

## **Sorting Out True Salvation**

1 John Overview

(preached Pine Grove 9/18/16; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

My first real job was at a distribution center for a store called McCrory's.

McCrory's was a dollar store that had a distribution center in Clinton about 15 miles from my house...

Distribution warehouses are busy places.

As products come from manufacturers, they are stored on shelves until they are ready to be shipped to stores for sale.

A major part of any large distribution center is what is called a sorter...

The sorter is a series of conveyor belts where products are taken off storage racks and put on these conveyors, which take them to the appropriate part of the warehouse where they are packed on trucks to be driven to the store.

Sorters have become more complex today, but my first job was to work on the return part of the sorter...

You see, every products taken off the shelf was given a sticker and as the product ran along the conveyor belt, scanners read the stickers at a very rapid rate and sent them to the right conveyor for the right truck..

However, not every product had the correct label or some products had the wrong label, so the computer would read them and send them to me...

I would get the product and make a right label and put it back on the conveyor where it hopefully find the right place on the truck..

My job was simply called the misread sorter operator.

I was responsible to take the products that were kicked out of the system, determine the problem, and help them find the right place...

Tonight, we come to the book of 1 John, and if I had to describe 1 John in warehouse terms, 1 John is a sorter of people in the church...

The book of 1 John scans your life and then reveals if you are part of the true church or it kicks you out of the system in hopes that you can discover your problem and become a true Christian before the final sort of your life.

In fact, the book of 1 John gives its purpose in 1 John 5:13...

***13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.***

In other words, the purpose of 1 John is to help you see if you possess eternal life...

And John is going to help your see that in very straightforward language...

In my first Greek class in seminary, we went through 1 John word by word in order to get a feel for the Greek language...

And the reason my professor chose 1 John is that John is a very straightforward writer...

John was a fisherman; he wasn't a scholar like Paul...

He was a blue collar man who spoke and wrote in very plain terms...

In this first letter to the church, John doesn't pull any punches...

His point is to help his readers understand their salvation..

To sort out the true church from the false church..

The contenders from the pretenders...

Now, many are surprised when they read 1 John because many have the wrong view of John...

They see him as a gentle man filled with love for Christ, and he was...

John was there laying on Jesus as the first Lord's Supper....

John is the one who wrote the gospel of love where he highlights the incredible love of God that cause him to send his Son to die for the sins of the world...

But also don't forget that John was also called one of the sons of thunder along with his brother James because they asked God to send fire down upon towns that rejected Christ...

John was also the man who wrote a a gospel that spoke in such plain terms describing people as either in the light or in the darkness, as children of God or children of Satan...

For as gentle as John was, he was also very clear in all his writing and 1 John is no exception...

Now the background of 1 John is not as clear...

It seems to best to date 1 John as late first century from 85-90 AD or even later....

We know that John was not martyred for his faith like the rest of the disciples, so at this point in his life, he was an elderly man in his 80s or 90s..

We do know that he was ministering at Ephesus at this time...

Ephesus was the place where Paul pastored for 3 years...

The place where Timothy was put in place by Paul to pastor after Paul was released from his first imprisonment..

Ephesus was central to much of the growth of Christianity in the first century but also the place of the most false teaching as well...

John had most likely come there after Timothy and since he had been with Jesus, John was given much authority and respect in Ephesus and the surrounding area..

And the testimony of early church fathers indicate that John was pastoring in Ephesus, evangelizing the area and also writing..

And the strongest evidence indicates that John wrote 1 John from Ephesus along with 2 John and 3 John before being sent to the island of Patmos where he wrote Revelation...

Now, the motivation for 1 John is simple as well....

False teachers were in and around the church...

The first major wave of false teaching was centered on gospel of works verses gospel of faith, and it was being put forward by the Judaizers...

We have been looking at it in the book of Galatians...

But the second great false teaching error came from a group of people known as Gnostics...

Gnostics attacked the person of Jesus Christ...

They denied that he was fully human because Gnostics believed that all matter was evil and to be avoided...

So in their mind, God who is spirit and perfect would never inhabit an evil human body...

And because of their warped teaching, the person of Christ came under assault...

But Gnostics also believed that sin was not that big of a deal...

It was only committed by the evil body, so a person could be spiritually saved and still live a life of incredible sin...

Therefore, people following their false teaching often lived lives filled with sin and corruption while claiming that they were Christians..

And John set out to do a couple things in his letter...

First to establish the fact of Jesus' full humanity and full deity....

But also to show that people who are true Christians put off sin and pursue holiness and obey God, and if they don't do those things, they are not saved and never have been...

So, let's get a good overview of the book tonight, and this is a real challenge because 1 John is the most difficult book to outline...

John doesn't start at point A and take us to to point B like Paul or even Peter...

John goes from A to B to C then back to A and then to C and then to B...

So, I have simply divided the 5 chapters into 5 parts relating to true salvation...

The first part will give us the center of true salvation, and the remaining four parts will be tests to see who possesses true salvation...

Let's begin in verse 1-4 with.....

## **I. The Center of Salvation: Jesus Christ (1:1-4)**

Verse 1...

***1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.***

John sets his sights on the false teachers in these opening verses with a clear picture of Jesus Christ...

The Gnostics claimed that Jesus wasn't a real person, that God has put His spirit in a person for a while but that Jesus wasn't a human like the rest of people...

And John wanted to make it clear that Jesus was fully human...

John saw him and listened to him, and even more than that, John and the disciples had touched Jesus Christ...

Jesus was fully human and this is so important because if Jesus were't like us, he could not serve as our Substitute...

He couldn't be the One who took on our sin....

If Jesus didn't play by the rules so to speak and experience the temptations that we experience and yet not sin....

He couldn't be our Substitute law keeper either....

Jesus had to be God so that his sacrifice would go on forever, but he had to be man so that his sacrifice would be acceptable on our behalf....

You can't have a Jesus that isn't fully God, but you also can't half a Jesus who is isn't fully man...

He has to be both, and you have to believe that Jesus is both to be fully saved...

Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses and Muslims don't see Jesus as fully God and they are saved, and Gnostics and anyone who doesn't see Jesus as fully man aren't saved either...

You must have the right view of Jesus Christ in order to be saved...

And if you don't, you are not in fellowship with God and with his church...

And John sets out to make the point right out of the gate that you must have the right view of Jesus to have a true salvation...

With that out of the way, John begins to take his readers through a series of tests to further prove or disprove their claim to salvation....

So, let's look at test #1 beginning in verse 5...

## **II. The First Test of Salvation: Understanding of Sin, Obedience and Love (1:5-2:17)**

*5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself 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 that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

People who are truly saved have a correct view of sin and of themselves as sinners..

And if someone claims to be a Christian yet walks in sin, he or she is not saved according to verse 6....

You see the Gnostics were claiming that you could live sinful lives as Christians...

They claimed that sin you were born evil, you could sin all your wanted as long as you were spiritual on the inside...

In case you were wondering, Gnosticism is still alive and well because that is the argument that many homosexuals make today...

I was born that way so my sin is fine as long as I believe in God on the inside...

Yet nothing could be further from the truth...

You must have a correct view of yourself as a sinner and you must have the correct view that a lifestyle of habitual sin reveals that you aren't saved in order to be truly saved...

John then takes chapter 2 to expand on this concept as he talks about the test of obedience as a measure of salvation...

1 John 2:3-6...

***3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.***

In case you were wondering, this isn't hard to understand.

If you are a Christian, you will live according to the teaching of Scripture...

If you are a Christian, you will obey the Lord's commands...

That is not hard to understand and past generations of Christians understood it perfectly...

It is only in a day and age where preachers want hands raised and people baptized to validate their ministries that the gospel is watered down to a few words or a prayer....

That you have people who think that they are saved even though they still lead lives of incredible sin...

The Bible consistently teaches that those who are truly saved will obey the commands of Scriptures...

We don't obey to get saved, but saved people obey...

It is that simple....

Obedience to the Word is a great test of salvation...

There is more to say in this first test, but let's get to the second test of salvation that begins in 1 John 2:18..

### **III. The Second Test of Salvation: Understanding False Teachers, Righteousness, and Love (2:18-3:24)**

One thing that lacks in many people in our day and age is how to discern between what is biblical and what is not...

Yet John would tell you that the ability to discern is a test of salvation...

In verses 18-25, John alerts his readers to the presence of false teachers and others that he describes as antichrists in the world....

Though we think of the coming Capital A Antichrist, John makes it clear that Little A antichrists will be around in every age of the church to lead people away from Christ...

Yet, true believers will not fall for their schemes and teachings...

Look at 1 John 2:26...

***26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you,***

***and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, [i]you abide in Him.***

The anointing that John is talking about is the Holy Spirit that is given to every Christian at the moment of true salvation...

This Spirit guides us to truth and away from error...

That is not to say that you can't be fooled at times, but in general even true believers who are conned into believing a false teacher will eventually come to their senses over time....

Just to show you that John goes from point A to point B and then back to point A, look at verse 4 of chapter 3.....

***4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or [b]knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil [c]has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is [d]born of God practices sin,***

***because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is [e]born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: [f] anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.***

To drive his point home once again that true believers don't practice sin, John says the same thing in a different way...

He even identifies those who practice sin as being of Satan himself who has practiced sin since the beginning of time...

And since Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, those who truly belong to Christ stop practicing sin and instead live righteously.

So, let's move from test 2 to test 3 beginning in 1 John 4...

#### **IV. The Third Test of Salvation: Understanding Doctrine and Love (4:1-4:21)**

In a little repeat of a previous test, John reminds us that true believers know truth from error in verses 1-6 of chapter 4...

As I said before, we live in a church culture that doesn't believe in confrontation and discernment...

If you use Jesus name in any way today, you must be saved and a good Bible student...

However, John writes this in verse 1 of chapter 4...

***1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.***

Look, I don't want to be known as the preacher who is against everyone and everything, but I do want to test every man who stands up and preaches by the word of God...

Words are important and just because it sounds good doesn't mean that it is good...

Many teachers in the church today say things like....

“Well, we don’t need to teach doctrine. We don’t need to be dogmatic on what people must believe. What you believe isn’t that important as long as you love Jesus...”

Well, I would remind these men who say this today that the Judaizers in Galatia also loved Jesus along with the Gnostics in Ephesus.”

In fact, I don’t know of a false teacher who ever said that he didn’t love Jesus and even told others to love Him.”

However, what they believed about Jesus and what they taught about Jesus was wrong and sent plenty of people to hell who would also say that they loved Jesus as well..

If you don’t believe me, read Matthew 7 where you will find that Jesus will cast many out of his presence who claimed that they loved him as well....

Every true believer loves Christ, but not everyone who says they love Christ is a true believer.....

Therefore, true believers test everything by the word of God...

Those who are playing the games test no one and are led even further astray..

John then revisits a test in 4:7 that he gave in chapter 2 and again in chapter 3..

And this is test of salvation focusing on the issue of love...

Look at verse 7 with me...

***7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is [a]born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested [b]in us, that God has sent His [c]only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.***

More people are derived into believing that they pass the test of love simply because they see love as simply an emotion they feel....

And so if you ask most people who claim to be saved if they love God and they love others, you will get an almost universal “Yes!”

However, if you checked their love by what they give to God and what they do for their neighbors, you would get a much different answer...

Love usually stops with the tongue and never makes it to a person's hands, feet, or pocketbook...

Yet, John would describe love as an emotion tied to action...

And so, taking this test tonight is not how do you feel about God and how do you feel about your neighbor, but rather, what does your love of God and your neighbor cause you to do?

If there is only an emotion of love without any evidence of love, its not love and you don't pass this test...

One final test that we will look at tonight is in the final chapter of 1 John....

## **V. The Fourth Test of Salvation: Understanding Victory, Jesus Christ, and Assurance (5:1-5:21)**

In this final chapter, John wraps up all his tests with a couple more tests of salvation...

One test is to ask yourself if you are a person of faith, which is a fact that John writes about in verses 1-4....

John then revisits a prior test of salvation that he opened the letter with in verses 5-12...

And that is a person's view of who Jesus is...

But then, John closes out the letter with a final test of salvation and that is the test of assurance in verses 13-21...

Those who are truly saved are filled with certainty about some truths about God...

In fact, John uses the word "know" 7 times over these final 9 verses...

In other words, people of saving faith know and believe certain truths about God, His Son and salvation...

The first of these certainties is found in verse 13....

***13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.***

People of true faith know that they possess eternal life...

Certainty #2 is found in 15...

***15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.***

People of truth faith believe that God hears and answers prayer....

Certainty #3...

Verse 18....

***18 We know that no one who is [o]born of God sins;***

In other words, we know that people who are truly saved don't make a practice out of sin...

We are certain of that truth....

Certainty #4....

Verse 19...

***19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one***

People of true faith know that the world is evil, and they are not part of that evil system but set apart to God...

And the final certainty of the truly saved is found in verse 20...

***20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.***

People who pass the test of salvation will know that Jesus is the Son of God and that he has come to save people who trust in Him...

The point of this final chapter is this....

People who possess true saving faith are certain of what they believe...

They don't waver in their belief...

They aren't wishy washy...

They are saying one thing today and another thing today about God and the salvation he offers in Christ...

They have a certain confidence about themselves...

They speak with it and they live by it...

## **Conclusion**

So, what do we do with all these tests in John 1?

Well, first of all, you need to take them yourself...

Are you filled with certainty about who God is and what he has done in the gospel?

Do you know exactly who Jesus Christ is?

Are you filled with love for God and others that has led you to action?

Do you think people can live in sin and still be saved?

Do you see your sin?

Are you obedient to the word of God?

Do you know how to tell between good and bad Bible teaching and preaching?

Do you love studying the deep truths and doctrines of God?

Are you someone of faith?

But if you pass the tests, you then need to know these tests to help others evaluate their own salvation...

But finally, you need to re visit and re read 1 John often to increase your confidence in your own salvation...

1 John is not a book that you read and pass and then never read again....

Your assurance of salvation will constantly be under attack, but 1 John will always give the true believer a shelter to hide under to grow in the confidence that they truly know the Lord...