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The Foundation and Friend of Assurance **1 John 1:1-2:2**

Thank you for being here this morning as we continue our study on assurance of salvation from 1 John. I just want to remind you what we are attempting to do in this 10:45 class that we call Steadfast. In addition to the preaching of the Word from Pastor Kirk, we are thinking through specific areas of the Christian life in this class. I'm not sure if you've ever shot a gun with a scope on it. If you have or if you haven't its ok - Think of looking through a scope at a target. The scope is God's Word. **In this class we are looking through the scope of God's Word at specific areas of the Christian life to make sure we are thinking about them the right way and applying God's Word to our lives the right way.**

For the next few months we are looking through the scope of Scripture at what the Bible teaches about the assurance of salvation. Some things in life are too important to get wrong. We can be wrong about a lot of things and be ok. Assurance of salvation doesn't fall into that category. John wrote his gospel primarily to help unbelievers know the truth about Christ to trust in Him to be saved. John wrote his letter to give genuine believers confidence in their salvation. 1 John 5:13 is a purpose 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."

Here are some words we see showing up in 1 John over and over again. Kind of like bumper cars. We keep bumping into these words - We know. Or that you may know. Knowing is a big deal

to John. **He knows Christ and wants to help us make sure we know Christ.**

Remember this is how Jesus describes eternal life. I see so many connections between what Jesus prays in John 17 and what John writes about assurance in 1 John. Keep John 17 close at hand as we study 1 John. In John 17:3 Jesus prayed the night before the cross, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Did you hear that? How does Jesus describe eternal life? Not something that happens when we die. Something that happens when we come to know Christ. Eternal life is a quality of life that comes from knowing God through knowing Christ.

Charles Spurgeon writes on 1 John 5:13, "It is right for a child of God to know that God is his Father and never to have a question in his heart as to his sonship. It is right for a soul that is married to Christ to know the sweet love of the bridegroom and never to permit a cloud of suspicion to come between himself and the full enjoyment of Christ's love."

I'm not sure where all of you are at with this. I am still getting to know many of you. I don't know your story. I don't know what your life has been like up to this point or the kind of churches you have been in. I don't know your religious background, but I do know this. **You are here because God loves you too much to leave you in the dark about your spiritual condition.**

To some degree it matters where we have been, but it really matters where we are and where we are going.

How do you know a genuine born again believer? They never let go of the truth about Christ because Christ never lets go of His people. He's the good shepherd, right? After claiming to be the

good shepherd in John 10 and desiring Himself as the One who lays down His life for the sheep, Jesus says in John 10:27-30:

- 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
- 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
- 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.
- 30 I and the Father are one."

Eternal life is not something we achieve. It's a gift. It is something Christ gives to His people. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. I love the hymn called He will hold me fast. Do you know this modern hymn? Did you know there was such a thing as a modern hymn? This should give some people hope.

When I fear my faith will fail
Christ will hold me fast
When the tempter would prevail
He will hold me fast

I could never keep my hold
Through life's fearful path
For my love is often cold
He must hold me fast

He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast
For my Saviour loves me so
He will hold me fast

Those He saves are His delight
Christ will hold me fast

Precious in His holy sight
He will hold me fast

He'll not let my soul be lost
His promises shall last
Bought by Him at such a cost
He will hold me fast

He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast
For my Saviour loves me so
He will hold me fast

For my life He bled and died
Christ will hold me fast
Justice has been satisfied
He will hold me fast

Raised with Him to endless life
He will hold me fast
'Til our faith is turned to sight
When He comes at last!

He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast
For my Saviour loves me so
He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast
He will hold me fast
For my Saviour loves me so
He will hold me fast

This morning, since it's been a few weeks since we studied 1 John, I want to go back and read from the beginning. 1 John 1:1-2:2 will be our focus this morning. I want to read these

verses and then give you two ways to consider them that I trust will be helpful:

1 John 1:1-2:2

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.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

- 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

I want us to think through these opening 12 verses this morning under two headings:

1. The Foundation of Assurance - 1 John 1:1-4
2. The Friend of Assurance - 1 John 1:5-2:2

The foundation of assurance is found in the first four verses. The first four verses remind us of the message about Christ that John and the other apostles proclaimed. Remember these guys didn't just know about Christ. They didn't get their information from a second or third hand source. These guys knew Jesus personally. They spent time with Jesus before the cross and after the cross and wrote through the superintending ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

So what Pastor Blake? **If you want assurance, go to the right source.** John is reliable because he writes as a true apostle. So, where does John start his letter? When we think about our assurance of salvation where are we tempted to begin? With us. John doesn't do that. John starts with Christ because salvation is of the Lord.

If you want assurance the starting point is to look to Christ and make sure what you believe about Christ lines up with Scripture. A pastor named Paul Twiss wrote a very helpful article called How Can I know if I'm saved? <https://blog.tms.edu/how-can-i-know-im-saved>. I would encourage you to read it and pass it along to others who may benefit from it. It's not a long article. In the article Paul writes about why John begins his letter pointing us to Christ.

Paul Twiss, "Contrary to our tendency to set the discussion of assurance within the framework of obedience, John begins his letter by simply setting forth Christ. Why does he start his discussion of assurance in this way? He does this because assurance is a fruit of faith. Assurance grows out of our trust in the Savior, and it cannot be properly considered apart from this fact. As such, if we want to grow in confidence of who we are in Christ we must—as a matter of priority—nurture our faith. The way to nurture our faith is to feast on the gospel. We delight ourselves in the One who saved us. For this reason, John begins his letter to this group of unsettled disciples by exhorting them to pursue a larger view of Christ."

I know you already know this and some people in our world today would think I am mean for pointing this out - It is possible for someone to say they believe in Jesus and still not be saved. What do I mean by that? It is possible for someone to say they believe in Jesus, but if what they believe about Jesus is not the right Jesus from the Word of God, whatever they believe won't save them. All of the other world religions have a certain belief about Jesus, but it doesn't line up with Scripture. It's high but not high enough.

What we see in our world today has been there since Genesis 3. Satan puts question marks where God puts periods. The truth about the true Christ has always been under attack. Satan knows that the lake of fire is coming for him and he spends all his time attacking the truth about Christ. That's really the context of 1 John and why John wrote this letter. It is about assurance. It is also written to help fortify Christians who have come under attack from Satan through false teachers.

Whenever we study a book of the Bible it is always a good idea to slow down and make sure you understand who wrote it and why. Don't start with you. Start with the original author and the original audience.

John is probably writing to 2nd or 3rd generation believers in or around Ephesus around 90 AD. Years earlier Paul met with the elders of the church in Ephesus and he told them what would happen to the church after he left. 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."

What Paul said would happen did happen. False teachers came into the church where these people worshipped Christ and they attacked the truth about Christ. Sadly, some people who looked like real believers bought what these false teachers were selling. They abandoned the truth they had been taught about Christ to follow false teachers. 1 John 2:19, "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."

Do you see what's happening here? John is writing to a group of genuine believers who had survived Satan's attack on the truth. This attack was not over. It was still happening when John wrote this letter. John writes in chapter 2:26 about those who are trying to deceive you. Satan loves to deceive people about the truth of Christ so their souls are destroyed.

How do we deal with satanic opposition? 1 Peter 5:8-9, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him,

firm in your faith." How do you resist Satan? **By standing firm in your faith.**

To stand firm in your faith requires knowing what you believe about Christ and making sure what you believe lines up with Scripture. Where does saving faith in Christ come from? Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Faith in Christ comes through the word of Christ.

When I was a new Christian, a baby believer, I met with an older man for discipleship. I highly recommend all of you finding someone who is more mature than you are in the faith and learning from that person. Something Bill Vine taught me has stayed with me since the mid 90's. He would tell me, "Blake, doctrine received, believed and practiced determines your character, behavior, and destiny." This was close to 30 years ago and it has really defined my Christian life.

Sound doctrine is truth about Christ from the word of God. You receive it, believe it, and practice it. That determines your character (Who you are), your behavior (How you live) and your destiny (Where you spend eternity). I learned from Bill that everything in my Christian life can be traced back to sound doctrine. Healthy teaching about who Jesus is from the whole Bible.

This is where John starts his letter in the opening four verses. He reminds us in these first verses that the Christ he proclaimed is truly God and truly man and what John and the other apostles had is what they want for us. They had fellowship with God and that is what they want for us. Fellowship with God comes through faith in Christ. Remember we are all sinners. We have no access

to God because of our sin. Jesus came to die for our sins to restore our fellowship with God.

That's what these first four verses are about. The foundation of our assurance is found in who Christ is and why Christ came. 1 John 1:1-4 forms the foundation for the rest of the letter because the rest of the letter shows us who has fellowship with God and who says they do, but they really don't. **Anyone can claim to have fellowship with God, but what we learn beginning in 1 John 1:5 is that people who possess eternal life live different than people who don't.**

Rick Kress, "This concept of fellowship forms the basis for the argument for the rest of the book. True Christians manifest the character of the God with whom they have fellowship. How? Through faith in the gospel."

Again, the rest of 1 John, beginning in verse 5, was written to bolster Christian confidence. It was not written to beat believers down, but to build them back up. John shows us in 1 John 1:5-2:2 who God is and who has fellowship with God.

1 John 1:1-4 shows us the foundation of assurance.

1 John 1:5-2:2 shows us the friend of assurance. Obedience, walking in the light, is what flows from genuine fellowship with God. Being alive to the light of the gospel always has a transforming effect. It changes how we view God and how we view our own sin.

Paul Twiss, "The relationship between obedience and assurance is one of friendship. They are companions, and they are both products of faith. Therefore, just as assurance is nurtured by growing our trust in Christ, so also is true

obedience. As such, the proper counsel for someone who is lacking in assurance because he is demonstrating an inconsistent pattern of Christian living is to look to the Savior, to set his gaze on Jesus. Then, with Christ firmly in view, he must wage war against sin, trusting that in time a sense of assurance will grow."

Let's read this next section from 1 John 1:5-2:2

1 John 1:5-2:2

- 5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
- 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
- 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
- 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
 - 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Do you see what John is doing in this section? In verse 5 he points us to who God is. The One that we have been given fellowship with is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. **God and sin do not exist in the same zip code.** God is light is a reference to His moral purity. Habakkuk, in the Old Testament,

understood this. He writes in Habakkuk 1:13, "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong." James got it. He writes in James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," **for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.**"

God is light and then John uses a double negative to prove his point. In Him there is no darkness at all. This stress of this verse is brought out by the order of words in Greek, "God light is") and by the use of contrast ("and in him is no darkness at all"). This is who believers have fellowship with. John follows up his thesis statement in verse 5 with a description of who has fellowship with God and who doesn't. He shows us that someone who has genuine fellowship with God approaches His Word and their own sin differently than someone who doesn't.

Let me slow down and ask - Should fellowship with a holy God make any real difference in how we live every day? Not just on Sunday, but on Tuesday and Thursday. Any day that ends in Y? I think so. This is John's point. It is impossible to be brought into fellowship with God and stay the same old you. To be alive to the gospel is life changing.

Tomorrow will be an interesting day. A total solar eclipse. This kind of thing doesn't happen very often. A total solar eclipse is where the light of the sun is completely blocked by the moon. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk. If it sounds like I got that from the internet, it should because I did.

1 John 1:5-2:2 are anti eclipse verses. These verses shine the light on who has fellowship with God and who says they do but they don't. These verses call out the counterfeit and comfort the

converted. They also remind us that there is a major difference between a genuine believer and someone who is not really converted.

There are three things I want you to see that mark the difference between someone who has fellowship with God and someone who doesn't:

a. Someone who has fellowship runs toward the light of God's Word

1 John 1:6-7

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

What does walk mean in these two verses? **It means habitual action.** Jesus said back in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." A little later in the same chapter we read in John 8:31-32, "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

How do you know if you are a real believer? You believe in who Jesus is and you do what Jesus says. Perfectly? No. Directionally? Absolutely. Walk in these two verses describes a person's habitual way of life. The constant current of their life. The trajectory of their life on a daily basis. What's the difference in these two verses between a professor and a possessor of eternal life? Someone who has genuine fellowship with God does

not habitually walk in darkness. They do not run from the light of Scripture. They run to it. They love it.

Oh, Blake, does this mean a genuine believer never struggles in their love for God's Word and their application of it? No. Believers do struggle at times. Read Psalm 119 this week. It will take a large cup of coffee to get through it. The Psalmist writes about his love for the word of God for 175 verses. That's a lot of love, right? Then he ends with an honest confession in Psalm 119:176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments."

The normal course of life for a Christian is to love the word of God because it is the means of our fellowship with God. People who love God love His Word. People who love God submit their will to the Word of God and seek to follow the Spirit's direction. Two benefits accrue to the believer who does this - Fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Do you see this in your life? Someone who has fellowship with God pursues the blessings of fellowship with His people. The church is not meant to be a burden. It's meant to be a blessing. We're family. We share a common life in Christ and the work of Christ on the cross continually cleanses us from all sin.

Curtis Vaughan, "The thought, then, is that the blood of Christ, applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit, removes sin's defilement and works in us a progressive sanctification."

There is a profession in these verses. The next progression is seen in verses 8-9:

b. Someone who has fellowship with God realizes and confesses sin

1 John 1:8-9

8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Verse 8 exposes the false teachers who denied their sin. People who possess eternal life don't deny their sin. What does the truth of God's Word do in our lives? 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction." The light of God's Word continually exposes our sinful condition. Right? What do we do when God shines the light of His Word on our wrong attitudes and actions? Believers don't do nothing. They do something. We confess our sins.

To confess means to tell God what we have said or done that does against His Word. Being alive to the gospel means being open and honest with God about our ongoing battle with sin. We can be honest with God about our sin because it's all forgiven. 1 John 1:9 is not about salvation. It's about intimacy. We can't walk in close fellowship with God and live in sin at the same time. We confess our sin to restore the intimacy.

Read Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 this week. Those are Psalms of repentance after David sinned against God. They show us that what David wanted most after he sinned was fellowship with God to be restored.

A mark of an unbeliever is to deny their sin. A mark of a believer is to own their sin and confess it to the Lord and to other people they have sinned against.

Now, notice the third mark of someone who has fellowship with God. I think the last verse in chapter 1 goes with the first two verses in chapter 2.

c. Someone who has fellowship with God relies on their advocate

1 John 1:10-2:2

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

I listened to a sermon recently on these verses. The pastor said that when we read these verses, especially verse 1 of chapter 2, we should picture John. He's an old man. He's wearing spectacles to help him see. He is sitting at a desk writing. He has been writing this letter with some sort of fountain pen. When he turns the corner into chapter 2 he slows down. He puts his pen down. He takes his glasses off. He looks into the eyes of believers he loves and he says, "Don't get me wrong. I am not saying it's ok to sin. It's never ok for a believer to sin. We make it our goal not to sin. But when we do sin we need to remember something. Remember we have an Advocate."

At this point we may be asking, "Who is that John?" John would say. There's only One who qualifies to plead our case when we sin. It's Jesus Christ the Righteous One. Jesus pleads our case because He died to take away the wrath of God once for all. All God's wrath was removed by Christ. He doesn't plead for us on the basis of our righteousness, but on the basis of His

righteousness. His work on the cross is sufficient to remove God's wrath for everyone who repents and believes.

I love what Spurgeon writes on these verses, **"Every day I find it most healthy to my soul to try to walk as a saint. But in order to do so, I must continually come to Christ as a sinner. We may have great growth in sanctification, progress in graces, and development of our virtues. But I earnestly pray we never put any of these where Christ should be. "Jesus Christ the righteous one" stands up to plead for me, and pleads his righteousness. And note: he does this not if I do not sin but if I do sin. There is the beauty of the text. When I have sinned, I come creeping up to my prayer closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart, and feel that I am not worthy to be called God's son, I still have an advocate because I am one of the many who sin."**

Do you see how John starts his letter on assurance? The foundation of the assurance of our salvation does not start with us. It actually starts in eternity past. It starts with Christ. God the Son was manifested to restore fellowship with God. All who have it live differently. Obedience is not the basis of our assurance, but it is the friend of assurance. Someone who has fellowship with God continually does three things - walks in the light, confesses sin and trusts in their advocate.

Again, I think its important to notice in 1:5-2:2 how many times John brings us back to the work of Christ as the basis of the assurance of our salvation. Friend, the way to grow in assurance is always looking to Christ. Know who He is. Know what He came to do. Know where He is right now. Know what He is doing for you from the right hand of God all the time.

Hebrews 7:25, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

Paul Twiss, "God is light and if we are in communion with him then our lives will testify to that relationship. John explains what evidences of this relationship he sees in the Christians to whom he is writing, and the apparent absence of such fruit in the false teachers. As he seeks to comfort his readers in this way it is notable how John continually seeks to bring the cross of Christ into view—"the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7), "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9), "he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). With every evidence, John makes reference to the atoning work of the Savior. Why? Because he is eager to stress that our salvation comes not by works but by grace—a grace that is made manifest through the blood of Christ. In this way, the apostle continues to lean upon the principle introduced at the start of the letter—that to grow in assurance we must feed our faith and that happens when we look to Christ."