

**1 John**  
**It Matters What You Believe (Part 6)**  
**1 John 2:18-27**  
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In the year 1921, John A. Larson, a policeman in Berkeley, California, and a physiologist, invented the first polygraph; a device designed to detect lying and deception. It simultaneously measured changes in the blood pressure, the heart rate, and the respiration rate of those who were being tested, and it compared their responses against a set of test questions to see whether or not they, in fact, were being deceptive. Today, it's estimated that 2.5 million polygraph tests are administered every year in the United States. Unfortunately, they're just not that accurate. In 1998, in a case before the US Supreme Court, "The United States versus Scheffer," the U.S. Supreme Court majority wrote this, "There is simply no consensus that polygraph evidence is reliable." The Court went on to conclude that the results obtained by using a polygraph were, "Little better than could be obtained by the toss of a coin." Well, that's not very helpful. So, the bottom line is that even with all of our technological advances, there is no device that really accurately identifies deception.

As I thought about that, I was reminded of the passage we come to today because it's different for us who are Christians. As believers, we actually have a built-in-resident lie detector that is 100% accurate when it comes to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. That's exactly what the Apostle John will teach us in the passage we come to this morning.

Now, let me remind you of the context. We're looking at this first letter, it's "Tests of Eternal Life," how do you know whether or not you have eternal life, and there are three tests. And those three tests are presented in three cycles or three movements. So, the same three tests

presented three separate times. We're concluding the first cycle or movement of those three tests. So far, we've looked at the moral test. If you want to know whether or not you're a Christian, look at your life and ask, is there a pattern of "Obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word?" The second test is a social test. If you want to know whether or not you're a believer, whether or not you really have eternal life, then look at your life and see if there's a consistent pattern of "Love for God and Love for God's People?"

We're studying the third test; it's the doctrinal test. And that is, look at your life and see if there is "Faith in The Biblical Jesus and in the Biblical Gospel?" In other words, a true Christian knows, believes, and perseveres in the biblically orthodox teaching about Jesus, about His gospel, and about the essentials of the Christian faith. What you believe matters. Just as there are vital signs that determine if a person is physically alive, there are doctrinal vital signs to determine whether or not you have spiritual life, whether you have eternal life. So, this is an important set of tests to see whether or not you're really in Christ.

Now, let me just remind you that the backdrop for this first letter of John is an ever-present reality. In the churches John shepherded in the first century, in this church, in every church, there are what we could call "true Christians," that is those who profess Jesus Christ, who really have been changed, who really know Jesus Christ, who really have been redeemed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, there are in every church, including this one, those who would raise their hand, and say, "Yes, I'm a Christian. I profess faith in Christ," but in fact, they are false Christians. By that I mean, they claim Christ, but they've never truly been changed by the Holy Spirit. They've never been born again. Their life has never experienced the kind of

transformation the New Testament describes. They are false Christians. And if they die in the state they are currently in, in spite of that profession they made at some point in the past, they will die and go to hell; they will stand before Christ one day as He says in Matthew 7, and say, “Lord, Lord...” and He'll say, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO WORK LAWLESSNESS.”

This book gives us the tests to know which we are. Are we true Christians? Or are we false Christians? That's what John was helping the believers in the first century understand.

Now, the first vital sign that's part of this doctrinal test we're looking at, this third test is this, “Do you belong to a biblical church?” Verses 18 and 19 remind us that if you're a true Christian, you don't leave a genuine church where the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel are taught and drift off and connect with a false church where the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel are not taught. Those who do that show that they were never Christians at all.

Now, we're considering the second doctrinal sign of spiritual life, of eternal life, and it's this, “Do you believe the essential gospel?” That's the message of verses 20 to 25. Let me read it for us, 1 John 2, verses 20 to 27:

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let

that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 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, you abide in Him.

Now, verses 20 through 25, that I just read together, the main point of those verses is that because of what he calls “the anointing” that every believer received at salvation, and as we learned, that Anointing is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. So, if you're a Christian, you've been anointed with the Holy Spirit, that is, you have the Holy Spirit, He resides in you. Because of that, we learned, first of all, that “A true Christian knows, believes, and perseveres in the essential elements of saving truth.” That's the message of verses 20 and 21. Now, that's a general statement. But in the following verses, John explains exactly what those essential elements of saving truth are.

Secondly, “A true Christian knows, believes, and perseveres in the biblical truth about Jesus Christ;” that's the message of verses 22 and 23. You can't be a true Christian, and not believe in the biblical Jesus. There are a lot of people in our world who say they believe in Jesus, but it's one of their own making; it's not one that's described on the pages of the New Testament. If they believe in a wrong Jesus, they're not Christians even if they say they are.

Thirdly, we learned that “A true Christian knows, believes, and perseveres in the biblical gospel,” verses 24 and 25. Again, you can't be a true Christian and not understand how the person of Jesus Christ and His work becomes yours. You can't believe that you're going to earn your way into God's favor. You can't believe that you contribute to your salvation. If your confidence is anywhere but Jesus Christ and His finished work, then you have believed an unbiblical gospel, a damning gospel. You can't be a Christian and be wrong on the gospel.

Now, we began this paragraph on the biblical gospel, verses 24 and 25, by looking at some deviations from the gospel, some common false gospels,; and if you missed that, I would encourage you to go back and listen online because it's an important backdrop to what we're going to look at today.

Last time that we studied 1 John together, we considered “The Core Truths of the Gospel.” What exactly is the biblical gospel? If you weren't here when I reviewed that, I encourage you to please to go online and listen because it's crucial that you know and have believed the true biblical gospel; it's necessary to be a Christian.

But before we leave this second vital sign related to the essential gospel, John calls us to “Perseverance in the Gospel.” We've seen the deviations from the Gospel, the core truths of the gospel, but in verse 24, he calls us to perseverance in that gospel, and essentially tells us this, “That is the response of a true Christian.” Look at verse 24, “As for you, (He means the true Christians to whom he writes this letter, as for you,) let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.” Verse 24, literally, reads from the Greek text, “You that which you heard from

the beginning, in you, let it be remaining, let it be continuing in you.” In other words, persevere in believing the Gospel that you heard at the beginning of your Christian life.

Now, this is a command, but at the same time, it's John's clear expectation. This is what true Christians do; they persevere in the gospel; they keep on believing the Gospel they heard at the beginning of their Christian life and experience.

Last time, we were looking at the truths of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection as we celebrated Resurrection Sunday, and I pointed out 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 1 and 2 to you. Paul says:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which also you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold fast to the word which I preached to you, (hold fast to it).

And he says if you don't hold fast to it, then you believed in vain. In other words, you didn't really believe; it wasn't genuine faith. The theological term for holding fast to the gospel is 'perseverance.'

What is perseverance? Let me give you a definition. Theologically speaking, perseverance is simply 'the biblical truth that genuine believers endure in the faith until the end.' Genuine believers endure in the faith to the end. In other words, genuine believers, if you're really a Christian, you never stop believing; you never stop believing the Gospel you believed at the beginning. You keep on believing till the end no matter what you encounter.

How does that happen? Look at 1 Peter, chapter 1. Here, Peter explains, he says in verse 3, "...God...(by) His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We've been saved "to (obtain) an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, (And then he says, it's) reserved in heaven for you." It's going to happen; you're going to get it. How is that going to happen? Verse 5, here's how perseverance happens, "who are protected by (What?) protected by (You fill in the blank.) the power of God." You're protected by the power of God; that's how perseverance happens. That's how a person who believed the gospel keeps on believing.

But then there's the human side of this as well, verse 5, "...through faith (through your faith) for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." So, perseverance is your continuing to believe in the faith until the end, and what will keep you continuing to believe the faith until the end? It's because you're protected by the power of God. That's why! So true Christians, then, persevere in their faith in the gospel; they can't help it because they're going to keep on believing because that faith and they are protected by the power of God. So, he says, "I plead with you to persevere in the Gospel; keep on holding fast. And he says, "I know you will if you're really in Christ."

Now John ends this point by reminding us of "The Promises of the Gospel." In the last part of verse 24, and verse 25, "The Promises of the Gospel," he reminds us of the pledge that Jesus Christ has made to us. You see, Christ has made some amazing promises to the one who perseveres, to the one who holds fast to the true biblical gospel that he or she believed at the beginning of their Christian lives. Christ's first promise is "Real Assurance," real assurance.

Look at the end of verse 24, "...If what you heard from the beginning abides in you," if the true biblical gospel is remaining in you, to use Jesus's picture of the parable of the soils, you remember, where He described the seed of the gospel falling into different hearts? He says, "If the seed of the gospel doesn't die in your heart but it continues to bear fruit, if you continue to live in a life of repentance and faith, the same way your Christian life began," verse 24 says, "...you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." Literally, "You will continue in the Son and in the Father, you will remain in the Son and in the Father."

Now folks, this isn't speaking of some special class of Christians; this promise isn't reserved for sort of the elite, the "Green Beret, the Seals." No! This is the experience of every true believer. If you continue to persevere in believing the biblical gospel, then you can have assurance, when combined with the other two tests, that in this life and in eternity, you will remain in a saving relationship with the Son and in a Father-Son relationship with the Father. That's what he's saying.

Turn over to John's second letter, 2 John, and notice how he begins this, verse 1, he says, "...all (those) who know the truth," verse 2, "for the sake of the truth which (remains or continues) in us and will be with us forever." We're going to remain in the truth, we're going to continue in the truth. Verse 9, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who (remains, who continues) in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son."

You see, this is a great encouragement. When we come to 1 John, we often use 1 John negatively; you know, if somebody in our lives says they're a Christian, but they're not behaving like a Christian, we say, "You need to read 1 John." And that's right and it should be that way, but that isn't the purpose of this book. The purpose of this book; it's written to true believers, those who meet these tests, who pass the test. What John is saying is if we pass the test that we're learning in 1 John, we can have real, biblical assurance that we have eternal life, that we've been forgiven. Christ promises, if you pass these tests, real assurance; not pretend assurance, not something you talk yourself into, not something you write in the front of your Bible, but God's own assurance that you're really His.

John also reminds us here of a second promise that Christ made, verse 25, that is, "Eternal Life," eternal life. "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." John emphasizes that this promise is one Christ Himself made. Literally, the Greek text says this, "This is the promise, which He Himself promised to us," repeats it twice. "This is the promise which He Himself promised to us, and that promise is eternal life." If you're a Christian, if you have believed the biblical Christ, the biblical gospel, and if you're persevering and believing that, then Christ has promised you eternal life.

Now, don't misunderstand, eternal life is never earned even by continuing to believe. In fact, eternal life is a gift of God's grace. Listen to Romans 6:23, "...the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." And by the way, notice that that gift of eternal life is never found outside of Jesus Christ. The only way you and I can ever have the gift of eternal life, the gift of

God's grace, is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that alone. So, this is the promise, eternal life.

Now, eternal life is an interesting expression because it refers, on the one hand, to the length or the quantity of life, this new life that we have; it is eternal, it lasts forever. But that isn't all eternal life means. I mean, think about it for a moment. If I came up to you and I said, "Okay, tell me what eternal life is," you might be tempted to say, "Life which lasts forever." And that's partially true. But guess what? Every single human being will have life which lasts forever. Jesus talks about those who will be resurrected unto eternal death and eternal punishment. Every person has life which lasts forever. So, this is something different; this is not only a quantity of life, but it's a different quality of life. It's life in John's gospel which is from above, we share the very life of God, we have been born of God, 1 John says. We share the very life of God Himself; we'll never be God; you'll never be God; I'll never be God; we'll always be humans, perfected, glorified humans, but we share the very life of God Himself.

Eternal life is our present possession. If you're a Christian, this isn't something you're going to get someday. This is something you've got right now. Look at (I John) chapter 5, verse 11:

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, (and again he says,) and this life is in His Son. (You don't get eternal life outside of Jesus Christ.) He who has the Son (Notice this.) has the life; (It's his current possession.) he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

If you're a Christian, you have eternal life as your present possession. And that's punctuating the fact that it's not just life which lasts forever, it's life of a different kind.

So, what distinguishes this life? What makes it different? Well, look down to verse 20 of chapter 5:

We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding (Here it is.) 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.

Now, John hints at what eternal life is here, but he defined it powerfully in his Gospel. Go back to John 17, as he quotes from Jesus's own prayer, John 17, this is Jesus's high priestly prayer the night before His crucifixion, and notice what he prays. In verse 2, he says, "Father, you gave the Son of Man; You gave Me authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Me (That is all of those who in eternity past you gave me as a love gift.) to them, I may give eternal life." (Paraphrase.) And then he defines it, verse 3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, (Father), the only true God, and (that they may know Me) Jesus Christ whom You have sent." There's a definition of eternal life, and you've got it right now. You know your Creator. If you've been redeemed, if you've been saved, if you've been transformed, you have a relationship with God, your Creator, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. You have eternal life.

That is the essence of the eternal life we currently possess.

But our new life is also our eternal possession. Listen to John 10:28, "...I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish." Go out as far as you want to in the future, and you will always have this life. In fact, your life is the very life of Christ; you are attached to Him, you are in Christ. And so, you can only be severed from God if Jesus Christ can be severed from

God. It is eternal! To the one who perseveres in believing the Gospel, Christ promises real assurance and eternal life, now and forever. What an amazing gospel! What a gracious Lord!

There's one last doctrinal vital sign of eternal life. We've looked at, "Do You Belong to a Biblical Church? Do You Believe the Essential Gospel?" Thirdly, "Do You Believe the Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith?" do you believe the essential doctrines of the Christian faith? This is the message of verses 26 and 27. Now at first glance, it appears that these two verses are just a summary or a kind of recap of verses 18 to 25. But on closer inspection, although John is making a similar point here, a case can be made that he's actually making a new, a different point.

Let me show you why. Because the focus of these verses is not on what you heard at the beginning, which is the point in verses 24 and 25, the Gospel you heard when you were saved. Instead, the focus of these verses is on what we continue to be taught by the Spirit. Notice verse 27, "...His anointing teaches (literally, is teaching) you (in an ongoing way) about all things." So, the key point in verses 26 and 27, is that because of the Spirit's anointing, a true Christian is kept from damning error and perseveres in the essential or cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

Now, John begins this third aspect of the doctrinal test with "A Warning about False Teaching," a warning about false teaching. Verse 26, "These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you." By "these things I have written," he's just referring back to this entire section that runs from verse 18 down to verse 25. "These things I've written to you

(Notice.) concerning those who are trying to deceive you.” Specifically, John, as we learned, was warning first century Christians there in Asia Minor, in the churches that he shepherded, against the teaching of the pre-Gnostics who had infiltrated their churches, who had made converts to their false teaching, and then had led those converts out of the true Church to join false churches and to form false churches. Verse 19, here's the description.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, (that is, if they truly had been Christians,) they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

All of those who abandon a true church where the true biblical gospel, the true biblical Jesus is taught, to go attached to a false church, they're not Christians at all. That was what John's concern was, and he's writing to those who stayed.

But in John's brief description there and in verse 26, “those who are trying to deceive you,” there are several important and very practical insights for us. Let me just point them out to you very quickly. In that expression, we, first of all, learn that false teaching is a real danger.

“Those who are trying.” Do you understand that false teachers are pawns in Satan's master plan, and under his control, there are false teachers everywhere who are determined in their efforts to deceive genuine Christians? “Those who are trying...,” it is a real danger.

Secondly, false teaching is a constant danger. Notice “They are trying.” The present tense verb in the Greek language, and it's reflected in our English text, makes the point that false teachers

are continually trying to deceive God's people. They never let up. Even when they leave true churches, they keep trying to get people that are in those true churches.

Thirdly, false teaching is a subtle danger. Notice, "Trying to deceive," literally, "to cause to go astray." How do false teachers cause people to go astray? They trap the unsuspecting with the deadly poison of a mixture of some truth tainted with damning error; it's how it always works. It's never all error; it never looks obvious, it's subtle, it's deception.

And then, he also explains here that false teaching is a personal danger. "You," John addresses this warning to those he refers to as "you," the plural personal pronoun in Greek. The warning was for every member of true biblical churches. Do you understand that Satan and his demons and the false teachers that are out there that they control would love to deceive every single Christian, including you and including me? It's a personal danger. Don't you, for a moment, think that that wouldn't be Satan's plan, it is.

But there's good news. After his warning about false teaching, John reminds us of "Our Protection from False Teaching," our protection from false teaching in verse 27. You see, Christ has provided us with two amazing resources that protect His true people from false teaching. The first of those resources is "The Word of God," the Word of God. You remember that Jesus taught His Apostles the Old Testament Scripture; He was all about the Scripture. In fact, Jesus did what I do. You realize that we read about His teaching during the week, and you know, He's out in the boat, He's on the hillside, He's in the field, but Jesus's primary ministry was teaching in the synagogues every Sabbath. And you know what He did in those

synagogues? They read through the Scripture, the Old Testament Scripture consecutively. And then a teacher got up and explained it, not always well, unless it was Christ. But that's what they did. They read the next text and they explained it. That's what Jesus did every week of His adult life and ministry. He did what I'm doing. He or someone else read the next text and then Jesus explained it. He was a preacher of the Old Testament Scripture. Luke 24:45 says, after the resurrection, "He opened (His Apostles') minds to understand the Scriptures," that is, He taught them and explained it.

And He continued to teach His Apostles after His ascension. How? Through His Holy Spirit! The Spirit revealed the inspired New Testament Scripture to His Apostles. John 14:26, Jesus said to them, "...the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." That's like, student's favorite verse, right?

I hate to tell you this but that has nothing to do with your tests next week. This is not a promise to you, it's not a promise to me, it's not a promise to any of us. That was a promise to the Apostles, that Christ would send the Spirit who would teach them all that He wanted to teach them, and He would bring to their remembrance everything Jesus taught them. And then, John 16:13:

When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Again, that's a promise to the Apostles. He was saying, "I'm going to tell you what else I want to teach you through My Spirit. Our Lord now teaches us through the Scripture, the Old Testament that he affirmed, you remember Matthew 5, "...not a single letter, not a single stroke will pass away until all is fulfilled." (Paraphrase.) And then through the New Testament that He pre authenticated by choosing the men who would write it and giving them the authority to write.

And so, now listen to John 17:20. Jesus prays, "I do not ask on behalf of these (That is the Eleven.) alone, but (I also ask, Father.), for those...who will believe in Me through their word." Jesus was pre authenticating their writing of the New Testament. And He was saying there are going to be people like us whom He would teach; not directly like he did the Eleven. Not miraculously, through Revelation like he did the Eleven who wrote the New Testament, but through the results of their writing, the New Testament in the Scriptures that you hold in your hand.

Our chief protection against false teaching is "God's Word." Look over at 1 John, chapter 4; 1 John 4. When he comes back to this doctrinal test again, the second cycle, the second movement, look at what he says in verse 6:

We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; (He means listens to what we've been commanded to teach and to write; he listens to the Scripture.) he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In Acts 17, verse 11, we read the Bereans “were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things (what Paul taught) were so.” Because our greatest weapon against false teaching is the Scripture. It's the Word of God. Does it measure up? That was a standard, by the way, of the Old Testament prophet. Even if they could work a miracle, Deuteronomy 13, if they could work a miracle, if they taught you something that wasn't in keeping with the revealed Word of God, they were to be stoned.

There's a second resource that protects us from false teaching, and that is “The Anointing of the Spirit,” the Anointing of the Spirit. We were introduced to this anointing in verses 20 to 21. In verse 27, John develops this more fully, let me just give you sort of an outline of what he says in verse 27. I'll do it in a question-and-answer format. First of all, “Who has this Anointing?” All Christians, verse 27, “As for you.” John structures this sentence to emphasize the plural pronoun “you.” In contrast to the false teachers and the false Christians who left the true church with them, in contrast to them, who are the deceived and being deceived, “you,” that is all genuine believers, have a special anointing?

Secondly, “What is the Anointing?” It's the Holy Spirit Himself. Verse 27, “...the anointing which you received.” We already discovered what this Anointing was back in verse 20, “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.” I won't unpack everything we taught there. But I showed you, I demonstrated for you that just as our Lord was anointed by the Holy Spirit, every believer has also been anointed by the Holy Spirit. Let me say it differently, in other words, the Anointing is the Holy Spirit. If you're a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit

dwelling within you; you have been anointed in that sense, as Jesus Himself was. You've been empowered as He was, not in the same way, but with the same Spirit.

Third question, "When did we receive the Anointing?" At salvation, verse 27, "...which you received," past tense. That meant every believer he wrote to, regardless of when they came to Christ, already had this Anointing. So, think about that logically, if every believer already has it, when did they get it? They got it when they were saved, they got it at the moment of conversion.

Number four, "From whom did we receive the Anointing?" Jesus Christ, look at verse 27, "...the anointing which you received from Him." In verse 20, John says, we received this anointing "from the Holy One." Now, as I pointed out, that could mean the Father or the Son. But in verse 27, "from Him" has to be referring to Jesus Christ. We know that because verse 28, referring to the same person speaks of "...when He appears;" that has to be Jesus. So, "...from Him" in verse 27 must also be referring to Jesus. So let me summarize, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given by the Father but was initiated by the Son. The Anointing is a gift from our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Father has given to us.

"How long does the anointing last?" Now and forever. Verse 27 says, "...the anointing which you received from Him abides (continues, is remaining) in you." So, like John 14:16, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." This is a lasting, continuing endowment. If you're a Christian, the Holy Spirit dwells within you; He has dwelt within you since the day you were a Christian, and He will never leave you.

“What results from this anointing?” Well John mentions two results here in verse 27. The first is, there's a positive and a negative. The positive is “The Spirit teaches us essential truth,” the Spirit teaches us all essential truths. Verse 27, “...you have no need for anyone to teach you.” Again, this can't mean that every Christian already knows all the spiritual truths they need to know. We studied earlier in 1 John 2, and we saw there spiritual children, and then there are spiritual young men, and then there are spiritual fathers, and how do you grow from one stage to the next? Through a growing knowledge of the truth! So, you don't know at any level of your Christian life all you need to know. So, he's not saying that. He's not saying we don't need teachers. Ephesians 4:11 says gifted teachers are Christ's gift to His church. And by the way, what is John doing in this letter? Teaching! So, what is he saying? What John means is that because we have the Holy Spirit along with the Word of God, we can detect and understand, listen carefully, all essential truth, all essential truth, all the cardinal doctrines of the faith.

In other words, let's put it negatively. The second result of the presence of the Anointing is “The Spirit protects us from heresy.” This is the other the flip side of the coin; the Spirit protects us from heresy. Verse 27, “...you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches” (That is, is teaching you.) about all things.”

Again, this isn't a promise of omniscience. Instead, John is saying that if you have the Holy Spirit, He continues to teach each believer how to distinguish truth and error. Not in every detail, Christians can believe error, but when it comes to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, you understand the truth. His anointing, we could paraphrase it this way, “His

Anointing is teaching you about all necessary truth.” John is underscoring the ability of the Holy Spirit to enable the believer to understand the essentials of the Christian faith through the Word of God. D. Edmond Hiebert puts it this way, “The Holy Spirit indwells the true believer and enables him to discern heretical error.”

As a true Christian, you can be misled, you can believe some error, and that happens every day. But if you're a true Christian, you will never believe damning error. It's not going to happen. The Holy Spirit is like a resident lie detector when it comes to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. But the way He differs from a lie detector is he's 100% accurate.

We've all had this experience. If you've been a Christian anytime at all, you've had the experience of hearing someone teach and while you couldn't fully articulate the positive truth, nor could you fully articulate the error and why it was wrong, you listened to it and as you listened, it just didn't pass the smell test. And you said to yourself, “I don't think that's right.” A little warning light on the dashboard of your soul went off and said, “I don't think so.” What was happening? The Holy Spirit was taking the truth that you have known, and you have seen, and you have discovered from the Word of God, and He was making you uncomfortable through the truth and the knowledge of the truth you did know about this thing that was being said, it just didn't line up, it didn't synch. And later, we learned that it, in fact, wasn't the truth.

Verse 27, continues, and this is a sort of an ambiguous, awkward statement for us in English anyway, “And is true and is not a lie.” Now, that could mean one of two things. It could be referring to the fact of the Spirit's teaching. In other words, John might be saying this, “Listen,

the Holy Spirit really does teach you, I'm telling you the truth, it's not a lie.” Or he could be talking about the content of the Spirit's teaching. He could be saying, “Listen, what the Holy Spirit teaches you is always true; it's never a lie.” I think that, in context, is more likely. In other words, he's saying this, “As the Holy Spirit illumines our understanding of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, what He teaches us is always dependable, it conforms to reality, it's the truth. After all, chapter 5, verse 6 says, “...the Spirit is the truth.” And Jesus Himself in John 16:13, I read it a few moments ago, called the Spirit, “...the Spirit of truth.” What He teaches us is true about the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

So, listen to what one writer says, how he puts it. This is Marshall in his commentary. He says:

The antidote to falling into false ideas of the Christian faith is to be found in holding fast to the statement of the Christian truth given in the apostolic witness (In other words, just hold fast to what's in this Book, hold fast to the truth in the Scripture.) as this is confirmed in our hearts by the anointing given by the Spirit. It is, nevertheless, from the Word that new understanding comes and any new doctrine which is not in harmony with the Word is self-condemned.

In other words, be very clear on this, it's not that the Holy Spirit whispers in your ear and says, “Let me tell you the truth.” No, it's that as you read the Word of God, the Holy Spirit is helping you understand it and understand the truth so that when you hear error, you say, “I don't think so.” So, with the resources of the Word and the Spirit, we learn the fundamental truths of the faith, and we're protected from heresy.

Look at the end of verse 27, "...and just as it," and by the way, that doesn't mean the Spirit isn't a person. "It" is neuter because it's referring back to the anointing which is a neuter word. "Just as it (the Anointing) has taught you, you abide in Him." Now, again, abide means 'to remain or continue.'

But there's a difficult question in this last phrase. Is "abide" a statement or a command? The form of the verb in Greek could be either; it could mean 'you are continuing in Him,' it's a fact. That's how the NAS translates it. Or it could mean 'be continuing in Him, be remaining in Him,' it's a command. If you have the ESV, that's how it translates it. Both are true, obviously. But which does John mean here? Well, notice verse 28 clearly begins with an imperative or the command, "...abide in Him." Seems to me it would be unnecessary and redundant to end verse 27 with a command and start verse 28, with the exact same command. So more likely, the end of verse 27 is a statement of fact, "This is true of every Christian." So, let's look at it again and let me let me read it that way. "Just as or because the Anointing, the Holy Spirit, has taught you the biblical gospel, and the essential truths of the Christian faith, you are therefore continuing or remaining in Christ." The Spirit has taught you the truth and that's why you're continuing and remaining in the truth.

I hope you won't underestimate the promise this passage is making. Do you realize that apart from the promise that Christ has given us here, any one of us could be led into damning error, deny the Lord and walk away from the faith, believe something that would damn our souls forever? But it's not going to happen, because we have the Holy Spirit,

Turn over to Jude. This is the letter written by the half-brother of Our Lord along with James, who wrote as the half-brother of Our Lord as well. But Jude talks about false teachers. He says in verse 3, we're going to have to "...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Why? Because of false teachers, verse 4 and following, "people who've crept into the church who want to lead you astray." (Paraphrase.) And he spends his whole letter talking about that. So how in the world can you and I walk through this world and not get sucked away into false teaching that damns our souls? Go to verse 24, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling." He's talking about stumbling into damning error, believing heresy, believing things that would take you away from the truth, away from God's grace.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Christian, you're going to make it because He will hold you fast.

Now, let me bring our study in for a landing with a couple of key ramifications. As we conclude our study of the doctrinal test, and the first movement of all three tests, we've now taken all three tests. So let me just tell you, if you will honestly take John's three tests, you can know whether or not you have eternal life. You want to know if you're a Christian, the real deal, not a false Christian? Here it is. Does your life, look at your life, does it demonstrate a pattern, not a perfect pattern, but a clear pattern of obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word?

Secondly, does your life demonstrate a pattern of love for God and love for His people?

And thirdly, does your life continue to demonstrate a continuance in believing in the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel and the essential doctrines of the Christian faith?

If those things are true, not in perfection, but if they're true, if you've passed those three tests, God's Word, and ultimately our Lord Himself through His Apostle says, "You are a genuine Christian, and you will never perish; you have eternal life." Look at chapter 5; 1 John 5, verse 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." It's yours! This isn't pretend assurance; this isn't talking yourself into it. This is God's assurance that you're His.

On the other hand, if you failed any one of those three tests, if you have to be honest with yourself and say, "You know, I've claimed to be a Christian, I made a profession when I was younger, but I look at my life, honestly, and I compare it against those three tests, I realize I fail one or more of those tests." Then let me tell you on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, you are not His; you're not a Christian.

And if you want to be reconciled to your Creator, if you want to have your sins forgiven, if you want to have the work of Jesus Christ applied to you, you must repent and believe the gospel we've studied in this passage. You must recognize that God sent His eternal Son into the world, to become one of us, to live a perfect life, to live the life you were supposed to have lived. He loved God perfectly, He loved others perfectly, and then He died not for His own sins, but for

the sins of all of those who would ever believe in Him, enduring the full punishment that those sins deserve, so that God could extend forgiveness to the one who believes in His Son, and then God raised Him from the dead. How does that become yours? You have to repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ.

My plea with you today is, “Stop the pretense!” Get on your knees before God and say, “God change my heart, give me your Spirit, make me a new person; make me the kind of person that can pass these tests.” And God alone can do it. That's my prayer for you today and that's the message of this text; encouragement for those who pass, and a reminder to look to God's grace for those who don't.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word. Use it in all of our lives. Oh, Lord, you know my prayer for your own people. Let this amazing study be a source of great encouragement and hope and comfort, that they're really yours because they pass the test you've given.

Father, for those who don't pass, help them to see that their profession of Jesus Christ has collapsed in a pile of rubble; it's worthless; and may they throw themselves on your mercy even today, praying for the change, the Spirit, what only you can do in their lives. May they come to you as beggars today, we pray in Jesus's name, Amen.