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Our Challenge and Comfort for Assurance - Part 1 **1 John 2:18-27**

Please take your Bible and open to 1 John 2:18. The title for our lesson this morning is our challenge and comfort for assurance. The next two weeks we are going to be studying a section in 1 John that shows us how the apostle John shepherds sheep who are under attack from false teachers. Remember 1 John was written to help genuine believers in Christ with confidence in their salvation. John's audience needed help in this area because their faith in Christ had come under attack and that attack had not gone away.

Paul Twiss writes, "The apostle John wrote to a group of Christians who were experiencing turmoil, false teaching, and the departure of some in the congregation. With pastoral skill and theological precision, the Beloved Disciple penned 1 John "to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). **His aim was to instill confidence in a group of disciples—confidence that they were indeed secure in Christ, in the midst of teaching that had undermined the true and saving gospel.**"

In 1 John 2:18-27 John addresses these false teachers head on and as he does so he reminds us that between here and heaven we are all in a spiritual battle whether we like it or not. We need to know this. We need to know that there are bad guys among the good guys. There are tares among the wheat. This danger of false teachers has not gone away. We still need these reminders.

Notice how John challenges and comforts us beginning in 1 John 2:18:

1 John 2:18-27

- 18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.
- 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.
- 20 (Notice the contrast) But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

- 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.
- 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.
- 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.
- 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.
- 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.
- 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.
- 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, **abide in him.**

When I was a youth pastor in Lexington, Kentucky I took the students and some of their parents to play something called Paintball. Have you heard of this thing called Paintball? **I learned pretty quickly that you don't play paintball, you get shot by paintballs.**

We divided into teams and went out into the woods to play capture the flag. I was kneeling behind a bush trying to get a student in the crosshairs of my paintball gun when I received my first paintball of the day. It was a solid shot to my right quadricep. We were told before the game that when you got shot you lift your gun over your head to alert other people you've been shot and you walk back to a safe zone.

After getting shot, I held my gun over my head and began the walk of shame back through the woods to the safe zone. When I was about to get to the safe zone a dad of a student, a dad who was on my own team, stood up in some nearby bushes and began shooting me in the middle of my chest. Someone from my own team was delivering one paintball after another right into the middle of my Dallas Cowboys T-Shirt. He may have drawn blood.

I knew that day playing paintball that I was in danger of getting shot, but I didn't know I would get shot from someone who appeared to be on my same team. This is how John is helping these people in these verses. He helps them by reading them that there are people in the church who are not who they appear to be. The church at this time had false teachers in it who said they were on the

same team with these Christians but they were not who they appeared to be. They claimed to know God, but they denied basic Bible doctrine.

I know it's mothers day. It's a day to celebrate mommies. This lesson may sound strange in light of a day worth celebrating, but I want to spend our time together this morning focusing in on the dangerous nature of false teaching. This morning we will focus on the challenging part of this section and next week we will focus on the comforting part of this section.

John is also showing us in this section what love looks like when a believer is in danger. **When you love someone and they are in spiritual danger you don't do nothing.** You do something. When danger is present you sound an alarm because you understand what's at stake - Souls are at stake when it detecting and staying away from false teaching.

When someone you love is in spiritual danger you pray for them and you pursue them the right way.

In 1 John 1:18-27 John provides three descriptions of false teachers in order to protect God's people:

1. The Defection of False Teachers - 1 John 2:18-19
2. The Denial of False Teachers - 1 John 2:22-23
3. The Desire of False Teachers - 1 John 2:26

Let's start with their defection in 1 John 2:18-19:

- 18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.
- 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

When John writes about the last hour, what time in redemptive history is he describing? John is describing what happens between Christ's resurrection and Christ's return. The last days are the days we are living in right now. How do we know we are living in the last hour? Because we have a preview of coming attractions. We know the antichrist is coming in the future because many

antichrists have already come. **The last hour before Christ comes back is going to be filled with false teachers who oppose the truth about Christ.**

What John writes about them in verse 19 is really important. These particular false teachers did not originate outside the church, but inside the church.

James Montgomery Boice writes, "In the context of the chapter it is surely significant that the antichrists are identified, not as those who are outside the church, but as those who at least for a time were within it. In other words, they are not the outright pagan opponents of Christianity but rather those who were attempting to destroy the faith from within by pretending to be Christians."

It is important to stop and consider how John describes their defection in verse 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." **Their defection exposed their true spiritual condition.** Their defection proved they were never saved to start with.

How do you know a true believer? A true believer never ultimately defects from the truth of the gospel. **Notice I said ultimately.** Can a born again believer go through a time of doubt? Yes. Jude addresses such people in his short letter. Jude tells them in Jude 22, "And have mercy on those who doubt." A believer can go through a season of doubt and discouragement, but they never ultimately defect. A true Christian will never get to the place of outright denial of the basic truths of the gospel.

Those are are saved by Christ persevere. We will focus more on this, Lord willing, next week. True believers don't defect because of God's anointing that we read about in verse 20 and throughout this section.

Notice in verse 19 John doesn't say these people were saved and then they were lost. Why doesn't he write that? Because that's not what the Bible teaches. He says they went out from us, **but they were not of us.** They were never saved to begin with and their defection revealed the truth about their spiritual condition. A true believer doesn't get to this point. What would have been true of them if they were really saved? The middle part of verse 19 - **"For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."** Who is the us in verse 19? True believers who submit to apostolic teaching.

How do you know a true born again believer? What are those kind of folks like? **They are the kind of folks who continue in the faith once for all delivered to the saints.** They're not pretenders - They're contenders. They do what Jude says to do in Jude 3-4, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Born again believers contend for the faith all the time, especially when it comes under attack.

I know that you already know this, but the majority of the New Testament was written to protect believers from false teaching. Why did so many believers in so many different churches need an apostle to write them a letter to warn them about the danger they were in and to provide instructions for their protection? **Because we're sheep.** Sheep by nature need what? Protection. Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18) and He provides undershepherds to care for the church (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Friends, this is a reminder that we all need the protection of Christ through the local church more than we sometimes think we do. We all need overseers who shepherd our souls. We need people who love us enough to confront us when we start tuning in to the wrong spiritual stations. I think a way you know someone loves you is when they have the courage to warn you when you are in sin or spiritual danger from false teachers and I think anyone in their right mind is open to reason when it comes to someone loving them enough to show concern over something they are believing that may not be biblical. If someone ever loves you enough to confront you about sin in your behavior or belief you should listen to that person because that takes courage. Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

John points us to the reason for the false teachers defection in verses 18-19 and then he addressed their denial of basic Bible doctrine in verses 22-23.

2. The Denial of False Teachers - 1 John 2:22-23

1 John 2:22-23

22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

What do false teachers deny? What makes false teachers false teachers is that they deny what the Bible teaches. Like Satan, they put question marks where God puts periods. Have you noticed throughout 1 John, he is not afraid to use the L word? Some of you didn't know there was an L word? John is not afraid to call counterfeit Christians out as liars. The liar is the person who denies the truth about who Jesus is. Anyone who denies God the Son denies God the Father. Much is at stake here.

James Montgomery Boice, "It is not their errors in general that he seizes upon but rather the fundamental error of their denial that Jesus is the Christ. Indeed, as he states it, this is the most fundamental error that can be made by anyone. Therefore, it also has the most serious consequences. In writing about this denial of Jesus as the Christ, John calls it the lie, and the one who embraces it the liar. To gain the full force of John's statement, one must recognize that the confession "Jesus is the Christ" does not mean merely that Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament expectation. This is involved, of course, but much more is involved. Here the context throws light on the statement - John goes on to speak of Jesus as the Son, that is, as the Son of God, and of knowing the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son. In other words, it becomes clear from the context that John is thinking of a confession of Christ's full divinity. It is the belief that God became incarnate in Jesus as the Christ."

When it comes to assurance of salvation, you can't get Jesus wrong and be right with God

This is why John starts his letter in the first four verses with who Christ is and why Christ came. He starts there because if you get that wrong, it's impossible to have assurance.

Do you know what born again people get right? Jesus Christ. Who He is and why He came. Through the illuminating work of God the Holy Spirit we ace that part of the exam. We embrace the unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. **We don't fully understand the Trinity, but we bow the knee to it.**

Ronald Sauer, "These heretics reject the divinity of both the Father and the Son. The person who denies that Jesus is the Son of God does not have a relationship with the Father. Conversely, to confess the Son is to acknowledge who He is, and this provides the evidence that one enjoys a right relationship both with Jesus and the Father also."

Yesterday I took my two younger daughters to play pickleball at quaker park up near 32. It was a bit windy, but we had a good time. As we began playing pickleball I noticed two mormons walk across the parking lot. One of them had a pickleball paddle. Instead of coming to play pickleball they got in their car and they left. They came back a few minutes later with Kentucky Fried Chicken. As they sat under a gazebo and ate their chicken close to where we were playing pickleball I thought about these verses.

As you know those guys eating chicken would be in this camp of liars that John describes in 1 John 2:22-23. They call themselves Christians and they walk around our parks and neighborhoods telling people about Christ, but the Christ they tell people about is not the Christ of the Bible. Mormons have a different view of God, a different view of Christ, a different view of the cross and a different view of salvation.

Kevin DeYoung, a reliable pastor in North Carolina, helps us think through these distinctions:

"In Mormon thought, God has a physical body. According to *Doctrine and Covenants*, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also;" but "The Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit." Whether God the Father is self-existent is unclear. There was a long procession of gods and fathers leading up to our Heavenly Father. Brigham Young once remarked, "How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds." What is clearer is that the Mormon God is not a higher order or a different species than man. God is a man with a body of flesh and bones like us. Mormons do not believe in the Trinity. They affirm the unity of three personages, but the unity is a relational unity in purpose and mind, not a unity of essence. The three separate beings of the Godhead are three distinct Gods.

Mormons believe Jesus is Redeemer, God, and Savior. He is endless and eternal, the only begotten son of the Father. Through Jesus, the Heavenly Father has provided a way for people to be like him and to live with him forever. But this

familiar language does not mean the same thing to Mormons as it does to Christians. Jesus was born of the Father just like all spirit children. God is his Father in the same way he is Father to all. Whatever immortality or Godhood Jesus possesses, they are inherited attributes and powers. He does not share the same eternal nature as the Father. Jesus may be divine, but his is a derivative divinity. Mormon theology teaches, in the words of Joseph Smith, that Jesus Christ is "God the Second, the Redeemer."

Mormons believe Jesus died for sins and rose again from the dead. The atonement is the central event in history and essential to their theology. And yet, Mormons do not have a precise doctrine of the atonement. They do not emphasize Christ as a wrath-bearing substitute, but emphasize simply that Christ somehow mysteriously remits our sins through his suffering. While the atonement itself is not overly defined, the way in which the atonement is made efficacious is much more carefully delineated. Salvation is available because of the atoning blood of Christ, but this salvation is only received upon four conditions: faith, repentance, baptism, and enduring to the end by keeping the commandments of God (which include various Mormon rituals). Finally, it should be noted Mormon theology stresses the suffering in the garden rather than the suffering on the cross. Atonement may have been completed on Golgotha, but it was made efficacious in Gethsemane.

The goal of Mormon salvation is not about escaping wrath as much as it is about maximizing our growth and ensuring our happiness. Salvation is finding our way back to God the Father and recalling our forgotten first estate as his premortal spirit children. How this plays out in Mormon life may differ from person to person, but they stress that the gift of the Holy Ghost is conditional upon continued obedience. Mormons must keep the First Principles and Ordinances, which consist of the Ten Commandments, tithing, chastity, and the "Word of Wisdom" which prohibits tobacco, coffee, tea, alcohol, and illegal narcotics."

I don't know how that description hits you but a word comes to my mind - cloudy. That's cloudy and not clear. It's not clear about who Jesus is or why Jesus came or how salvation works. Why? Because mormons add to the word of God and when you add to Scripture you end up corrupting Scripture. What false religions make complicated Scripture makes simple. Read Titus 2:11-14 and you get a clear understanding of who Jesus is and why He came and how sinners are saved. It's not as complicated as false religions make it out to be.

Why do I include this reminder? **Because what John wrote about 2000 years ago has not gone away.** Later in 1 John 4:1 he writes, "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." Do you know what tense have gone out is in? The perfect tense. John says that false prophets went out in the past and they remain in the present.

John's point is that to deny the Son is to deny the Father. Someone who denies the deity of Christ does not know God. John isn't afraid to call these false teachers what they are - Liars. I know that seems almost harsh in our day, but nothing is more loving for a believer than to call a heretic out. The way we know the Father is through the Son who came to reveal Him.

Do you smell what John is cooking in these verses? He is sounding the alarm because the false teaching that had rocked the churches where these people worshipped had not gone away. There was a real and present danger in their midst. People who looked like they were on the same team played for a different team and John loves them enough to call these people out.

We see their defection in verse 19 and their deviation in verses 22-23 and we see their desire in verse 26.

3. The Desire of False Teachers - 1 John 2:26

1 John 2:26

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

The desire of false teachers is to deceive God's people. Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus years earlier that this would happen in this area where John is now writing years later. In his last conversation with the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul told them in Acts 20:29-30, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Notice Paul describes where these false teachers come from and what they draw people after. They arise from among your own selves speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. There's a selfish satanic agenda behind all false teaching.

Do any of you remember the crocodile hunter? The guy on television from Australia who would find the most poisonous snakes in the world and grab them by the tail and hold them up and say, "Danger, Danger, Danger!" Did you know he died? Did you know how he died? It wasn't an animal that we normally associate with danger. It was a stingray. Stingrays, according to one report I read, are among the more peaceful and docile creatures of the ocean. He died because of a specific stingray and an unlikely puncture of his heart.

False teachers abound in our day and some of them may appear to be nice people. They usually don't wear signs around their neck that says, "I am a false teacher. I am here to deceive you to destroy your soul. I work for Satan you know." They don't do that. They hide their true spiritual condition.

Why would John call these people's true intentions out? So these believers stay away from these people. The crocodile hunter kept getting closer and closer to animals that were dangerous and an unlikely one killed him. Believer, don't ever think that you can stay under or around a false teacher and it not affect your soul. Who you choose to listen to and who you choose to not listen to is a really big deal. Your soul is at stake in this.

Born again believers who possess eternal life don't deny the faith. We remain in fellowship with other believers and we continue in the faith because of the anointing that we have from the Holy One.

Well, happy mothers day! Be warm and filled :). No. I love you guys. I hope you know that. John loved these believers. He calls them children in 1 John 2:18. Everything John writes about false teachers flows from his love for God's children and his desire to protect them. God loves us too much to not warn us when spiritual danger is present and true believers heed the warnings. Let's pray.