finished. He saw his death as fulfilling the work the Father sent him to do. Christ's testimony from the cross was that he had done everything needed to redeem His people and to atone for their sins.

There is also powerful testimony to who Jesus is surrounding the events of the crucifixion.

**Read Matthew 27:50-54**

**What miraculous and supernatural events happened soon after Jesus died?**

**What is the significance of those events and how do they bear testimony to who Jesus is?**

**How would you explain the words of the centurion in v.54?**

And of course let's not forget the most powerful testimony of all surrounding Christ's death, the resurrection. By raising Jesus from the grave, God clearly testifies that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. His sacrifice has been accepted, and no more blood need be shed for the forgiveness of sin.

*The Spirit:*

The final witness in this group is the Spirit. The fact that the Spirit has come convicting us of sin, indwelling the believer's hearts, and reminding us of the words of Jesus validates the testimony of Christ. In John 15:26, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. He said, "when the Counselor comes, the One I will send to you from the Father- the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father- He will testify about Me." The Holy Spirit by His very nature testifies to who Jesus is, and the Holy Spirit, being God, cannot lie. Therefore, all of His testimony regarding Jesus is true. In verse 8, John says that the water, the blood, and the Spirit are all in agreement that Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh. This is referring back to Deuteronomy 17:6 which states that no one can be condemned to capital punishment without the testimony of two to three witnesses. The witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit more than satisfy this demand. But that is not all. There are still three more witnesses to testify.

2. The Witness of the Father and the Believer (v.9-10)

**Read 1 John 5:9-10**

**In what ways is God's testimony the greatest and most powerful testimony about Jesus?**

**How does a believer bear testimony within himself of Jesus?**

**What does John say about the unbeliever in this passage?**

*The Father:*

The Bible is very clear: God delights in his son. No one knows the Son like the Father. Jesus is the beloved Son. In Isaiah 42:1, God speaks of his Son this way, "This

is My Servant, I strengthen Him, this is My Chosen One; I delight in Him.” John is making an argument here in verse 9. If we are willing to receive the testimony of men, how much greater is God’s. In a court of law, if multiple witnesses come forth and speak to the truth of something then because they collectively have testified to the same thing we believe them. Their words can either acquit or condemn someone. If we accept the validity of two or three witnesses to decide matters on earth, ought not God’s testimony be accepted all the more.

### **In what ways specifically has God testified to the truth of His Son?**

God has provided ample evidence that Jesus is His Son. Other than audibly declaring it at both Jesus’ baptism and the Transfiguration, he has also left us the historical testimony of Jesus in the Gospels. We have the eye-witness accounts of the life of Jesus in the Gospels.

#### *The Believer:*

John says something very interesting in verse 10. He says that those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God have a testimony within them. When we confess Jesus with our mouths, God makes that confession a reality in our hearts. God’s Spirit works in us to testify to the truth about Jesus.

Read Romans 8:16

So this testimony is an internal testimony in every believer. Isn’t it true that sometimes you need to be reminded of the love of God for you? But isn’t it great to know that you don’t have to look to an outside source for that reminder? God has put a constant every day reminder in you with the gift of His Spirit. It daily bears internal testimony to our hearts of who Jesus is and who we are in Him. We can know for sure that we belong to God because of this internal witness.

This verse also comes with a warning to those who would refuse the testimony of God regarding His Son. To reject God’s testimony about Jesus is to call God a liar. Anyone who would deny any aspect of who Jesus is, as revealed to us by Scripture, is calling God a liar. We are called to accept the testimony of God about Jesus. Anything less than that or more than that is false teaching and should be rejected.

### **In what other ways do we testify to the truth of who Jesus is?**

#### 3. The Witness of Eternal Life (v.11-12)

**Read 1 John 5:11-12**

**When you think about life eternal, what comes to mind?**

#### *Eternal Life:*

Â A message that you get very loud and clear from John throughout this whole letter is that to have Jesus is to have eternal life. It is also clear from this passage that eternal life is a gift of God. It isn't something you earn or can purchase. It is part of God's gift to those who trust in Christ. To have Jesus is to have eternal life. And this isn't just life unending. It is that, but it is so much more. Jesus the Son is by his very nature eternal. To be granted eternal life, therefore, is to participate in the very eternality of Jesus. This is the sum of the testimony concerning Christ. The gift of eternal life testifies to the fact that Jesus is God, and as such he is eternal. He is the endless fountain of life itself. By imparting that to those who believe, he gives witness to the fact that He is the Son.

There is also a warning here. Verse 12 is very clear that to not have the Son is to not possess eternal life. See, there is something worse than physical death, and that is spiritual death. We will all spend eternity somewhere. To face eternity without Christ, is to face it with not only the certainty of physical death but eternal spiritual death as well. If only true eternal life can only be found in Christ, then to die without Him is to face what the Bible calls the second death.

**How does this truth give urgency to sharing the gospel?**

## APPLICATION

**How can you better prepare yourself to be a better witness for Jesus?**

**Who do you need to bear testimony about Jesus to this week?**

**Spend some time this week thanking God for the gift of Jesus, His Spirit, and eternal life this week.**

## PRAYER

Write a prayer for your small group here.

## COMMENTARY

### 1 John 5:6-8

Water and blood constitute external, objective witnesses to who Jesus Christ is. They refer to Jesus' baptism and death. John combats the dualism of false teachers who asserted that the "Christ-spirit" departed from the man Jesus just prior to his death on the cross. John writes to show that God has given testimony to the deity of Jesus

through both His baptism and death. The verb "bears witness" and the noun "testimony" both come from the same Greek work and are used a total of nine times in this section. The basic meaning is "someone who has personal and immediate knowledge of something".

"Three that bear witness", the OT law required the "testimony of two or three witnesses" to establish the truth of a particular matter. (Taken from The MacArthur Bible Commentary)

The Spirit - Evidently the Holy Spirit. The assertion here is, that that Spirit bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, 1 John 5:5. The testimony of the Holy Spirit to this fact is contained in the following things:

(1) He did it at the baptism of Jesus. Notes. Matthew 3:16-17.

(2) Christ was eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit; as it was predicted that the Messiah would be, and as it was appropriate he should be, Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 61:1. Compare Luke 4:18; Notes, John 3:34.

(3) the Holy Spirit bore witness to his Messiahship, after his ascension, by descending, according to his promise, on his apostles, and by accompanying the message which they delivered with saving power to thousands in Jerusalem, Acts 2.

(4) he still bears the same testimony on every revival of religion, and in the conversion of every individual who becomes a Christian, convincing them that Jesus is the Son of God. Compare John 16:14-15.

(5) he does it in the hearts of all true Christians, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Corinthians 12:3. See the notes at that passage.

The Spirit of God has thus always borne witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and he will continue to do it to the end of time, convincing yet countless millions that he was sent from God to redeem and save lost people. (Taken from Barnes Notes on the Bible)

### 1 John 5:9-10

If we receive the testimony of men- As we do continually, and must do, in a thousand instances, if we would not give over all business, and even refuse taking necessary nourishment. The testimony of two or three credible witnesses, according to the law of Moses, was deemed sufficient to prove any matter of fact; and indeed human affairs in general, even the most important, are conducted and determined by depending on the testimony of men. Nay, and we not only receive the testimony of men, when they bear their testimony in a solemn manner, upon oath, before magistrates, but we rely on one another's word from time to time, and sometimes concerning things of great moment: the testimony of God is greater - More valid, of higher authority, and much more worthy to be received than the witness of men, be they ever so numerous, or ever so respectable for their understanding and their integrity; so that we may rely on it with



the greatest assurance. For this is the testimony of God- Namely, this six-fold testimony, and especially that of the last three mentioned witnesses, of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: which he hath testified of his Son- As the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world, able to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him; and actually saving all that believe in him with their heart unto righteousness. (Taken from the Benson Commentary)

"he has the testimony in himself" refers to the inward testimony of the Spirit," the internal realization that Christians have of the Holy Spirit's presence and work within them. "Has made him a liar" refers to people who reject the Son of God as Savior, or are indifferent to the Son, are provoking God to his face. (taken from ESV Study Bible)

### 1 John 5:11-12

So what is being testified to? That eternal life comes from God through his Son Jesus and through no other way (vv. 11-12). This statement is very likely directed at the antichrists who charged that the readers did not really have eternal life through Christ. Scripture makes it clear that we do have eternal life through Jesus. To deny this is to deny God's testimony and to call God a liar. (taken from Smallgroup.com)

And this is the record,...The sum and substance of it, with respect to the person of Christ, and the security of salvation in him, who is the true God, and eternal life:

that God hath given to us eternal life; which is a life of glory and happiness hereafter; in the present state is unseen, but will in the world to come be a life of vision, free from all the sorrows and imperfections of this; and will be of the utmost perfection and pleasure, and forever. This is a pure free grace gift of God the Father, proceeding from his sovereigns good will and pleasure, and which he gives to all his chosen ones, for they are ordained unto eternal life; to as many as he has given to his Son; to all that are redeemed by his blood, and are brought to believe in him: to these he gave it in his Son before the world began; and to the same in time he gives the right unto it, the meetness for it, and the pledge and earnest of it; and will hereafter give them the thing itself, the whole of it, to be possessed and enjoyed by them in person, to all eternity.

And this life is in his Son: not only the purpose and promise of it, but that itself; Christ asked it of his Father in the covenant of peace, and he gave it to him, that he might have it in himself for all his people; and here it is safe and secure, it is hid with Christ in God, it is bound up in the bundle of life with him; and because he lives, this life will never be lost, or they come short of it. (Taken from Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible)

# FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES- SESSION 13  
WHAT WE CAN KNOW  
1 JOHN 5:13-21

## MAIN POINT

To discuss five certainties that we can know as believers and children of God.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the early church heresies that John and the Apostles all dealt with was an early form of what became known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a combination of a lot of different ancient teachings which would eventually also include Christianity. For instance, it would combine Jewish and Christian beliefs with ancient Greek philosophy. The name Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *ginosko* or *gnosis* which means to know or to understand. John combats this false teaching all throughout his letter. John uses some form of the Greek word for “know” 27 times in this letter.

### **What does it mean to know God?**

### **How is it possible that we can know God?**

Knowledge of God isn't locked away in a vault somewhere only to be obtained by those who gained the spiritual secrets to this grand mystery. Knowledge of God is revealed to us in the person of Christ and in the pages of His holy Word.

## UNDERSTANDING

There are 5 certainties we can know from this passage.

### 1. We Can Know We Have Eternal Life (v.13)

#### **Read 1 John 5:13**

### **How would you describe the nature of eternal life to someone?**

### **Why is it important that God gives us assurance of eternal life?**

John wants them to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that in Christ they have eternal life. This is something we can know. John uses two Greek words for “know” in this passage. The one used in verse 13 is *eido*. This word is also translated in other places as “to see”. We can examine and inspect and perceive this truth with the eyes of our hearts. We can hold it and know it and cherish this truth. We can trust that there is certainty in the promises of God. When He says that all those who repent and come to Christ will have eternal life, He means it. God can promise that because He is powerful

enough to bring it to fruition. The promise of eternal life and the promise of being in Heaven with God go hand in hand. And Heaven is Heaven because God is there. Randy Alcorn says in his book *Heaven* that “God’s glory will be the air we breathe, and we’ll always breathe deeper to gain more of it. In the new universe, we’ll never be able to travel far enough to leave God’s presence. If we could, we’d never want to. However great the wonders of Heaven, God Himself is Heaven’s greatest prize.”

What about eternal life in Heaven are you most looking forward to?

## 2. We Can Know That God Answers Prayer (v.14-17)

**Read 1 John 5:14-17**

**According to verse 14, how should we ask things of God?**

**What does it mean to ask according to His will?**

**How can you know God's will?**

**According to v.16-17, how should we pray for those in sin?**

The next truth that John wants believers to know is that God delights in hearing and answering the prayers of His children. John says in verses 14-15 that if we ask anything according to God’s will that we can know that He hears us, and we can know that we can have what we ask Him for. Now, we know that it isn’t true that we get everything we ask God for because we don’t ask according to His will.

So what does it mean to ask according to God’s will? Paul, I believe, answers this question in Romans 12:1-2 .

**Read Romans 12:1-2**

**What is discernment?**

**According to this passage, how can we discern the will of God?**

Paul makes three very important points about God’s will in this passage. First, God’s will is good. It is pleasing and joyful. Secondly, God’s will is pleasing. Some translations use the word acceptable here. So God’s will is good for us and it should be acceptable and pleasing to us. Lastly, Paul says that God’s will is perfect. His will is complete and lacking nothing. Paul is saying that in order to understand God’s will, and thus to pray according to it, we must offer ourselves daily to God. We submit ourselves to Him. We dig deep into His revealed word. As His Spirit works in us to expose sin and bring a deeper understanding of who God is, we begin to more fully and clearly understand His will. As we submit to Him, he breaks all the things in us that still cling to and conform to this world. He transforms our hearts and minds to bring them into alignment with His will. This affects our prayer life. The more we understand God, and the more we understand His will, the more we will ask for things that align with His will.

John then gives an example of this kind of confident prayer life in verses 16 and 17. Really the example of prayer you see in these two verses is what is called intercession. Praying to God on behalf of someone else. John is wanting to imagine a fellow believer who is dealing with sin. It is important that this sin is not one that “leads to death” as John puts it. In other words, it isn’t an unforgivable sin. Even believers struggle with sin, and John is saying we should intercede for them according to the will of God. It is good and right to pray that God would restore and lead to repentance a brother or sister caught in sin.

**What is a "sin that leads to death"?**

**How can we make intercession more a priority in our prayer life?**

3. We Can Know We Can Overcome Sin (v.18)

**Read 1 John 5:18**

**What does John mean when he says those born of God "do not sin"?**

**How does God help us overcome sin and protect us according to this verse?**

Ongoing and unrepentant sin is not the pattern of life for a believer. God in His infinite mercy and grace has broken the power of sin in our lives. Sin is no longer our habit or pattern. Holiness is. We may not be able to be perfect in this life, but we can be pure.

In this life a believer still struggles with sin, but we do not fight it alone. John says that those born of God are kept by God. God’s power is working in us assisting us in our fight against sin. God will keep those who are born of Him.

Not only have we overcome the power of sin, but John says we have overcome the power of Satan as well. This doesn’t mean that Satan does not affect us at all or that he doesn’t still have power to tempt believers. What I think John is speaking of here is that for those in Christ Satan can no longer lay hold of them to do them harm. Satan is not all powerful. His work is limited by the sovereignty of God. He can’t do anything without God’s permission.

4. We Can Know We Belong to God (v.19)

**Read 1 John 5:19**

**What does it mean to be of God, to belong to Him?**

This is the fourth certainty for the believer. We belong to God. Think deeply on that sentence for a minute. This truth is really the foundation for all of the other certainties we’ve talked about so far. We can know that we have eternal life, we can have confidence

in prayer, and we can be sure that we have overcome the power of sin all because of this one reality: we belong to God. The Greek the word “of” in verse 19 denotes origin. It means to proceed from or to come out of. What John is saying is that those who belong to God are of Him. They proceed from Him. We are his possession.

And John makes it clear in this passage that there are only two types of people in this world. Those who are of God and who belong to Him and those who are under the sway of Satan. There is no in between. You either belong to God now or you don't. God doesn't take possession of His children when they die. He possesses them even now. This is a certainty, and it should bring us comfort. To belong to God is to no longer be under the influence of Satan or the world.

**How does knowing you belong to God help you with struggles in this life?**

5. We Can Know Jesus, the True One (v.20)

**Read 1 John 5:20**

**According to this verse, what has Jesus, the Son, given us?**

**What does John means when he says we are "in the True One"?**

Of all the things that John wants his dear children to know, He wants them to know Christ most of all. The Son has come, and His name is Jesus. Jesus has come and has given us understanding. The wonderful mystery of Christianity is that God didn't sit and wait for His people to find them. He isn't hoping that in their endless search for meaning and purpose that maybe they'll stumble upon His reality. The wonder of Christianity is that God the Son temporarily left his place in heaven and came down to earth and made himself know. In Christ, God has made himself known.

What a beautiful truth to conclude with. In a world of uncertainty, knowing Christ makes all the difference in the world. He is our salvation. He is our propitiation and atonement. He is the exact expression of God, the radiance of His glory. He is the embodiment of truth and love. He has conquered sin and death by his own death and resurrection. He purchased His Bride with his own blood, and He is working even now to purify her. And one day He will bring her home to experience eternal fellowship with Him.

**What does it mean to you that you have come to know Jesus?**

**What other certainties can you think of that God has given His people?**

**Read 1 John 5:21 to conclude**

**Why this warning at the end?**

**Why must we be on guard against idols?**

## **What do our idols look like?**

It is fitting, given all that warning against false teachings that John has given his readers that he concludes with a warning against idolatry. We need God every day. Without him we are prone to wander. Without his work in us we would constantly create idols in our hearts. An idol is anything that would draw our affection away from the Lord. We must be careful if we erect idols in our hearts. If we belong to God, we can be sure that He will tear those down. He is jealous for his glory and honor. He will not stand by as His people worship lesser gods and give glory that only belongs to him to idols. He loves us too much to see our worship go to any but Him.

## **APPLICATION**

**How can you intercede for someone you love caught in sin this week?**

**What can you do daily to help you overcome your own sin?**

**What idols have you erected in your heart that need to be torn down?**

## **PRAYER**

## **COMMENTARY**

### 1 John 5:13-15

Toward the end of his first epistle, John stated his purpose for writing it: That you may know that you have eternal life. First John is written to those who are Christians to give them assurance that they are saved (v. 13).

The Christian may have confidence in approaching God in prayer (vv. 14-15). Our confidence in prayer is a natural consequence of our assurance that we have eternal life (vv. 12-13). We may ask anything according to God's will, and we will receive it. This leads many Christians to ask, How can I know what the will of God is? Sometimes Scripture will tell us what the will of God is, either explicitly or in principle. It may take spiritual maturation and discernment to learn which principles of Scripture should guide our prayers. (Taken from Smallgroup.com)

Upon all this evidence, it is but right that we believe on the name of the Son of God. Believers have eternal life in the covenant of the gospel. Then let us thankfully receive the record of Scripture. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Lord Christ invites us to come to him in all circumstances, with our supplications and requests, notwithstanding the sin that besets

us. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of God. In some things they are speedily answered; in others they are granted in the best manner, though not as requested. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

### 1 John 5:16-21.

In verses 14 and 15 John gives the reader assurance that God will answer prayer. Now he gives a specific encouragement to pray that God would restore a fellow believer ("brother") who is sinning. There is, however, one limitation to such a prayer. If this person's sin involves a "sin that leads to death," prayer should not be offered. John has often mentioned the theme of sinning in this epistle (e.g., 1:7-10; 2:2, 12; 3:35, 89; 4:10). The believer is not without sin (1:8), but at the same time he is not characterized by an ongoing sinful lifestyle (3:89; 5:18). When a Christian "sees" his brother sinning a sin that does not lead to death, he is to pray for that person. The verb translated "he should pray" is a future tense verb (lit., "he will pray"), which expresses the Christian's inevitable and spontaneous reaction. The result is that God will grant the sinning brother life.

But not every sinner is granted life as a result of answered prayer. The praying Christian can have confidence if the person's sin is not of the sort that leads to death. John does not strictly forbid prayer for such a person, but it is clear that he is in doubt about its efficacy. What exactly is the "sin that leads to death"? A few suggestions about the nature of the "sin to death" include the following: total rejection of the gospel, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or a specific, deadly sin. We cannot be sure of the correct interpretation of the "sin to death." Thus, we need to focus on the positive point: we are to pray for our sinning brothers. This is certainly in line with God's will. Jesus prayed for Peter on the night Peter betrayed him (Luke 22:32), and we should do the same for one another.

John brings his first epistle to a close by summarizing three final affirmations, each introduced with the phrase, "we know": 1) A person born of God does not continue to sin and is kept away from Satan's harm. Jesus keeps him safe. The believer is secure in the grace of God, and Satan cannot take his salvation from him. 2) We are children of God, not under Satan's control as the world is. This reinforces the distinction between the satanically-controlled world system and the Christ-controlled body of believers who have been delivered from its power. 3) The Son of God has come into this world to give us understanding which leads to salvation. This strikes a one-two blow against the false teachers, the antichrists who claimed to have special inner knowledge of God and salvation apart from Jesus. God can be known in only one way-through Jesus. Truth can be known in only one way-through Jesus. (Taken from Smallgroup.com)

We ought to pray for others, as well as for ourselves. There are sins that war against spiritual life in the soul, and the life above. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that mercy, which supposes the forgiveness of sins, should be granted to them, while they willfully continue such. But we may pray for their repentance, for their being enriched with faith in Christ, and thereupon for all other saving mercies. We should pray for

others, as well as for ourselves, beseeching the Lord to pardon and recover the fallen, as well as to relieve the tempted and afflicted. And let us be truly thankful that no sin, of which any one truly repents, is unto death. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)