

How To Know That We Have Eternal Life

Overview of The First Epistle of John

- In my own studies apart from what I do for class, I am reading **1 John** once a day.
- I decided that it would be extremely helpful to get the big picture of **1 John** first.
- My goal is to give you just a taste of **1 John** and leave you hungry to study it on your own.

About the Author

- John, the disciple of Christ wrote the Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and Revelation.
- He was the brother of James, the son of Zebedee, and was trained to be a fisherman.
- John was called by Christ out of the fishing boat where he was mending fishing nets.
- He was taught by Christ how to fish for souls, preaching Christ to all whose souls needed mending.
- Peter, James, and John were part of the inner circle of Christ's disciples.
- James and John were known as the Sons of Thunder - intense, outspoken, impetuous, bold.
- John was 1 of the 12 Apostles of Christ, specially chosen delegates of Christ to the world.
- B/c of his close bond with Christ, John was called the one ***whom Jesus loved***.
- He was a faithful Apostle of Christ throughout his entire life.
- **Jn.19** Jesus, while on the cross, charges John with the care of Mary.
- **Jn.20** We read about John outrunning Peter to the tomb.
- **Ac.2** John is with all the believers when the Holy Spirit was given.
- **Ac.3** Peter and John healed the lame man that was begging at the temple gate.
- **Ac.4** Peter and John were thrown in Jail for preaching in the name of the Risen Christ.
- The next day they were threatened not to preach in the name of Christ. But...
- ***Peter and John answered and said to them, 'whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard'...with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. Ac.4:19-20,33***
- The Apostles and believers were preaching Christ very publicly and very boldly.
- **Ac.5** All the Apostles were put in jail & interrogated by the Council, then flogged and released.
- **Ac.5:41** says ***...they went on their way...rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.***
- **Ac.8** Peter and John went to Samaria to confirm that even Samaritans were being saved.
- **Ac.12** John lost his brother James to the cause of Christ, the first of the Apostles to be martyred.
- Not much else is known about the Apostle John's ministry until about 55 years later.
- 2nd century Irenaeus wrote that John penned his **Gospel** in Ephesus at an old age. **80-90 AD**
- As the only remaining Apostle, John certainly would have had oversight of churches in Asia Minor.
- In **Rev.2-3** that John wrote to the 7 actual Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea all located in western Turkey.
- About **95 AD**, under the persecution of Roman Emperor Domitian, John was banished to Patmos.
- **Rev.1:9** tells us it was ***because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus***. Faithful witness.
- So **1 John** was written around **90-95 AD** sometime before John's exile and writing of Revelation.

- After his release from Patmos, John lived to a ripe old age, and died a natural death, only 1 of 12.

About That Time

- Late in the 1st century the variations of religious philosophies were numerous.
- The philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, filtered through centuries of Greek mythology...
- The many gods and goddesses of pagan Roman religion...
- Add in the traditions of O.T. Judaism and a little N.T. Christianity.
- Mix it all together what do you get? A confusing religious mess.
- The errors of inclusivism & tolerance (many gods) and relativism (many truths) were the trend.
- True believers were under constant attack from these outside false religious philosophies.
- And men who were infected by these philosophies became false teachers within the church.
- The prophecy of Paul in **Acts 20:29-30** was coming true. ***I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.***
- The Apostle John and the believers faced a proliferation of philosophies and false teaching.
- In **1John** we do not know for sure the exact teaching of the **anti-Christ** John is confronting.
- Some scholars say it was a form of Gnosticism, like what Paul dealt with in the Colossian church.
- Regardless of the exact form of the heresies, we know that they perverted the gospel of Christ.
- The Apostle John, AKA son of thunder, inspired by the Holy Spirit, boldly pointed out the error.

About Our Time

- We live in a time that is similar to the time of the Apostle John in Ephesus.
- The USA went through the 60's a generation ago. Hippy mvmt affected us more that we know.
- Every establishment was challenged, free thinking, free love, and no more boundaries in life.
- Drug use exploded along with the divorce rates and sexual perversion. Utopia, Nirvana, Peace.
- And we see the philosophies that came out of that era along with new ones perverting truth.
- We have a plethora of religions all claiming to possess the truth about Christ and Christianity.
- Every one of them appealing to people to come to them for salvation.
- Even within evangelicalism there are many factions and variations, always evolving.
- One group emphasizes one part of the Bible, another rips that part out and flings it to the wind.
- Baptism - baptized to be saved, baptized after salvation, baptized before and after salvation.
- We are deeply infected with inclusivism & tolerance as well as relative thinking, no absolutes.
- We hear constantly that it isn't possible to know who is saved and who is not saved.
- Too many **what if** scenarios for us to filter through...we just can't know.
- And I will concede that by taking a quick glance at a person's life, we may not know if saved.
- By talking with them briefly about work and sports, we won't know if they are in Christ.
- But as we get to know someone over time, and we hear them espouse their doctrinal convictions.
- As we see what patterns characterize life, and the kind of fruit produced...WE CAN KNOW.
- **1 John** helps us cut through the confusing religious clamor to KNOW who is saved.

Why the Letter was Written

- As we read **1 John** we are told several reasons why it was written. One of them is **1Jn.5:13**
- The letter is written to believers, so we can **EVALUATE** and **KNOW** that we have eternal life.
- And by knowing who has eternal life we can also evaluate and know who does NOT have it.

- We can evaluate and know who the false teachers are and who the *savage wolves* are.
- Litmus paper is used in Chemistry to determine the acidity or alkalinity of a substance. (Parker)
- In politics, the litmus test of Abortion is commonly used in deciding who to vote for.
- Litmus tests are a way to find out what substances or people are really made of.
- They reveal the true nature, the true heart of a person, regardless of our initial impressions.
- **1John** provides us with a litmus test that reveals the genuineness of a person's salvation.
- A "How to" manual on confirming who is saved...and who is NOT saved.
- This test is not a quick glimpse at a life, but evaluates patterns over time.
- It is written in very clear, very direct, black and white terms. The way all "sons of thunder" write.
- **1John** reminds us of biblical standards with which to measure true spiritual condition.
- Let's be clear – salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – not by works.
- These standards are not prerequisites for salvation but confirmation of true salvation or lack...
- True saving faith, new life in Christ WILL show up in very real ways, we will change. **2Cor.5:16-17**
- Believers will not attain perfection in this life but our direction will move toward Christ-likeness.

Litmus Test of Genuine Salvation

- There are two categories tested in **1John**, doctrine and life, what we believe and how we live.
- Let's look at a few. These are not separate little tests but one test. Pass or fail.
- **1:3** Believe that Jesus was God the Son made flesh, fellowship with God, saved. Reject it, unsaved.
- **1:6** Empty words do not save. If no outward transformation, no inward transformation/salvation.
- **1:7** Walking in the light of truth and growing in holiness is what characterizes the truly saved.
- **1:8,10** False teachers and the unsaved refuse to acknowledge sin...let alone confess it.
- **1:9** Habitual humble confession of sin, agreeing with God, is part of walk of the believer.
- **2:3-6** Saying the right words, praying the right prayer, being religious, saying that we love God...
- If there is no progress in obedience to God and Christ-likeness, we lie, and are not saved.
- The life of a true believer will be marked by an increasing pattern of obedience **over the years**.
- **2:15,17b** Lives defined/consumed by the world and its values, no thought of God, not saved.
- Only true believers can be obedient to the will of God revealed in the word of God.
- **2:23a** Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Messiah, one and only Savior. Not saved.
- **2:23b** Embracing the biblical Christ as our only hope is the core of salvation.
- **2:29** A pattern of godly and righteous living is an evidence of having new life in Christ.
- **3:14,15** Genuine love for fellow believers is an assurance of genuine salvation.
- A lack of love and hatred of others is evident in the lives of those who are still spiritually dead.
- On the handout I have other **1 John** passages listed for you to examine on your own.
- See if you can identify the litmus test of genuine salvation in each passage.
- I'll be honest. There are some difficult portions. Remember to compare scripture w/ scripture.
- There are also many other wonderful promises for believers in **1 John**. You will be blessed.

The Conclusion

- It is natural for believers to doubt their salvation, especially in the early years. No track record.
- But as we compare our life patterns with the test of **1 John** we can gain tremendous confidence.
- We can know that we have eternal life. And we can rest in that assurance of salvation forever.
- And we can also no longer be fooled by the many false religious philosophies that we hear.

- But it is also true that the light of truth in **1 John** exposes those who are not saved.
- Many kind, loving, & sincere people do NOT embrace the biblical Christ alone – Not saved.
- Many religious people have a basic knowledge of Christ but there is NO spiritual fruit – Not saved.
- And so if you examine your life and find yourself void of any of these 1 John evidences...
- If you reject the Biblical Christ, no matter how good you are, you are not saved.
- And if you know the facts about Jesus but your life has not changed, you are not saved.
- And I beg you, with all my heart. Humble yourself b/4 God. Repent of Sin. Call on the Lord Jesus.
- And if your repentance and faith in Christ alone are genuine God will save you, give you new life.
- The Holy Spirit will indwell you, empowering you and freeing you to begin new patterns.
- And over time you also can KNOW that you have eternal life and live for the Lord in confidence.

Examine the following passages and identify each test of true salvation.

- **2:9-11**

- **3:4-21** (Speaks about habitual sin that fills and characterizes the life. This is NOT teaching the sinless perfection of believers. **1Jn.1:8-10**)

- **4:1-6**

- **4:7-8**

- **4:9-19**

- **4:20-21**

- **5:1**

- **5:2-3**

- **5:4-12**

- **5:13-21**