



July 21, 2013
1 John 1:1-4
Pastor Larry Adams

Jesus, the Word of Life

Today, if you'd open your Bibles to 1 John Chapter 1, we are going to begin a new series together that I hope will take us all the way through Christmas, a series of messages that we are calling "A Life of Certainty."

You know, it's a terrible thing when people are lost for eternity because they don't trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. There is a wide variety of reasons why people never come to believe. Even though they've heard many times, sometimes their hearts are not open. Pride and selfishness and ignorance and a whole host of things get in the way of our trusting Jesus. It's a terrible thing when people are lost to eternity when they don't have to be.

I think also one of the great tragedies is when people trust Jesus at some level and then over time because of the pressures of the culture, because of the lies of the world, because of our insecurities, because of our lack of our knowledge of the Word, and a host of other things, we find our faith slowly eroded where we begin to question whether or not Jesus is really true, whether he really is the only way. Are other religions possible? Is my commitment to Jesus, and living this out in hardship at times through trials and circumstance, is it really worth it? At times you can see people's faith begin to be eroded because they are not living a life of certainty.

The apostle John saw that happening in his own day so he wrote this letter, as well as his own gospel, to be able to help people in the churches to understand that there is a certainty in our faith in Jesus Christ that should never be shaken. That's why when John writes in 1 John so many times, "So that you may know. . . So that you may know . . . So that you may know . . . So that you may know." He begins like this in 1 John Chapter 1:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

Let's pray together.

Lord, in a world of shifting standards and constantly changing values, it is sometimes hard for us to believe that we can be that sure, that certain, placing all of our faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am so thankful that we are not dealing with a legend or someone's mystic imaginations or dreams. Our faith is rooted in a person, the historic person, the God-man Jesus Christ who lived, and came, and died, was buried, and rose again, and who lives today, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I pray God, that as we go through this book, this book will go through us. That we shall have a certainty of life which the apostle John had, and so many others have had. No matter what sands of time may change or whatever contrary voices may come to our minds or ears, I pray that we will be strong in the Lord and in your mighty power, living life in Christ with a certainty that will not be shaken.

So, Lord, I thank you for this book, and I pray that by your grace over the next few weeks we will learn together. Whether here or in Antioch, God, we thank you for how you are working with the many people who listen in online around the world. I pray today, God, that you will help all of us to live a life of certainty, and I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Last week, Karla and I had the joyful experience of watching the sunset over the Pacific Ocean on the California coast. You know, when the sun went down, the moon came out. The stars appeared, and the wind picked up. It actually got really cold. It was hard to imagine it was 90-something inland. It was in the 50s out there. It got really cold. I was thinking, "Have you ever really thought about what would happen if the sun stayed down and never came back?" Perpetual darkness. Increasing cold. Plants would die. Food sources would dry up. Life as we know it on the planet would cease.

You know, if you think about it in those terms, a sunset should be a very scary, unsettling experience because when you watch the sun go down you realize, "If it doesn't come back, we're toast." But Karla and I didn't panic. There was no worry or fear. In fact, we just sat there looking out upon all that beauty, and we were praising God and thanking him for what we were seeing. Then we retired in peace.

Why is that? Because, in my lifetime, I've had over 22,000 sunsets and never has the sun failed to appear the next morning. We lived in Oregon and Washington for a while; you wonder if it's really there for months on end, but the sun has never failed to appear. So when it comes to a sunset there is no fear or worry, there is no uncertainty. We have a faith in its reappearance that is rock solid and certain.

Do you realize that there is something even more certain than a sunset or a sunrise? That's the reality that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He always has been, he is now, and he always will be. That's the way God wants all of us to live in regards to our faith in Jesus, to live a life of certainty.

John was writing this letter to assure Christians of the reality of Christ and the certainty of their faith in him. That's why he said in 1 John Verse 1:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

You see there's a lot of people, even Christians, that don't have a certainty or a joy like that. Assaulted by an increasingly Godless worldview, people begin to question the reality of their faith in Christ. I see it happen all the time. I know people who have been to Bible college who are now professing atheists because they have been worn down in

the uncertainty of their faith. Increasing numbers of professing Christians are beginning to say that they believe that Jesus is not the only way to God, that other religions have equal validity, that the Bible is not the inherent inspired word of God, that evolution is a scientific fact, that abortion is not murder, homosexuality and same sex marriage should be incorporated into the church, and the person of God is becoming more defined by how we think he should be rather than how he has revealed himself. Biblical ignorance only serves to magnify the problem. All of these things can lead to an uncertainty about the uniqueness of Jesus and the faith we have put in him to the point that people become unsure and wonder if their faith is well placed.

These attacks on truth are not new. John was addressing the same assaults in his day. The primary threat in the early church that John addressed was false teaching in the church and by a heresy developing called Gnosticism which was seeking to undermine people's confidence and their faith in Christ, undermining who Jesus was, and even getting them to believe in a false Jesus.

A false teaching within the church was teachers arising within the church claiming to have discovered from God a superior knowledge or insight to God that had enlightened them to the point that they saw that Jesus was not the only way. They were so convincing that they were threatening to lead people away from the church to follow them. They were seeking to lure people away from following Christ with their twisted version of Christianity. Cults like Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many others have begun in the same way. It's amazing how many people fall prey to those deceptions.

Then, if that were not enough, there was this compelling heretical philosophy that was invading the culture called Gnosticism. Basically, Gnosticism attacked the virgin birth of Jesus, his sinless life, his atoning death, his victorious resurrection in favor of a more "enlightened" approach through intellectual pursuits and human wisdom. Isn't it interesting that Satan's approach hasn't changed?

Today, the message is that if you're people who believe in Jesus, you trust and obey him, that somehow you are simple or ignorant or uninformed or misled fools. You can't be educated, and you can't be scientific because if you were you wouldn't believe in such nonsense. But the people who reject God and rely on science and human wisdom are smart and educated, enlightened, scientific, because they are people that would never fall for such foolishness. You ever heard that?

That's what Satan has always tried to do to make the people of faith feel foolish and the people who are so called "enlightened and intelligent" to be wise, and all the ignorant people follow Jesus. People succumb to that all the time. Isn't it interesting that the Scriptures say, "It is the fool who says there is no God." We get it backwards, and we believe that lie. Our culture is a master at it because the same guy is behind it, Satan himself.

There were two primary forms of Gnosticism John was dealing with that were affecting the church. One was called "Docetic Gnosticism," and basically it was denying that Jesus could ever be God come in the flesh because the Docetists thought this, "Spirit is good; God is spirit. Flesh, or the material, is evil. So, God who is spirit would never come in a body to earth. Therefore, Jesus' claims to be God in the flesh were false." That's what the Docetists thought.

Then there was another form of Gnosticism called “Cerinthian Gnosticism.” It was a view advanced by a first century opponent of John called Cerinthus. He had an interesting approach. He taught that Jesus and the Christ were two separate entities. So Jesus was the man part and Christ was the God part. The Christ part came upon Jesus the man at his birth, but it left him at his death. He wasn't the unique God come in the flesh, he was just a man who happened to be indwelt by God during the “Christ season.” So when he died, the Christ now is free to fall on some other man to be the Messiah, and Cerinthus volunteered that it was him. Ha ha. (laughter)

All of this and more created a confusion that was threatening to lead some people away. They were not sure of their faith in Christ, so John wrote to address this. This is why later on in 1 John you read verses like this in Chapter 2 verse 18. Listen to this:

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. ²¹I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. ²²Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

²⁴See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.

²⁶I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. ²⁷As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

That's why John later will say in 1 John 5 Verse 13:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

God wants all of his people to live a life of certainty in Jesus the Word of life. Why can we live with such certainty? In these opening four verses, which by the way is one long running sentence in the Greek so there is no broken thought here, John tells them why we can have complete certainty. Because Jesus is the Word revealed and because Jesus is the Word experienced. We can live with certainty because Jesus is the Word of life revealed.

Here's how John put it in Verse 1:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and

testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

Due to the gracious generosity of some friends in our church, our family and I have had several opportunities to spend some amazing days in the wilds of western Montana. The part of Montana that we stay in is a rugged place. It's near Glacier National Park, the flathead range of the Rocky Mountains. Wildlife is everywhere from cute little ground squirrels to wild turkeys, herds of deer, big horn sheep, mountain goats, and bear. But at the top of the food chain is the beautiful and elusive mountain lion. Rarely seen, we were told that they were there and that they were occasionally near the house we were staying in.

When we stayed there the first time, we never saw a bear, never saw a mountain lion. It's fun to read about them in books. It's fun to know that they're out there somewhere, but I can tell you now that I know they're real because I've seen them, three in one day actually.

My son Tyler and my son-in-law Jeremy and I were riding quads on a mountainside logging trail about a mile from our house. We're going down this road overgrown with weeds and brush closing in on both sides. There was not a lot of room to get through. As we're driving along, I'm in the front, Jeremy behind me, Tyler's in the back. All of a sudden this mountain lion jumps out about 10-15 feet in front of me. Now, I can tell you, they are a lot bigger when you see them out there and you don't have a gun or a knife or anything. They look a lot bigger. I slammed on the brakes. I stopped. I put my arms up. Well, the guys behind me couldn't see anything, so I yelled, "Did you see that?"

They said, "See what?"

"A mountain lion. Right there. Went down the road about 15-20 feet. Went into the brush."

They said, "No way."

I said, "I'm tellin' ya, I saw it. I wasn't hallucinating."

Well, no sooner had the words come out than a second one jumped out right where the first one did. Those guy's jaws dropped. This thing goes down and goes in the woods right where the other one did. We're sitting there wondering, "What in the world are we supposed to do?" when a third one jumps out. It must have been two yearlings, which were big enough, but this was the mom, darker. You know, they come in many shades. This looked like a panther. This thing was huge! Jumps out of the brush right in front of us, looks at us, turns around and goes down a few feet, and goes in the brush.

Here we are surrounded by brush. We can't see them; they can see us. There's three of us and three of them. We're on their home turf. We don't have a gun. We don't have anything. We didn't even say a word. We fired those things up, spun them around, and we were out of there faster than you could blink! (laughter)

People say there are mountain lions living in Montana. I had read that. I had been told that. I had even seen their pictures, but now I know they do because they appeared to me.

John told the Christians in his day, "We've all read about God. We've been told about God. We've had affirmed to us that God exists. There are people everywhere who believe in this God, but now you can know that this God is real because he has appeared to us." John declared with certainty, "This is the eternal God who appeared in human flesh." That's why he said in 1 John Chapter 1:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared;

The word "appeared" means "manifested, made visible, clearly seen." But, it's in the context of "clearly made visible" so that you can know with certainty. John said:

That which was from the beginning,

John is telling them, "This is the God that has been from the beginning. This is the God that Moses wrote about when he said in Genesis 1 Verse 1, "In the beginning God." In other words, "When the beginning began, this God already was. Before creation, before time, before history began, He started it all." This was the same message that John had written in his gospel, the same God who had appeared to John and the other apostles. That's why John wrote in John 1, Verse 1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses try to make it, "And the word was a God." No, it isn't that way. There is no indefinite article in the Greek. In fact, the Greek reads like this: "God was the Word."

There is no mistaking what John was saying. "He was with God in the—beginning. When the beginning began, Jesus was there. Through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of man." John 1 Verse 18, "No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

Jesus is God come in the flesh. You see, when the beginning began, this Word of life was already there because he had always been. In fact, the beginning had its beginning because the Word of life was there to begin it which is why John began his letter with a certainty:

That which was from the beginning.

You see the point is that this God is not just some Johnny-come-lately savior who is the latest option invented in the minds of men. This is not the appearance of another idol or the latest religious fad. This Jesus is not a figment of our own imagination, not someone's dream. It is not some mystic machination. It is not legend concocted in somebody's mind. This is the God of the universe, the eternal God who has always been, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullest of God in human flesh has appeared to us, and we're telling you, "You know that. We know that. Don't let anybody else convince you otherwise!" That's what he's telling them.

It's a message that sustained Paul throughout his ministry. He had seen the risen Christ appear to him when he wrote to the Colossian church struggling with the same heresies. He said in Colossians 2 Verse 6:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,
⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principals of this world, rather than on Christ.

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority.

John said, "This eternal God has appeared. We have heard him. We have seen him. We have looked at him and touched him with our hands. This eternal Word of life has appeared. So don't let this so-called wisdom and the latest discoveries rattle your faith. Live your life with certainty in this Word of life that appeared, the God who always was, the God who always is, and the God who always will be. The God revealed in his Word, has now been revealed in human flesh, and we have seen him."

Not only because the Word is the Word of life revealed, but we can live with certainty because Jesus is the Word of life experienced. John said in 1 John 1, Verse 2:

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

There is a certainty that comes with experience.

Can you imagine my response if I were to meet someone who would say, "There are no mountain lions in Montana."

I'd say, "Excuse me? What did you say?"

"Yeah, there are no mountain lions in Montana."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, I read it."

"Really? Where'd you read that?"

"I read it in a scientific journal that they've all been hunted to extinction and no longer can be found in this state."

"Really? Well, I need to tell you something. I know of at least three that didn't get the extinction memo. I've seen them, I can testify to their existence. I am proclaiming to you now that there are mountain lions alive in Montana."

You see, there is a certainty with experience that will not allow you to stand there and listen to error and leave it unchallenged. John said, "I'm not going to stand by and let people tell you this Jesus isn't real, that he isn't God in the flesh, that he isn't Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world, the only way to God. I'm not going to stand by and let you be told by people that you don't need this Jesus, there are other ways, that religions are equally valid, that there are many approaches to God, everyone will end up in heaven. I'm not going to let someone stand there and tell you that because I'm telling you I know the one who is the truth and I've experienced him."

You see, when people said that Jesus wasn't any of those things, John was saying, "Excuse me? What did you say?" He told them in Verse 1, "We've heard him. We've seen him with our eyes. We've looked at him. Our hands have touched him – and now we're proclaiming this Word of life to you." So confident is he that he drives that all home a second time in Verse 2:

The life appeared; we have seen it, testified to it, we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard.

John uses three verb expressions to highlight the reality of his experience, and not only his but many others who had the same experience. This didn't happen in a vacuum. Jesus appeared to many, and he said in Verse 2:

We have seen it

Meaning, "We have had the personal experience of eye witnessing his majesty."

We testify to it.

That's personal witness. In other words, "We are telling you what all of us who have seen him know to be true, and we proclaim to you." An authoritative declaration, meaning, "We are telling you on the authority of our position as apostles of Jesus Christ that we have seen and bear witness that this Jesus is the Word of life." John is telling them, "Why are you listening to these people, these Johnny-come-latelies, who ignore the Word and have never seen Jesus? Why are you believing what they're telling you rather than what we're telling you? Why? They haven't experienced him. We have." So have many of you because the greatest certainty is not knowing what others have experienced but in experiencing his reality for yourself which is why he said in Verse 3:

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy (your joy and our joy) complete.

That word "fellowship" is the word "koinonia." It means "something commonly shared, something shared in common" as opposed to something that is just your own. The fellowship here refers to the supernatural life that Christians share with Jesus, the Word of Life. "We are proclaiming this to you," he said, "so that you may know and live in Christ and experience the fullness of this Christ who came to live in you when you believed." In other words, "When you share this fellowship with other believers, you recognize that you share the same oneness and fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that has been the experience of every believer from eternity past."

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always had this fellowship. Now, through Christ, we have entered that fellowship with them and with each other, and we will never lose that fellowship with Jesus Christ because we have all experienced the supernatural power of his grace. That's what John's getting across. You're in the fellowship that existed in the God head and exists in every one who trusts him. Verse 4:

We write this to make our joy complete.

John tells them the reality of Jesus can't be denied anymore. Too many people have experienced his life-changing fellowship, his life-changing transformation. John says, "You are among them. Don't deny what you experienced when Christ came to live in your life when you believed. Don't let people make you question the reality of Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I'm not very proud of what I was before I met Jesus; I'm ashamed actually. But I can tell you when Jesus came to live in me I am not the same man that I used to be. I'm not. I was so disgusted with my behavior before I met Jesus, I tried to clean up my act a bunch of times. I couldn't do it. I could for a season, but I couldn't. Jesus came to live in me. I'm not a perfect man today, but I can tell you I'm a different man. God has conquered in my life things that on my own I could never conquer.

That peace he talks about - that's real. That joy he's referring to - it's real. Yeah, we have hard days, stressful days, but there's a joy and a peace he gives that cannot be stolen. That's the joy that John was talking about in that fellowship they had experienced together. John said, "Remember, many of us saw him, and heard him, and touched him, and we believed, and we were blessed. But many of you have heard, and many of you have been touched by him, and you are not the same."

Experience alone is not the testimony, but when you believe when this Jesus comes to live in you, that change is real. He said, "I want you to remember." In his gospel he wrote to help them to remember what Jesus said to Thomas and the others in the upper room after his resurrection.

You see, many of these people in the church with John had never seen Jesus with their eyes. They had heard the word and they had believed it, and that change happened in them. They experienced Christ by faith not sight. Someday we who have believed by faith are going to experience this Jesus by sight. We're going to see him face-to-face, but I've never seen Jesus with these eyes. I've never looked at him. I've never heard him audibly speak. I've never reached out my hand and touched him. John did and many others did. I haven't. I believe by faith. People have asked me sometimes, "Larry, would you like to see Jesus right now, face-to-face?"

I said, "Only if I'm going to heaven. Not before."

"Why not?"

"Because the faith that I have to believe in his reality right now without seeing him is a greater blessing to Jesus than if I had seen him. You know how I know that? Because Jesus told me."

Do you remember in John 20? Thomas was not in the upper room with the disciples on that Sunday night after the resurrection when Jesus appeared, and he would not believe that he had really come. So in John 20, verse 25 John writes about what happened in that upper room the following week. The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord."

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side I will not believe it." In other words, "I'm not going to believe what you tell me, I'm gonna have to see it myself." A week later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you,**" and then he said to Thomas, "**Put your finger here. See my hands? Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.**"

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" That's right. That's who he is.

Jesus told him, "**Because you have seen me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"

That's you and me. We are blessed to be a blessing to him, because we believe his Word and stand on it without ever seeing with these eyes. I don't want to rob Jesus of that blessing. I believe him because of what he said, because of what John and the apostles have said. In Hebrews 11 it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, those who comes to him must believe he exists and he rewards those who diligently seek him."

Are you a seeker of God today? Then you are a seeker because you believe in him though you've never seen him. That's why, to a group of suffering Christians who had never seen Jesus but believed in him with all their hearts and were enduring all kinds of suffering for his name, Peter, the apostle, who had seen Jesus many times, wrote one of the most encouraging verses, maybe one of my favorite, in the Scripture. 1 Peter 1, Verse 8:

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

There is a certainty of experience with Christ that we are to hold on to. Don't let people who have never experienced the true wonder of this transformed life in Christ ever tell you that what happened in you when you believed is not real. Do not let them steal your joy. Live with the certainty of Christ in you, the hope of glory. There is a difference that certainty makes.

You know, most people know about the passion of Dr. Martin Luther King for racial justice and non-violent resistance. However, some people, for a variety of reasons, are not as familiar with King's deep personal faith in Jesus. In his book *Welcoming Justice*, Charles Marsh described one of King's profound encounters with the risen Christ that saw him through because he believed the mission he was on of non-violent resistance for racial justice was God-given to him. This is what it says in the book:

In January 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr. returned home around midnight after a long day of organizational meetings. His wife and young daughter were already in bed, and King was eager to join them. But a threatening call—the kind of call

he was getting as many as 30 to 40 times a day at this point—interrupted his attempt to get some much-needed rest. When he tried to go back to bed, he could not shake the menacing voice that kept repeating the hateful words in his head.

So he got up, made a pot of coffee, and sat down at his kitchen table. With his head buried in his hands, he cried out to God. There in his kitchen in the middle of the night, when he had come to the end of strength, King met the living Christ in an experience that would carry him through the remainder of his life. He said – and I quote -- “I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. He promised never to leave me, no never alone.”

He went on to say in the book:

In the stillness of that Alabama night, the voice of Jesus proved more convincing than the threatening voices of anonymous callers. The voice of Jesus gave him the courage to press through the tumultuous year of 1956 and to the victorious end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. But more than that, it gave him a vision for his ministry with Jesus that would drive him for the rest of his life - a certainty of life in Christ that could not be stolen even by the threat of death.

Do you have a certainty like that? A joy like that that allows you to face whatever and have a faith unshakable? A certainty that says, “I know Jesus is real. He is the eternal Word of life, and that life has appeared.” A certainty that says, “I know Jesus is real. He is the eternal Word of life that has transformed me. I've read about this God. I've heard about this God, but now I know this God.”

The apostle Paul lived a life of certainty. In fact, at the end of his life when everyone had abandoned him, he was in a prison cell under some of the most adverse conditions you'll ever read of. Facing his own execution of what we believe to be the last letter of his life, he writes to his young son, Timothy, and this is what he says. 2 Timothy 1, verse 7:

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

⁸So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. ⁹Who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

1 John Chapter 1:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we

proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

Thank you, God, we don't have to live by the whims of culture, the powerful, intellectual voices of our days who are fools without Jesus. We don't have to wander in the midst of our circumstance if this God is real. You're the one who's always been. You are now and you always will be. You are the Word of life. It is your Word that we trust. A Word given to us from God through those who have heard, and seen, and looked, handled, and touched, who have experienced God just like we have when we have believed. May this be so part of us it'll be like the air we breathe and the water we drink. It will be as certain as a sunset that there will be a sunrise. May it always be that way, God. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.