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The Starting Point for Assurance of Salvation

1 John 1:1-4

Good morning. Thank you for coming this morning as we begin a study on the assurance of salvation from 1 John. If you have your Bible please open to John 20:30. The title for our lesson this morning is the starting point for assurance of salvation. We will start with John 20:30 and then we will move to 1 John.

Since we are going to be talking about the assurance of salvation the next few months, which is a serious topic, I thought I would begin with something lighthearted. I want to start with a true story of how the Lord used 1 John to lead one of my friends to Christ.

I have a friend back in Kansas named Chad Loudenback. **He's one of my best good friends as Forrest Gump would say.** I met Chad in 2011 when our family moved to Kansas. When I met Chad, he was a new believer. Chad came to faith in Christ a little later in life. How Chad came to faith in Christ is an interesting story.

Chad is a lifelong hunter. Most people in Kansas like to exert their dominion over the animal world. He has a ranch that he hunts on about 30 miles from Hutchinson, Kansas. About 15 years or so ago he was hunting with some friends and he met a pastor of a local church there named Rick Goertzen. Rick likes to hunt as well. They got to know each other hunting and as time went by Rick became concerned for Chad's soul. He was living with his girlfriend at the time and was not a part of a local church.

After a Sunday night service Rick took a MacArthur Study Bible over to Chad's house. He dropped it off and told Chad to read the gospel of John and they set up a time to meet for lunch to talk about it. When they got together for lunch, Chad informed Rick that he was going to hell. How did he come to that conclusion?

Chad had never really studied the Bible before. **Rick told him to read the gospel of John, but instead of reading the gospel of John, my friend read 1 John instead.** He found the book of the Bible that said John and started reading but it wasn't the right book. He had read the five chapters in 1 John instead of the 21 chapters in the gospel of John. He concluded after reading 1 John that he was not a believer in Christ and he was going to hell.

Rick didn't know it, but there was nothing better he could have done for Chad than to not help him find the gospel of John. Why do I say that? **Who needs a Savior?** Sinners. Only people who see themselves as sinners need a Savior. 1 John was the perfect starting point to help Chad see his sin against God and his need for what John wrote his gospel about. 1 John is clear about who is saved and who is lost.

After telling Chad that he had read the wrong book of the Bible, Rick pointed him to the gospel of John. Chad read the gospel of John and turned from sin and trusted Christ. That was about 15 years ago. Chad was born again and his life has never been the same. And we have not stopped giving Chad a hard time for how the Lord saved him.

That true story points us to something really important. It reminds us that there are purposes for every book of the Bible. Purpose statements usually

contain the two words "so that." I want to start our study on assurance of salvation by showing you two purpose statements in the gospel of John and 1 John. The purpose of the gospel of John is stated in John 20:30-31. John 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." That's the main purpose of the gospel of John - To evoke faith in Christ for eternal life. John's primary purpose in the gospel is what? Evangelism.

Now look over at the end of 1 John. Go to the right toward the end of the Bible. 1 John 5:13 has another so that statement, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." John was written to help unbelievers become believers and he wrote his letter to believers to embolden their assurance. **John's first letter was written to help believers know they have eternal life.** So, is it possible for someone to now they have eternal life? Yes. 1 John 5:13 is an encouraging reminder that the only prerequisite for eternal life is faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John Stott puts it together for us like this, **"He (John) wrote the gospel for unbelievers in order to arouse their faith (John 20:30-31), and the letter for believers in order to deepen their assurance (1 John 5:13). His desire is for readers of the gospel was that through faith they might receive life; for the readers of the letter that they might know they already had it."**

How are you doing with this? How are you doing with assurance of your salvation? Is anything more important? **Charles Spurgeon was so sure of his salvation that he talked about being willing to grab onto a cornstalk and**

swing out over the fires of hell while staring Satan in the face singing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." That was Charles Spurgeon.

Others really struggle in this area. Throughout my ministry I have met with people who really wrestle with assurance. Sometimes genuine believers are overwhelmed by their ongoing sinfulness and have a hard time looking away from themselves to Christ. They see more sin in themselves than mercy in Christ. They have a hard time believing that God is no longer keeping score when it comes to their sin and all their sins have been nailed to the cross. They need help remembering that where sin abounded grace abounded all the more.

Sometimes people who are the most involved in the church struggle with assurance. They know they cannot earn salvation and yet they wonder if they've done enough or are doing enough. Whatever enough means to them.

Others rely on their feelings for their assurance of salvation. Steve Lawson writes, "*Those who rely on feelings for the assurance of their salvation will be riding an emotional roller coaster. When they are up, they feel saved: when they are down, they feel lost. I pity the person who attempts to live this way.* **Only the eternal unchanging word of God can be the ultimate basis for our assurance. The Scriptures alone are the rock solid foundation upon which full assurance is built.**"

Those are some obstacles to assurance I've personally dealt with. I think back to my time in Kansas and meeting with an older man who told me he wasn't saved God did not choose to save him. He blamed his unbelief on God for not choosing him to be saved. **He used the sovereignty of God in salvation as an argument against his salvation.**

No matter where I took him in the Scripture to try and find relief for his soul, that was his conclusion. I also saw in this man someone who was very hard on himself. He served in the church, but he knew his motives were imperfect so he concluded he wasn't a Christian. It seemed that pride was getting in the way and what he needed most was to humble himself.

Other people rely on something they did in the past for salvation. When you ask them if they are a Christian they tell you what they did in the past to become a Christian. I prayed a prayer. I got baptized. I'm a member at such and such a church. My grandfather was a preacher. **They base their assurance on something they did and not something Christ did for them.** Sometimes people rely on a past decision they made for Christ as a child that really makes no difference in how they are currently living.

The part of the country I grew up in was a great part of the country to grow up in. The republic of Texas was nice. But it can also be a confusing part of the country when it comes to being a Christian. Most everyone I grew up with went to church and would have claimed to be a Christian. The problem is that everyone lived the same way. There was little or no actual transformation that flows from the new birth. What we are going to see in 1 John is that life in Christ will always lead to some measure of growth in Christ. When the Spirit gives us life in Christ, there will be changes in terms of what we believe and how we live.

I'm not surprised that there are so many attacks on the assurance of salvation. Satan's problem is pride and pride contends for supremacy with Christ. Satan hates the glory of Christ and the truth about Christ and loves it when people are led astray from Christ. Satan attacks the grounds of assurance because his pleasure is our pain.

That being said, I have some really good news for you this morning - **Assurance of salvation is something God wants for all of His blood bought children.** If God didn't want us to have assurance He wouldn't have given us a letter that was written to help us know we have eternal life. **God gave us 1 John to help us settle the question of eternal life because that's how much He loves us and He knows that stability and joy in life come from knowing we are saved.**

Please turn to 1 John 1:1-4. This morning I want you to see from the first four verses in 1 John that our salvation is rooted in actual historical events. It's rooted in the coming of Christ. John starts this letter taking us back to the truths about Christ because when he wrote this letter those truths were under attack.

Listen to where John begins a letter on assurance:

1 John 1:1-4

- 1 Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—
- 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—
- 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
- 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

How does John describe Jesus in these first four verses? The Word of life. Literally, I think, the Word who gives life. What kind of life? Eternal life. In

verse 2 John refers to Jesus as the eternal life. What Jesus has in Himself is what He gives to His people.

Life here means more than quantity, it's talking about quality. The night before Jesus went to the cross he prayed this way for believers. John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

How does John know so much about Christ? He writes about hearing Jesus and seeing Jesus and looking upon Jesus and touching Jesus. This sure seems personal. Remember John did not have a back row seat to the ministry of Christ. John was one of the original apostle's and was a part of the inner circle with unique access to the ministry of Christ. John spent time with Christ before the cross and after the cross. John's life was changed by the one He points us to in these verses.

I love this description of the apostle John from **Rick Kress, "Association with Jesus and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17; 16:13) had turned an unforgiving (Luke 9:49-56), ambitious, self seeking (Mark 10:35-45), and sometimes hostile man, once named with James a "Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17), into the Apostle of love (note the emphasis of love in John 13; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:10-24; 4:7-12; 2 John; 3 John)."**

John was transformed by Christ and he writes this letter as an apostle with the authority of Christ. If we want assurance, listen to John. Listen to his message about Christ. Take it in. The main verb in 1 John 1:1-4 is found in verse 3. **It's the verb we proclaim.** That's what we want to focus on this morning.

This morning I want you to see 2 truths from 1 John 1:1-4 that form the foundation of the assurance of our salvation:

1. The *person* John Proclaims - 1 John 1:1-2
2. The *purpose* John Proclaims - 1 John 1:3-4

Let's start with the person John proclaims in verses 1-2. What do you see in the first two verses? I see a progression. From that which was from the beginning to what John and the other apostles experienced with the coming of Christ. Notice the progression in these verses from Christ in eternity past to the incarnation,

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."

I see an order of progression in these verses. Verse 1 begins with Jesus in eternity past. That which was from the beginning describes the relationship between God the Son and God the Father in eternity past. That which was from the beginning takes us back to John 1:1 and all the way back to Genesis 1:1. Jesus was in the beginning with God the Father before the world was made. Then "the life was made manifest" is a description of the incarnation.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "The word "Trinity" is a combination of *tri-*, meaning "three," and *unity*, meaning "one." A "trinity," then, is a three-in-one, or one-in-three. To be sure, the word "trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the truth

is taught there (cf. also Matt. 28:19–20; John 14:16–17, 26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6). Christians do not believe that there are *three gods*. They believe that one God exists in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nor do Christians believe merely that one God reveals Himself in three different ways, much as one man may be a husband, a father, and a son. No, the Bible teaches that God is *one* but that He exists in *three* Persons."

John starts with a reference to both the deity and the humanity of Christ because that is what forms the foundation for our assurance and those are the truths that were under attack. The true teaching about Christ has always been under attack. It's still under attack.

Look over at 1 John 4:1-3. Notice what John writes about false teachers, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."

False prophets went out at a point in time in the past and remain in the present. There are not a few false teachers in our day. There are many. Their name is legion. How do we identify such people? **By what they teach about Christ.** John provides us with specific ways to discern a truth teller from a false teacher. People who believe and teach error about Christ can be the nicest people on planet earth, but if they deny the divinity and humanity of Christ they are on Satan's team.

Here is what John knows - **A counterfeit Christ can't save.**

Go back to 1 John 1:1-2. In the majority of verse 1 through verse 2 John describes the humanity of Christ. John and the other apostles did what to Jesus? They heard him, saw him, looked upon him and touched him. The Son of God who always existed in face to face communion with God the Father was manifested as a Man and John knew it.

Remember the night before the cross in the upper room it says in John 13:23, "Lying back on Jesus' chest was one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." That's John. John knew Jesus personally. He knew that God became a man in the person of Christ and he writes with the help of the Holy Spirit whose goal is to glorify Christ.

BB Warfield says it this way, **"The glory of the incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze not a humanized God or a deified man; but a true God-man-one who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is (yet without sin); one on whose almighty arm we can rest, and to whose human sympathy we can appeal."**

The starting point for assurance of salvation is the Christ of history. Something I have heard Dr Bookman say that I have found helpful is that our salvation is rooted in actual historical events. How do we know we are saved? Because of who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished for us. In John 17:4, the night before the cross, Jesus prayed, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." That is Jesus summarizing why He came and that He accomplished what God the Father sent Him to accomplish, namely, our redemption.

The Christ John proclaimed was with the Father in eternity past and was manifested at God's appointed time. Was with the Father is a reminder that Christ, the eternal life, was continuously existing from all

eternity in a face to face intimate relationship with God the Father. That was true before the incarnation and it's true again. **Rick Kress writes, "The person on whom hangs all of Christianity, Jesus Christ, the eternal One is real. I, John, testify to it. It's my business to proclaim it."**

John is passionate about defending the truth about Christ, but it's more than just defending the truth for truth's sake. Something else is at stake in this that we read about in 1 John 1:3-4. There is a goal for John in proclaiming Christ. What's the goal?

The next thing we see in verses 3-4 is:

2. The purpose John proclaims - 1 John 1:3-4

Notice the word *so* that in the middle of verse 3. That's a purpose statement. The purpose of John's proclamation is more than just feeling better about himself because he got something off his chest. Notice the goal of the proclamation in 1 John 1:3-4:

1 John 1:3-4

3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, ***so that you too may have fellowship with us***; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And we are writing these things so that our ***joy*** may be complete.

What John and the other Apostle's had is what John wants for us. What is it? Fellowship and the joy that comes from living in close communion with

God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This word fellowship has the idea of partnership. It means participation, partaking, partnership.

The word is used in Luke 5:10 to describe the fishing business that James and John and Peter were involved in together before they left everything to follow Christ. 2 Peter 1:4 says that we have become partakers of the divine nature. It's not that we become little gods. It means we enter into a personal relationship with God Himself.

What John writes in these opening verses is what he describes throughout the letter. Someone who is saved has fellowship with God and that makes a difference in how they live.

Rick Kress writes, "True Christians manifest the character of the God with whom they have fellowship with. How? Through faith in the gospel...Sharing the gospel with others and partaking of the gospel in faith both produce unquestionable joy. John knew that the confirmation of his joy would be to share the reality of Christ with his beloved children. Christianity is true. The message is true. The person is real. The participation is genuine. And the joy and sharing it is unquestionable."

Here are some closing questions I would love for all of you to spend some time thinking through this week:

1. Since the message about Christ is true - Do you believe it?

Hebrews 11:6 says something important about faith. Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." God not only exists, He has made Himself known in the Person of Christ.

Christ is the image of the invisible God. He reveals God and reverses the curse of sin.

This is the gospel John proclaims from the beginning about the One who was from the beginning. God the Son came from heaven, took on human form, and died to pay the penalty for the sin by which we have offended a holy God. He rose from the dead three days later, victorious over sin, satan, and death and is now exalted at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The starting point for your assurance is to answer yes to this question - Have you truly turned from your sin and surrendered your heart to Christ?

2. Since the message of Christianity is true - What are your priorities in life as a believer?

Do your main passions in life line up with what John was passionate about? John's joy was found in knowing and proclaiming the truths about Christ. If you are miserable this morning it might be because you have a different goal in life than participation with Christ in the furtherance of the gospel. Jesus did the will of God the Father and Hebrews 1:9 say, "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." What we see in Jesus is the being consumed with doing the Father's will, even though it was hard, led to Jesus being unusually joyful. May the same be true for us.

3. If Christ is real - Do you trust Him? Do you take refuge in Jesus as the God-Man?

While Brianna and my older two daughters were at the woman's conference yesterday I got to spend time with our youngest daughter

Cooper. She's 10. We went to Target to get some things for Molly's birthday, which is tomorrow. We were waiting in a long self checkout line and then a worker came and opened up a new line right next to us so we were first in line. I laid out what I was going to buy and Cooper went to get something she wanted to buy for Molly. It was taking Cooper a minute to get back to the line and I could tell the people who were waiting weren't happy campers. I could feel their impatience as I waited for my 10 year old.

I'm not sure what you tell yourself when you feel pressure in life? Something I tell myself a lot when I feel pressure is Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Before I react in pressured situations I try and slow down and remind myself what is true about Christ and what's true about who I am in Christ. That's how I try and deal with my negative feelings and emotions. Go back and tell yourself what is true about Christ and what is true of who you already are in Christ and it makes a difference in how you respond to the pressures of life.

4. If participation with the Lord is genuine - Do you live like it?

Doesn't it seem like people who have fellowship with the triune God would live different than the rest of the world? If you really know God, it has to show up in how you live. John is going to walk us through the differences fellowship with God makes in our everyday life. He is going to show us how fellowship with God changes what we believe and how we live -

namely in obedience to Christ and love for one another. Fellowship with the Lord is life changing. It was for John and it will be for us.

5. If personal joy is the result of John's proclamation about Christ - Are you personally communing with Christ and passing on the truth about Christ to help unbelievers know Him and believers grow in Him?

Do you know what Jesus wants for us? Jesus is all about joy. John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

John begins his letter reminding us that our salvation is secure because Christ really is the God-Man who was manifested to give us life, eternal life. 1 John 1:1-4 is a message about Christ. Next week we will learn about the message that came from Christ. I hope you'll come back. Let's pray.