

Blessed Assurance 1 John 5:13-21

Introduction:

For many people, when we claim that we have eternal life and we know it, it seems like the height of arrogance. The mistake they make may be in thinking that we think we deserve it. Our assurance is only in Christ and His finished work on the cross – which is not something we deserve at all.

Further, we are all plagued by doubts at some level – doubts resulting from the inconsistency of our walk with Christ, our ongoing struggle with sin, the wavering nature of our trust and commitment. Despite all of this we should not lose heart.

John wants us to have confidence in Christ. He wants us to fully and continually trust in Him. That's why he wrote this letter. In this last section he emphasizes the assurance he hopes we will receive from what he has written to us.

1 John 5:13-21 Outline:

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I. Assurance of Eternal Life 5:13

5:13 John began this letter by proclaiming eternal life.

The two expressions "life" and "eternal life" are used by John interchangeably. Further, this letter eternal life almost always refers to a present experience that we have as believers. John ends his Gospel with a similar statement of purpose:

John 20:30-31 ³⁰And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

The main purpose of John's Gospel was evangelistic. He wanted people to hear about Jesus and believe, receiving eternal life. The purpose of this letter is more for assurance. He wants us to know that we are secure in our status before God through faith in the name of the Son of God.

II. Confidence in Prayer

5:14-15

5:14-15 **confidence** = boldness, freedom of speech

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

See also 3:21-22

Obedience gives us greater confidence or assurance of answered prayer. This is firmly linked to the will of God because if we aren't committed to doing God's will then how can we pray according to God's will? As we grow in obedience we will also grow in our confidence in prayer.

On prayer according to God's will:

"Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth," – Robert Law.

"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness." - George Mueller

Chuck Smith said, "I have an agreement with God. If I ask God for anything that is not according to His will, I want Him to just ignore it. Even if I get upset and pout and complain, ignore it!"

III. Assurance of God's Forgiveness

5:16-17

5:16-17 Some of us were raised with the traditional view of the Roman Catholic Church which says that there are *mortal* and *venial* sins. Mortal sins lead to death and venial sins don't – they merely *"impede the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good."* (RC Catechism)

Scripturally, however, that view is problematic. Some sins *are* more serious than others, as Jesus told Pilate, *"... the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."* But what kind of sin is it that doesn't potentially lead to death?

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If we've sinned at all, we've earned death as the consequence. Thus, the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus is necessary to save us from death. See also **2:2** and **4:10** on "propitiation."

Another view points out that believers can sin in such a way that God takes their life as a consequence. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 provide us an example of that. The difficulty here, however, is that there doesn't seem to be any reliable way to determine which sin is going to lead to physical death and which isn't – and John sees a difference right now. It just seems to have been God's sovereign choice to take the life of that couple right on the spot. In that light, we may all be surprised we're still here!

There is a clue to what John means here if we look back at his Gospel. In John 11, we find the story of Lazarus:

John 11:1-4 ¹Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." ⁴When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not **unto death**, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

That phrase "**unto death**" is the same phrase that John uses here. If we follow the story further, we find that Lazarus did actually die, but death was not the end result. Lazarus, as a believer in Jesus inherited eternal life.

Remember that when John speaks of **life**, he tends to mean **eternal life**. For example, see **John 20:31** (above) and **1 John 3:14** and **5:11-12**.

James also encourages us to pray for one another with respect to our sins, when he says,

James 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

All through this letter John has been speaking against a large group of people who apparently left the fellowship of believers in Asia. They left because they began to deny some of the essential doctrines about Christ.

If we look closely at **5:16-17**, John says that it is a brother who sins in a way which does not lead to death. When he refers to the **sin leading to death** and says **I do not say that he should pray about that**, John doesn't specifically say that this person is actually a brother.

So we can and should pray for one another with respect to all manner of sin and expect God to forgive us. We should also come before God ourselves, confessing and praying for forgiveness. Our forgiveness from God is something about which John wants us to have assurance. Always keep 1:9 handy so that you can keep your accounts short with God.

If, however, someone is in a state of consciously rejecting Christ, I don't believe we should pray for forgiveness for that. Such a person is cutting themselves off from God's appointed means of receiving forgiveness. In those cases, we should rather pray that God would work in their life and influence their heart so that they might believe and be saved.

IV. Confidence in Christ's Protection 5:18-19

5:18-19 **keeps himself** This translation in the NKJV, which goes back to the KJV, seems to put the emphasis on what we do. This may not be very encouraging. David Jackman explains:

"Such a view places the onus on the born-again Christian to keep himself safe and immune from evil. It would lead many of us to despair as we come to realize increasingly how deeply ingrained sin is within our very nature. There would be little cause for confidence if our victory over sin was dependent on our own ability to keep ourselves safe."

Other translations put more emphasis here on what Jesus does.

1 John 5:18(ESV) *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

1 John 5:18(NLT) *We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.*

The contrast in 5:19 makes more sense as well if we look at 5:18 in that way. We are protected by **the One born of God**. The whole world lies under the control of the evil one.

Remember the bully from *A Christmas Story*? And remember how cool it was when Ralphie finally beat him up – and he ran away crying? Jesus sends the wicked one away crying. We can have confidence in Christ's protection. As we do battle against indwelling sin, we can have confidence in Christ's indwelling presence. Our protector is more powerful than the evil one who controls the world.

V. Assurance That We Truly Know God 5:20-21

5:20 His Son Jesus Christ See also 1:3. He is:

- Jesus the Man from Nazareth.
- Christ, the promised Messiah
- God's eternal Son

Cross reference this verse with:

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Now that we are in Christ, our understanding of Him grows. This can be a long, slow process, but it seems almost inevitable for anyone who is truly in Christ. We grow in our understanding of Him. We grow in our knowledge of Him.

"The growth of the Christian life largely consists in changing belief that rests on testimony into knowledge grounded in vital experience." – Alexander MacLaren

We are made in God's image, so God placed within us the capacity or potential to know Him personally. Sin has, however, blinded us and thwarted that capacity.

In the Gospels the Lord brought sight to the blind on numerous occasions. In each case, the person already had eyes, but those eyes were essentially useless. The touch of Christ's finger gave those dead useless organs their original God-given ability. In the same way, we are given our spiritual eyesight when we submit to His healing hand. Dead sinners wandering in spiritual darkness are brought into the light of Christ by His touch. Again, Alexander MacLaren:

"In the incarnation Jesus Christ gave us God to see; by His present work in our souls He gives us the power to see God."

This is the true God There is some variation in translations here. I kind of like the ESV as it makes this a strong statement of the deity of Christ: *"He is the true God and eternal life."*

The NLT follows suit: *He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.*

Keep yourselves from idols Anything that pushes God out of the central place in my life and toward the margins, must be rejected. Any concept of God which contradicts his perfect self-revelation in Jesus Christ must be rejected. All of our idols must be smashed to bits and replaced with the true revelation of the One True God.

Conclusions:

- Back in John's time there were people who contradicted his teaching and who tried to sway people in the churches away from simple and total faith in Jesus Christ. John gave them – and has now given numerous forms of assurance in response:

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- When confronted by doubts and people who may contradict us, this passage gives us a wonderful place to turn.
- As we learn God's will through the study of God's Word, we can gain boldness or confidence in prayer. Never be afraid to ask God for things that He reveals in Scripture to be in line with His will. There is no better way to pray than to pray the Bible.
- What would your prayers sound like if you knew you could say anything to God? Let your prayers sound like that. We read something from the psalms at every Sunday service here. You may have noticed those prayers are not always sweet and beautiful – but they are honest expressions of confidence before God – boldness or freedom of speech.
- Pray for one another's forgiveness. We all know that we all sin. That much is a given. How much freedom we should have, then, to intercede for one another. We need one another's prayers and John has given us powerful encouragement to pray them.
- When we look at our own weakness and we look at the wickedness of the world, we can easily become disheartened. In the midst of overwhelming evil, however, we can have confidence in Christ's protection. He keeps us so that the wicked one does not touch us. We're safe in His loving hand.
- Go ahead and let yourself know that you really know God. Confidence grounded in Scripture and in a personal connection with Christ is a real thing. There is no need to doubt or waver in that relationship. He has given you an understanding that is genuinely supernatural. Take advantage of it and let that assurance grow.
- When you are plagued by doubts, turn back to this letter as a source of confidence. If someone you know is affected by doubts about their faith, bring them here. John's purpose was to give us assurance.