

# 1 John 5:13-21

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[ 0 : 00 ] We come this morning to the very end of the letter of 1 John, and I am somewhat saddened by that. Judging by the length of my sermons, you all know that I've really enjoyed this.

Today John is going to draw together his concluding thoughts and the three themes of truth, love, and obedience. Are going to find a resting place that we might not expect.

And I hope, I expect that it's going to be a beautiful encouragement to us. So 1 John chapter 5, starting in verse 13.

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. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin, not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life.

[ 1 : 16 ] To those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin. But there is sin that does not lead to death.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who is born of God protects him. And the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

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. He is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Let's pray. Fathers, you have brought us to the end of 1 John.

I pray that your beautiful encouragements to us will be so evident today. And what looks at first like a challenging and maybe even distracted passage will bring us home to you.

[ 2 : 35 ] So, Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Oh, Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Pray that in the matchless name of Christ, our King.

Amen. Amen. So, we have come at last to the final chapter, to the end of 1 John. And as we've been pointing out through this whole series, verse 13 holds the key.

John has told us why he is writing. He says, 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.

And so, here's the point of 1 John. Now, why did he write an entire letter about assurance of salvation?

Well, it's not unusual for Christians to struggle with doubt or uncertainty. And for someone who has been made alive, that is, who has been regenerated and been made alive to the reality of sin, just the gravity of it, the reality of hell and the justice of God, uncertainty over salvation is actually terrifying.

[ 4 : 03 ] Much more so than to the person who hasn't been awoken to those realities. So, John cares about assurance because he loves his flock. He wants to comfort them. And how does he do that?

Well, actually, he's already done it. In verse 13, he's already done it. Look, he writes these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.

You see, the comfort's already there. If you believe in the name of the Son of God, you have eternal life. You see, faith in Christ, that posture of our hearts where we are trusting in Christ alone, his life,

his substitutionary death, his victorious resurrection for our salvation.

If that's where our hearts are at, you may know that you have eternal life. Because that is the faith through which God pours out his grace and gives us new life.

And the rest of the book has been saying, okay, do you need further evidence? Well, here are three ways to reassure yourself that you indeed do have new life. Truth, obedience, and love.

[ 5 : 21 ] Truth, does your faith reflect new life? That is, you know, are your faith and your worldview shaped by God's word? Do you hold to the true gospel? Obedience, do your actions reflect being born again?

If you have new life, is your life, well, new? Do you strive to follow God's laws with the strength that he provides? For his glory and for your own good and love.

Do your interactions with the church also reflect this new life? That is, do you have a new heart that sees the church as family? John gave us these tests because Jesus said, you will know them by their fruit.

You and I, we can't see someone's heart, and sometimes it's even hard to see our own heart. We certainly can't see if someone else has been born again, but we can see people's lives.

We can see our own lives. So if these three tests, truth, obedience, and love are missing, something is critically wrong. Either we haven't actually trusted in Christ and haven't been born again, or we are walking way out of step with our profession of faith.

[ 6 : 35 ] And so that's our assurance. 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. If you are trusting in Christ alone for the salvation of your soul, his death for your sins, he has revealed himself in his word, you have eternal life.

You may know that. And if you want to evaluate whether that faith resides in your heart, look at the three tests, truth, obedience, and love. That's been the whole book up to this point.

And as we have said at every opportunity throughout the entire letter, don't get the order confused. It does not work two ways.

Faith gives rise to obedience, truth, and love. Not the other way around. We cannot obey God into new life. We cannot love others into new life.

It only goes one way. It's like pushing a rope. It's impossible, and it will only frustrate you. Instead, run to the cross.

[ 7 : 45 ] See Jesus crucified for you. Your sin nailed to his cross, and run to the empty too. Jesus rose victorious over death. Your guilt is dealt with, and your future is secured if you've placed your confidence in him alone.

That's the heart of faith. And from that heart, a love for truth, a love for obedience, and a love for his children will naturally arise. So that's the great theme of this book, assurance of our salvation.

John wants Christians to know that they have eternal life. And why does he care that we know? Why does he care that we know?

Assurance of our place with Christ is critical to our peace, that we've already mentioned, and to our ongoing Christian life.

And he's going to land here with prayer. Verse 14 says, And this is the confidence. He moves from that we may know to immediately to our confidence.

[ 8 : 49 ] This is the confidence that we have towards him. That if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

Are you afraid to ask a close family member for help, for a favor? Probably not.

How about a friend or a neighbor? Depends on how well you know that person. How about a stranger? Probably not, right? You will be willing or not willing to ask a person for help depending on how well you know them, how close you are to them, how much you know they're in your corner. And so if your relationship with someone is absolutely secure, like standing at an altar and saying, till death do us part, there's nothing you can't ask of that person.

But if you don't have any trust built up, there's nothing you can ask from that person. It's true about people, and it's true about God.

[ 9 : 58 ] If you don't know, know that Jesus has died for you, what kind of prayer life are you going to have? If you don't know, and I mean know, that Jesus is standing today before his Father, interceding for you, what will you ask of him?

If you don't know, and I mean know, that Jesus will never leave you, or forsake you, will you take everything to him in prayer? Will you take anything to him in prayer?

But, you knew that Jesus came for you, drew you, and has drawn you to himself.

Will you keep running to him? I think so. If you know that Jesus gave his very life for you, will you know that there's nothing that he won't hold back from you for your good?

If you know that Jesus made himself available to you in prayer, will you pray? And so our assurance grounds our trust and our faith in God.

[ 11 : 12 ] And so it drives us to more and better prayer. See, a huge part of our prayer life, the biggest part of our prayer life, hangs on this.

What do we believe about God? A.W. Tozer said, what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Why is that? Well, we won't trust an abstract notion of God.

You can never know, love, or depend on an idea or a principle or some distant God, but we will trust a God who personally came to this world to seek and save the lost.

God will never love God the tyrant as I think a lot of people think of him. We'll never follow him, but we will joyfully obey a father who did not spare his own son for us.

[ 12 : 27 ] And what John has in view in today's passage, we'll never go in prayer to a God who may or may not be for us. But we will humbly make our requests known to a king who bought us with his own blood to secure our lives forever.

So John cares about our assurance because it impacts every area of our lives, especially prayer. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, he says, that you may know you have eternal life.

So since we've been saved by God's grace through faith, this is the confidence that we have towards him. And if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

He sought us out to bring us salvation. He won't ignore us now that we come to him. He gave his life for us.

He gave his life for us. He won't hesitate to give us other good things. So come. Come to the fountain of life. The same God who sent his Son for your salvation, who paid the highest price so you might live with him forever, who is committed to your everlasting good, has invited you to prayer.

[ 13 : 55 ] And his word says that we have confidence. And if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Friends, let's be people of prayer. Let's be a church that seeks out the Lord day after day.

Let's be a congregation that brings all our cares, all our worries, all our troubles, all our needs, and all our joys to God. Let's be a church that prays.

God in James chapter four, those of you who are with us this summer in our sermon series through James, we heard James say, you do not have because you do not ask.

Nobody is immune to that. For about a year and a half, two years, I was having knee pain. And it was preventing me from working out, it was preventing me from walking stairs, comfortable, it was miserable.

And because I had been healthy in my life up to that point, it didn't even occur to me to pray about it, to ask God for help with it. I just thought it was like something I had to deal with because I had never even had to reach out for help before in my life for something health-related.

[ 15 : 12 ] I did not have because I did not ask. And I wonder if there are areas of your lives, our lives today, that we haven't brought to the Lord in prayer.

Places that we have trouble, places that we have sorrow, places that we have fear, places that we don't know what to do, but we haven't brought them to the Lord in prayer.

His word tells us we do not have because we do not ask. I think sometimes we don't even think to ask. So if you've neglected prayer in any area of your life, please don't anymore.

If you aren't asking God for help in a particular area of your life, I want to ask you, what are you relying on in that area? Are you relying on yourself?

Where are you placing your trust? Because you still have troubles, you still have needs, but you're relying on yourself. Come to Jesus. Come rely on him, the author and perfecter of your faith, who went to the cross, shed his blood for you, to pay the penalty for your sin, to cleanse you of your

unrighteousness, to raise you to new life, to give you a new heart, and to purchase for you a future. [16:46] to give you a hope, a home, and a family forever. Lean on him. Pray. And so, sometimes it's really hard to take a sermon and apply it right then and there, but this one's easy.

So we're going to pause for one minute together now. We're going to put this into practice right now. Let's spend one short minute bringing our cares, our needs, our hopes, our fears to the Lord right now, especially the places where we don't have confidence, and especially the things that we haven't brought to him in prayer before.

Right now, where you're sitting, join me in silent prayer as we go to the Lord. Lord, make known your requests to God with me. Let's pray.

Lord, in one short minute, we cannot bring before you everything we need to lay at your feet, but Lord, let this be the beginning, the moment that kickstarts a season of vigorous prayer for this congregation.

Let us be a people of prayer. For those who have prayed for things they haven't prayed for in a long time, or maybe ever. Lord, I pray that you would make this the beginning of a season where they bring those things to you day after day.

[18:23] Lord, we know that you hear us. We pray that in the name of Jesus, in whom we place our confidence that you hear us.

Amen. Amen. Now, verse 15 might be really difficult for some of us.

If we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests we have asked of him. This verse, which should be an encouragement, which should be a blessing, might taunt some of us.

Some of you have prayed and prayed and prayed and still do not have the requests that you have asked of him.

It seems that your experience has disproved this verse. It feels like a false promise or a cruel joke. It's not as if you're praying wrongly.

[19:35] Verse 14 says that the prayers God hears are those that are according to his will. So that excludes praying for sinful or selfish things.

Again, in James 4, we read, you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. But what if you're praying and it's not for selfish reasons, but for good and godly reasons?

In this room sit the people who have prayed for a child, who have prayed for the health of a loved one, who have prayed for financial relief, have prayed for the Lord to draw someone to himself, who has never met Christ?

And so when we read whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. That doesn't ring true to some of us. It falls flat.

Perhaps it upsets you. Some false teachers would say that the problem is you. If you've ever run across a teacher of the prosperity gospel or the word of faith movement, that's what they'll say.

[20:58] They'll claim to be in your corner, but they'll actually blame you. I point this out because they're very prominent prosperity teachers in our nation and in the world right now. They write best-selling books, they have their own TV networks, not just shows, but networks.

They're incredibly influential, and they are poison. They'll probably say one of two things to the person who has prayed and not received. First, they'll say, oh, you didn't pray with enough faith. That sounds sort of spiritual at first, but then you realize it has turned God into Tinkerbell. Do you remember Tinkerbell, Peter Pan? Couldn't shine unless enough children believed in her hard enough.

Well, our God is not Tinkerbell. Our God is mighty. He doesn't need our faith to empower him or to impress him.

Not at all. The other things that a false teacher of the prosperity or word of faith movement might tell you is you haven't planted enough seed. And what they mean by that is you haven't given them enough money to solidify your faith tangibly, to activate God's provision.

[22:12] That is an abomination. Turning an act of worship, ascribing glory to the Lord by participating in his mission through giving, turning that into a transaction whereby we purchase from him what we want.

That's an abomination. And it's a stupid transaction when you think about it. In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul put it this way, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and

earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. Now, friends, if you have asked something of the Lord and not received it, it's not because you need to believe harder or sow more seed.

If you've asked the Lord for a good and godly thing and not received it, if that person is not healed, if that person has not been reconciled to the Lord, if that job has not come, if that child doesn't come, the darkness hasn't been lifted, God is still at work.

He's at work for his glory and for our good. I don't want to simplify this into some platitude, like find a silver lining on a cloud, though.

[ 23 : 57 ] I don't want to pretend I can give you the exact reason that the Lord has delayed or said no, why this thing is not in his will for you at this moment.

Or maybe at all. I don't want to give you a pat answer, but I do want to tell you three things. First, God is for you. We have seen that all through this book.

Second, Jesus walks with you, and third, walk by faith. First, God is for you. Do you remember the length we went to last week to look at just two words in the first half of chapter five?

Jesus came through water and blood. He came through blood, his cross, to bear the wrath due to our sin. And he came through water, his baptism, to identify, to associate himself with broken people so he could bear their sorrows, their burdens, their troubles.

We tend to talk about the blood, the cross, and sin more than we talk about the water, carrying our burdens. And we do that rightly. It doesn't much matter if the Lord calms our present fears if we are still under his righteous wrath and condemned to hell forever.

[ 25 : 15 ] So it is appropriate that we do talk about the cross more. But he also came by water. And the water and the blood together show us how comprehensive our redemption is.

Our Lord cares about our sins, and our suffering. He cares about our guilt and our troubles. Our redemption is a complete redemption.

Our God is for us entirely. Which means, secondly, Jesus walks with you. The Lord did not leave it there.

He did not secure something for us in the past and buy something for us in the future and leave us alone in between. Our salvation isn't only something Jesus did and is coming back to complete.

All throughout chapter 5, John has been talking about eternal life in the present tense. For instance, this passage begins verse 13, I write these things to you who believe in the name of God, the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.

[ 26 : 27 ] Not that you will have, that you have eternal life. Remember what we said last week? Eternal life means more than living forever. It means that. It means more than that.

It means living with God. And Jesus said, I will never leave you or forsake you. And he can say that because he is the good shepherd from Psalm 23.

Though I walk to the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. He walks that valley with us today because 2,000 years ago, he walked it alone to its very end, carrying a cross for us.

so we can, third, walk by faith. Living by faith doesn't only mean that I believe something is true while I'm alive.

That's not what living by faith means. It means the way I live is built on what I believe. So when we are faced with this tension, knowing that God is for us, when faced with unanswered prayer, live by faith.

[ 27 : 58 ] Living by faith in the face of unanswered prayer looks something like this. I know that what I'm asking of the Lord is a good and godly thing, and he has promised to give me whatever I asked, provided it accords with his will.

He has already shown his love for me in Jesus. So even if this burden feels unbearable, I can trust him that in his love and in his wisdom, his will is not to answer this prayer today for a good reason.

I may not see it. And I will walk forward in the knowledge that even in this life, I never find out his purpose in this situation, confession, that he is my good father, who carefully watches over me.

I will trust him and not despair and keep on praying and keep on walking because I know that even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because he is with me.

Jesus walked that road ahead of me all the way to its end. he will see me through all the way to his father's house. That is walking by faith, taking what we know to be sure about God and resting in it

as we live uncertain lives.

[ 29 : 36 ] And that's why one of John's major concerns in this letter has been holding to the true gospel. See, I can only give you the comfort that I just counseled you with.

With the truth that John has been fighting for. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus has come in the flesh. Jesus came by water and blood. It all falls apart without that. If he didn't walk all the way to the end of the valley of the shadow of death, we don't know that he's for us.

We don't know that he's with us. We don't know that we can rely on him. Even when our prayers seem unanswered, we don't know those things. And that's why truth matters so much.

We trust that the Lord delays or chooses not to override the brokenness of this world. When he does that, we trust him that he does it out of a heart of wisdom.

And a heart of love. Because we've already seen that at work for us in his mighty actions. And so the false teachers who denied the reality of Jesus' cross could never have the comfort I just described.

[ 30 : 57 ] They couldn't. It's not possible. They could never have the hope it provides. They could never walk by faith like that. All the religions of this world, all of them, from the most remote tribal religion to the most systematic and formalized mosque to secular humanism.

And make no mistake, the secular humanism of the West is a religion. They have none of that. Because they do not have God with us, God for us.

A faith without a cross is a faith without hope and without comfort. God for God. You are on your own.

But praise the Lord, we are not on our own. So, in verse 13, John said he wrote this letter so we might have confidence that we've been born again by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

In verses 14 and 15, he shows us how powerful that assurance is in our daily walk, and it is foundational for a vibrant life of prayer. In verses 16 and 17, he's going to tie in one of his other major themes, love for the church.

[ 32 : 13 ] And so we'll ask the question, where do we direct our prayer? Our brothers and sisters in Christ. Read with me, verse 16. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin, not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life.

To those who commit sins that do not lead to death, there is sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin. But there is sin that does not lead to death.

You will be tempted, I am tempted, we are all tempted here, to focus on the sin that leads to death, right? Well, we will look at that in a moment. But John only mentions it to say it's not his focus.

He's saying direct your prayer at something else. So all of the talk of sin leading to death is actually not his point. His point is, in normal Christian life, I want you to pray for your brothers and sisters, specifically for their sins.

Now, if assurance for salvation leads us to prayer, it also leads us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. and the two can be expressed together as we pray for them.

[ 33 : 29 ] Now, John has sin in mind here. Why? Why doesn't he just say pray for their blessing, pray for them in general? Why does he say pray for them in their sin specifically?

Because as he closes this letter, he wants to leave his people in a place of joy. sin isn't just breaking the rules in some abstract sense.

You always sin against someone, and no matter the sin, every sin, public, private, whatever, we're sinning against God. And sin creates separation.

I'm actually having trouble explaining this concept to my three-year-old. Her brain isn't there just yet, but if she hits me, I have to absorb the blow. But there's also a blow to our relationship.

It causes some relational separation. There's a distance between us. Acting against someone wounds them, and it's just what happens between us and the Lord when we sin against him.

[ 34 : 39 ] My daughter, remember, is still my daughter, but there's a wound, and when we sin, we are still God's saved children. If you've already been bought by Christ, but we do distance ourselves from the Lord.

And in fact, many of you have found, and Christians throughout all generations have found, that sin does impede our prayers. And so we find here that God cares about our holiness, not for some arbitrary reason, but because he wants to be near to us.

He wants us to be near to him. And so if we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will pray for them that they would be quick to repent, quick to move towards God, quick to run back to chapter

one.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I think that stands contrary to our impulses, doesn't it? repentance, first, isn't natural to us. We don't like admitting and confessing and turning away from sin, but it's God's grace that gives us the humility to repent.

[ 35 : 57 ] And second, it's not our first instinct to pray for other Christians, that they would be quick to repent. I don't think that's our first instinct, is it? But if we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we want what's best for them.

If we have the boldness in prayer that comes from assurance of faith, then we will pray for our brothers and sisters to draw near to God in repentance and faith themselves.

Now, this is a community project, isn't it? It's the opposite of gossip and envy. And let me warn you, you can pray for a brother or sister in Christ in their sin, and in your own heart have a self-righteous or prideful attitude.

Do not let that spring up in you. You can say, oh, Lord, help that guy. Look at that sinner, right? This is the opposite of gossip and envy and pride and self-righteousness.

It's the opposite of relishing the downfall of others. It is a beautiful thing, that a church family praying for each other, that each one will draw close to the Lord. That means that when we obey this passage, as a whole church, each one of us are beneficiaries of its blessing, because you and I, we are all being prayed for too.

[ 37 : 30 ] how excellent would it be to be prayed for, that your life would be marked by grace and faith and repentance and nearness to God.

How beautiful. So, we can do that right now. Let's bow our heads one more time.

Let's bow our heads a second time and obey this passage right now. Join me again in silent prayer, asking the Lord to grant each of us humble hearts that are eager to repent, so we might live in a closer fellowship with the Lord.

So join me in prayer right now again. I invite you to pray for your family, that they would be drawn back to the throne of grace.

pray for your brothers and sisters sitting near you, around you today, that God would humble their hearts and draw them back to himself.

[ 38 : 42 ] pray for the leaders of this church, your deacons and your elders, that they too would be humble before the Lord and repent with joy.

Joy. Pray for the whole congregation, that we would be a people, always running to the cross and always near to Jesus.

And pray for God's church all over our region and all over our world, that we would be a church of repentance and faith and the whole world would see a city on a hill.

Lord, we ask you to humble your people. Make us quick to repent, to run to you for forgiveness and life. Bless us with this grace, this nearness to you.

And Lord, we ask that this prayer too would mark the beginning of something new. Make us people who pray for the spiritual well-being of our whole church family.

[ 40 : 13 ] We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who came through water and blood for our whole redemption. Amen. A helpful note, I have often found that when I am in the midst of a period of spiritual dryness, when my faith seems to lack vitality, that praying for someone else has been the catalyst, the moment that the Lord used to reinvigorate my spiritual life.

So if that's you today, I would encourage you especially to faithfulness and obedience to this, praying for others. And now I have to mention the sin that leads to death.

I will say two things about it. First, it is easy to read here more than what John actually says. He does not forbid us from praying for the person who commits this sin.

Instead, he's saying that the person who commits that sin is not who he's talking about right now. So he's not telling us you may not pray for that person. That's not what he's saying. And second, what is the sin?

I think there are a number of views on this, and I think the most natural one is to simply look at the book of 1 John and ask ourselves, what has he been talking about? He's been talking about in the whole of the letter false teachers who have been promoting a false Jesus who is not Jesus, and a false Christianity, which is not Christianity, and a false version of the life of the church, which is no church.

[ 41 : 50 ] And that's why this prayer isn't for them. They don't need a prayer to continue in a life of repentance because they have never met Christ.

They need to come to the risen Lord for the very first time, to rest in his cross, on his empty tomb, and on faith. They need to repent of the sins that, as we saw earlier, they didn't even think they had. If we remember back to chapter one, they need to receive new birth. They need an entirely different kind of prayer. So we don't pray for people who are outside the church the same way we pray for the people who are inside the church.

And with that last instruction for building up our own lives, verses 13, 14, and 15, and for building up the church, in verses 16 and 17, John begins to wrap up the book by reminding us that our salvation has made us very different.

In verses 18 through 20 we read, we know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who is born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

[ 43 : 04 ] We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, 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, he is the true God in eternal life. When Jesus saved us, he did not give us a method for incremental improvement.

He didn't just show us a better way to live. He didn't just give us wisdom or principles to live by. He didn't just give us some strength to kind of kickstart us, get us up and moving.

We, like the world here, laid in the power of the evil one. We did not have any spiritual understanding.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We didn't have any part with Jesus, who is the true God and who is himself eternal life.

[ 44 : 15 ] Christians, your life in Christ is a miracle. The dead made a life.

The slave made a son. We were without life, without understanding, without any kind of hope for reconciliation to God.

And he made our hearts new. He died for our sins, rose for our life, and lives for our redemption.

And he gave us this new life. And so, when we look at the world around us, we know the depth of their situation. Those who are far from Christ, we know the death and the darkness that they live in, even if they won't admit it. And this should break our hearts for people. For those we meet who don't know Jesus.

[ 45 : 22 ] And so, this passage has launched us into prayer twice already today. And now, it also drives us to prayer for the lost. But, before John gives us that last instruction, he gives us an unexpected word.

The final verse of this book is unexpected, I think. Verse 21, little children, keep yourselves from idols. His last words seem like a mystery at first, don't they?

He hasn't been talking about idolatry, not once, in this whole book. Why now spring not on us, the very end? And how on earth is it relevant to you and me in the 21st century?

I think the only time that you and I probably have had any exposure to carved idols was in comparative religions in junior year of high school or something, probably.

But the idea of an idol goes deeper than a carving of wood and stone. Idols are objects of worship. And so, whatever shape they come, they come, we worship idols, every one of us, because everyone is a worshiper.

[ 46 : 43 ] The question is not do you worship, but what do you worship? And that actually brings us right back to the premise of everything he's been saying in 1 John.

You see, we all love something above everything else. We all pursue something with our best energy, our best efforts. We invest in something as our highest end.

The question is what is it? There is one thing in every person's life that they will sacrifice the other stuff for. Everybody has that thing. Whatever it is, that's our God.

And that can either be the God of the Bible, the living God who sent his son for us, or in the flesh, through water and blood, to rescue, ruin sinners, or it could be something else.

It could be a good thing, it could be a bad thing. People have made idols of everything under the sun. It could be comfort, reputation, a person, a home, wealth, a relationship, it could be many, many things.

[ 47 : 59 ] And actually, this is a fitting end to John's letter. Because if you pause and think about it, the whole book has been about worship. What again have been John's three main themes?

Truth, love, obedience. Well, love for the church, true faith, and obedience to the Lord, those are worship, aren't they?

Your love for the family of God is an expression of love to God. God. Your faith is what you hope in, what you trust in. That ascribes worth, value, trustworthiness, confidence in God.

That is worship. And your obedience, it's also worship, isn't it? We direct our energy and our service to our highest treasure. We do that every day. And so your love, your faith, your obedience, they are postures of worship, acts of worship.

That's why John ends this letter talking about idols, objects of worship. And John wants us to keep watch over our own lives. We have so great a God, so great a Savior, so great a salvation, so great a family, so great a future, so great a hope.

[ 49 : 22 ] Don't let other objects of worship fight for your affections. Don't. They will never satisfy. They will never be as beautiful.

They are not worthy of your worship. In your head, in your heart, or your hands. So let's pray today. Let's thank God for our salvation.

Let's thank God that we may be assured of that salvation. Let's pray for our brothers and sisters that they would be quick to run back to God and reap the blessings of that. God. Let's pray for those who are far from God, that those who still lie in the power of the evil one, just like we once did, will come to know the glory of Jesus and be given eternal life by grace through faith in him.

And let's pray that we won't settle for lesser gods, but that our love, our faith, and our obedience would be a life of worship to the king who came in the flesh for us through water and blood so that we may have life in him and with him.

Let's pray. Lord, you have brought us to a beautiful end in this book. Thank you, Father, that you sent your son in the flesh, through water and blood for our salvation, and Lord, that we can be sure that we are yours.

[ 50 : 59 ] Lord, let that invigorate us in prayer, in our own lives, in our prayers for our friends and family and church, for those who do not yet know you, and Lord, keep us from all the things in this world that would fight for our affections apart from you.

May you be in all things first in our heart. We pray that in the matchless name of Jesus Christ, our King. Amen.