

Prayerful Assurance

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[0:00] kids, rooted folks, you are dismissed. If you would open up your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5, we're going to be looking at verses 13 through 19.

This, we're almost home in 1 John. We've got one more sermon after this next week, and it is a really peculiar voice verse, but that's for next week.

Hear God's word. This is 1 John chapter 5, verses 13 through 19. May God bless the reading and the hearing of his word.

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 request 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 to those who commit sins that do not lead to death.

[1:13] 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 was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.

May God bless the reading and hearing of his word. Imagine, you go to Stein's Garden Center because you've got a green thumb. You walk out with a little baby hosta.

Hostas are kind of broad-leafed ground cover for gardens and yards. You bring that hosta back. You plant it right where you want it, but unbeknownst to you, that soil which you planted your little baby hosta in is toxic.

And it's not just a lack of nutrients and a lack of water. Someone spilled 50 gallons of formaldehyde on it three years before you didn't know about it. Nothing grows there.

[2:22] So over the course of a couple days, you're looking out on your little hosta that you've just planted, and you watch its leaves turn a pale, sickly yellow.

They shrivel and wilt. You watch your hosta languish because it's been planted in toxic soil.

There are Christians born of God, genuine, languishing, because they've planted themselves in the toxic soil of the world.

Thinking that the world gives life, they languish. Do you have a line of sight on a brother or sister in Christ who is languishing in sin?

Maybe their obedience to Jesus, their belief in Jesus, is turning a pale yellow. Their obedience to God's commandments are shriveling.

[3:33] Their love for other Christians is wilting. Maybe you're hearing this, and you're thinking, I'm languishing.

That's me. Well, this morning, the claim of this passage, four words, pray boldly, pray lovingly.

Pray boldly, pray lovingly. John's closing out his letter here, urging Christians to pray boldly and lovingly for languishing brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And he does so by urging us with four truths that embolden your prayer life. And so, that is the outline. I know there's a lot of blanks on your outline. It might be overwhelming.

Some of you love to fill out blanks. I'm glad for that. But let's look at this first, first truth to embolden your prayer life. One, be assured of eternal life.

[4:39] We see that 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. When John writes, I write these things, you know what he's talking about?

He's talking about the first four and a half chapters of 1 John. All of that he's written. I've written you all of these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know, be confident of, assured of your eternal life.

And all throughout 1 John, he's been rolling through these three tests. Remember? The doctrine test. The belief test. Do you believe that Jesus is totally God, totally man, who came in love to die for your sins so that you could live for him?

That's the belief test. And then there's the obedience test. Trusting and obeying all of God's commands because they're not burdensome. They're joy. And then there's the final love test. Are you laying down your life for other blood-bought brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of whether they're like you or unlike you? These are the things that John has been telling, writing about.

[5:53] This little kind of purpose clause that you may know that you have eternal life, that sentence could summarize the entire book of 1 John. It's all here to assure those born of God that they have eternal life.

And remember, this belief, obedience, love, it is a package deal when you're born of God and you're granted eternal life all by God's grace. It's not like you have belief without obedience and love.

It's all together. It's the fruit of eternal life. Come home. And I just want to remind you of one other thing.

When John is writing about eternal life, he's writing about something that Christians have now. It's not just a promise that we're looking forward to.

It's a reality that we are to experience now. And so for a Christian, eternal life doesn't begin when you breathe your last breath.

[7:01] Eternal life begins when you breathe out your first Jesus is my Lord. The moment of your regeneration and conversion. This is life in the sun.

I have an older brother, friend, a Christian brother, who chronically struggles with his assurance. He became a Christian early on and then he spent a couple years replanting himself in the world and he languished there.

God revitalized him by his spirit. There was repentance. He turned from that again and turned back to Jesus. But ever since, he has these long shadows cast from that time period that make him question whether he belongs to Jesus or not.

So do you know what I regularly do with our brother? I say, brother, do you believe that Jesus is totally God and totally man who came in the flesh in love for you to die for you so that you can live for him?

Do you believe that? Yeah, I believe it. I waver, but I believe it. Brother, are you seeking to obey, actively obey all that God has commanded you?

[8:25] I'm trying. I fail, but I'm trying. Brother, are you seeking to love your brothers and sisters as Jesus loved you, as he laid down his life for you? I'm trying, but I regularly fail.

When we can move one another onto what Christ has done for us, that's where assurance is, his finished work. These tests of belief and obedience and love, they're the definitive evidence, they're the fruit of eternal life having really taken root in you.

Now, you may be thinking right now, Mike, it sounds like this is a sermon on assurance. I thought you were talking about prayer. This is about prayer.

And here's why. In order to pray with boldness, brothers and sisters, you must first be assured of God's love for you.

In order for you to pray boldly, you must be assured of eternal life. So how's your prayer life? Well, if your prayer life is more like a prayer desert than a prayer jungle, maybe it's because you've been languishing under fear instead of flourishing in the rich soil of God's love.

[9:57] God's love makes for nutrient-rich soil for a vibrant prayer life. So to pray boldly, to pray lovingly, you first need to be assured of eternal life.

Second, the second truth to embolden your prayer life. Be bold in asking your Father. Be bold in asking your Father. This is in verses 14 and 15.

And this is the confidence. You see that word confidence in the ESV? Great word. Freedom from fear. No fear. Freedom from fear towards Him, your great God.

No fear. fear. You move towards Him without any reservation at all. God's love. And John has a particular kind of confidence in mind.

It's a prayerful confidence, a prayerful assurance. This is the confidence we have towards Him that if we ask anything, He hears us.

[11:02] This is a prayerful confidence. Remember, in Luke 11, Jesus is teaching on prayer. It's what I quoted from. Steve's going to close the service on it. It's a section in prayer.

And Jesus says at one point, ask and you will receive. Our assurance of God's love leads to boldness in our asking.

I've got to show you the qualification though. You've got to be sure you're seeing it because it's not like God is saying, ask whatever your sinful heart wants and I'll sign a check for it.

Look what He says in verse 14 that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. The other place that John talks about God's will in 1 John is 1 John 2 verses 15-17 specifically in verse 17 but this is the section where God says very clearly do not love the world or the things in the world.

You've been called out of the world, don't blend back into the world. Don't love it like that. It's not my will. And then He goes on to say, starts talking about some of the things in the world, the desires of the flesh, unchecked sexual cravings.

[12:22] He talks about the desires of the eyes, unreserved covetousness. And He talks about the pride of life, this sense of it's all about me.

the desires of the flesh, not God's will. The desires of the eyes, not God's will.

The pride of life, not God's will. And if you've planted yourself in those, do you know what's going to happen to you, brother, sister in Christ? You will languish. Your faith will turn a pale yellow.

You will languish. What is God's will? Well, John has been telling us over and over again. It's growing in a vibrant belief in who Jesus is.

Totally God, totally man. It's obeying all that God commands. That's God's will for us. It's God's will for us to love one another with a sacrificial lay your life down love.

[13:29] That's God's will for us. That's His will. That's what He wants. That's eternal life flourishing in a Christian. When we obey Jesus more and more, love Jesus, own more and more, and believe Jesus again and again with deeper resolve.

So eternal life is a flourishing. And we ask our Father for boldness, boldly ask Him for things that will cause us to flourish.

Makes us bold. That's why John says, we see these two we know in verse 15, and if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him.

If you're asking God for greater faith, that pleases your Father. You'll bring it to pass. You'll increase your faith. If you're praying, asking for greater obedience to more of God's commands that delights your Father, He's like, I love you, I'm loaded, I'll give it to you.

If you want to grow in love, that's right up God's alley. Ask for these things. And when you ask, you can be assured He's going to give it.

[14:53] When our God, when it comes to asking requests of our Father, He is no miser. When I was a young dad, we'd bring our kids to Chuck E. Cheese because I was a high-end ruler.

We'd get in there, you have different packages you can buy. We had to do the 30 token package. This is before Mary was with us, we had three kids. Which meant, each of my kids get ten tokens each.

Which means, they get two and a half arcade games. That's it. And then, Steve Salvati, my dad, takes all of us to Funway Amusement Center in Batavia, Illinois.

With this huge, huge arcade setup. He says to my children, go have fun. Here's some tokens.

And then one of my children was like, well, what happens when we run out? My dad reaches into his pockets, pulls out like hundreds of tokens, and he says, I'm loaded.

[16:12] His will was made clear. Go enjoy. I've got all the tokens you need.

Our Heavenly Father has made his will clear. He wants us to flourish. He wants our eternal lives to flourish. flourish. So we, he says, ask me, and I will give you what you need to flourish.

He's no miser. He gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask. He gives the Holy Spirit so we flourish in our faith in Jesus.

He gives the Holy Spirit so we flourish in our obedience to Jesus. and he gives us the Holy Spirit so that we flourish in our love for one another because it gets challenged.

Our Heavenly Father is no miser. He gives in superabundance. He's a life giver. He gives according to his will.

[17:25] So knowing that your Heavenly Father loves you like that and he is loaded, loaded with life, what's keeping you from asking him? What's keeping you from boldly going to him?

That night, my kids went back to my dad again and again with boldness. Can I have more tokens? They knew he got it. He knew he was loaded and he loved them. We go to our Heavenly Father with confidence, boldness.

He's not going to say, maybe a little bit for, you know, obedience. He's going to, I'm going to lavish you with the life you need. He's going to, so two questions for you.

Are you being bold in your asking your loving and loaded Heavenly Father for what he alone can give? Are you boldly asking for it?

Are you, second, are you asking your Heavenly Father according to his will, your will be done, hallowed be your name? Are you not getting the things you're asking for?

[18:36] Are you asking for the right things? Are you asking according to his will? Be bold in asking your Father for the life that he alone can give.

Be bold. He's loaded. Be bold, be loving. Third point. The third truth to embolden your prayer life, be loving when praying for your siblings.

In verses 14 and 15, what we were just looking at, this, this, this encouragement to pray and be bold, it's kind of general and then in verses 16 and 17, it's specifically applied.

Let me read 16 and 17. 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. And I'm guessing that there are several of you in this room right now or watching online and when you hear about the sin that leads to death, you're like, whoa, what's that?

[19:58] Because what you really want to know is not what it is, you really want to know, am I doing that? Remember, 1 John 4, 19, perfect love casts out fear.

And don't forget, this is about praying. So what is meant by death here? If you notice in verse 16 and 17, that word death shows up four times whenever you see a word that's repeated like that, it's carrying some emphasis.

So we've got to ask the question, well, what does John mean by death? Is he talking about physical death? Is he talking about eternal death? So that's where we step out and say, well, what is the context all about? What can we learn about this word from the context of 1 John?

And the word death doesn't show up super frequently, but you know what the word does? The opposite of death, which is life. And what kind of life shows up very frequently in 1 John?

Eternal life. Last week, I gave you a tour de life in 1 John. I showed you that Jesus in 1 John 1-2, he is the life manifest.

[21:18] He is the eternal life carnate. He is life that John and the apostles, they heard and they touched and they saw.

We learned in chapter 2, verse 25, that in Jesus is the promise of eternal life. We learned in 3.14 that we know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

In 4.9, in this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

What kind of life? Well, let's look at 1 John 5. Last week, verse 11 and 12, and this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son.

Whoever has the son has the life, eternal life. And whoever does not have the son of God does not have life, which is a way of negative, you make the life negative and what you're actually talking about is death.

[22:29] And so what's implied in verse 12 is made explicit in verse 16 and 17. it's got to be eternal death. Which I'm thinking now, you're really wondering, well, what is the sin that leads to eternal death and am I committing it?

The stakes are high, aren't they? The key, thank you Bob Yarborough, Colin Cruz for your help this week. The key to understanding this is one word in verse 16.

It's the word brother. If anyone sees, if any Christian sees his Christian brother or sister committing a sin, literally sinning 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.

The best way to understand it, it's not what is the sin, it's who's doing the sinning. John is referencing in verse 16 a Christian who is sinning.

One born of God. We already know that's very possible not just from our experiences but from the fact that if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[24:07] We know it from the fact in 1 John chapter 2 verses 1 and 2 my little children I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin but if anyone does sin and we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, our protector.

He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. So here's how to understand this. Verse 16, the sin that does not lead to death, it's who's doing the sin. It's one born of God. Of course it's not going to lead to death because that sin has been propitiated by Jesus. So what then is the sin that leads to death?

If the logic follows, it's who is doing that sinning. Anyone not born of God. those who are card-carrying members of the world.

And if you're a Christian, you used to be in that club. So what does John mean then at the end of verse 16 when he says, there is sin that leads to death.

[25:27] I do not say that one should pray for that. We hear that and we're like, oh, is the apostle John telling me I cannot pray for my non-Christian child. Is that what he's saying?

Well, we know that's not what he's saying because the apostle Paul in Romans 10, 1, says in terms of his unbelieving Jewish friends, it's his heart, desire, and prayer that they would be saved.

So what is he getting at? What is this advice that he's giving? Well, again, a little historical context is helpful. If you flip back to 1 John 2, 19, we learn, we're reminded of this.

There was a group. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that it might be complained that they all are not of us.

There was a group of people in first century Ephesus that rejected Jesus as totally God, totally man, that they didn't think obedience was necessary, that they didn't think that they had loved one another sacrificially, and they left the church.

[26:41] So they had professed Jesus at one point and then walked away. I think that's who John is talking about. Those, there is sin that does lead to death.

I do not say that one should pray for that, and by the way, he's not forbidding it either. But what you need to see is that three times, he says, talks about, there is sin that does not lead to death.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, your sin does not lead to death because Jesus has propitiated it. He's delivered you from it. He paid it all.

He bore the wrath intended for you. In verse 17, John comes back and says, all wrongdoing is sin. We all know that the wages of sin is death, Romans 3.23.

And then he says, but there is sin that does not lead to death for those who have received eternal life.

[27:48] So what does John say about this? Because this, this is a passage that's actually informing us to pray for something.

What is he saying? Well, in verse 16, he says, for your brothers, your languishing siblings who planted themselves in the world, who are feeding who are feeding the desires of the flesh, who are feeding the desires of the eyes, who are feeding the pride of life, here's what you do.

You ask for them. You pray for them. When you see them, not when you're on some kind of suspicious stakeout of your brother, not when you hear something through the gossip mill, but when you see it.

When you're very aware that your brother or your sister is languishing in sin, when you see that, you love them by praying for them. And we know what you're praying for in light of what God promises to give.

He promises to give life to that brother or sister. And just to clarify here, God is not saying, okay, when your brother or sister languishing in sin, they've lost their salvation, so now, ask God and he will re-save them.

[29:19] That's not what's being said, because he refers to them as brothers. These are believers. This is you and me. God says, ask for them.

Call on me, the giver of the Holy Spirit, the life giver. He's loaded. He loves us. And he promises to give them life.

I believe this is a revitalizing life. This is a stirring up of one eternal life by the Holy Spirit that leads to repentance and faith. It results in replanting of oneself in gospel-rich soils of God's love.

This kind of praying for one another is not pharisaical. Catch him, God. It's loving. Oh, God.

Help him. Help her. If you're seeing a brother and sister in Christ, their belief turning a pale, sickly yellow, if you're seeing a brother and sister in Christ whose obedience is shriveling because they think God's commandments are a burden now, if you see a brother and sister whose love is withering due to some kind of selfishness, you pray for them.

[30:49] God, give them Holy Spirit life. Revive them, restore them, help them. Do you have a line of sight on a brother or sister who is languishing in their sin?

Love them by praying for them. Are you languishing in your sins? Call out to the life giver.

Give me life. Tell brothers and sisters you're languishing. Exercise humility so that they in love pray for you.

Live. Call on God. It brings me to the fourth truth. To stir up your prayer life and to be honest with you, it should just assure you again of your salvation.

When we're talking about praying for brothers and sisters who are languishing, do we have any assurances that God will actually answer our prayers? Well, there is exactly that in verses 18 and 19.

[32:11] We know that everyone who's 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. Can't touch this. We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Our assurance in God's turning brothers and sisters from their sin is not in our praying. It's not in a brothers or sisters ability to repent.

It's in Jesus the keeper of his own. Be assured of his keeping. Verse 18 Everyone born of God will not keep on sinning.

Why not? He who was born of God protects him. Who is that? Well, that's a very unique way to talk about Jesus.

Totally God. Totally man. The Christ come in the flesh. Born of a virgin miraculously by God who came in love to die so that we would live risen from the dead reigning on high advocating for his own our protector our good shepherd that's who we're talking about.

[33:42] He keeps us listen to this. Let this tune your ear to this. This is your savior.

This is your keeper. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

He's a keeper. He goes on to say my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand. I and the father are one.

Double keep baby. Baby back in the 90s MC Hammer had the song Can't Touch This in some dynamic pants but it's it's as if Jesus speaks over you to the world and the devil can't touch this doesn't belong to you he or she is mine.

which means the evil one the devil can't lay a finger on you. Have you ever seen those movies where someone has to move from a building to a waiting car and there's this mass of like press or fans that are looking to press in and just touch this person and then what happens is you have a bodyguard that is kind of huddled over this person and they get from the building to the car can't touch this Jesus is ushering us through the world can't touch this can't touch this one can't touch this one blood bought they belong to me the devil can't lay a hand on you because you no longer belong to him you belong to Jesus now he's given you his life do you believe that to be true that you and me our brothers and sisters are being kept by Jesus himself do you believe that it's right here he's keeping you protecting you we know that we are from

[36:11] God and that he's keeping us that should assure you and that should put some boldness in your praying Jesus keep him protect him don't let the evil one touch him pray in verse 19 we have this division of all humanity into two groups we know that we are from God those are the ones born of God those are the ones who have eternal life the spirit living in them and they are flourishing they are believing obeying and loving on the other side of the great continental eternal divide is the world and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one all of unregenerate humanity in organized disobedience to God languishing under the power of the evil one languishing in their sin that leads to death languishing in their hopeless despair and darkness but let me just remind you of chapter 5 verses 4 and 5 it's right there look at it for everyone who's been born of

God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world our faith who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God and the reason why we can overcome the world is because our savior overcame the world and overcame the devil himself kicked him to the curb is Jesus able to keep his own all the way to the end and he will we pray for one another in full confidence in Jesus ability to keep us can't touch this can't touch this brothers and sisters pray boldly pray lovingly in light of your assurance of eternal life in light of bold asking of your father he's loaded love when you pray for your siblings pray for life and be assured that he

Jesus is our keeper when we pray along these lines expect outpourings of the Holy Spirit resulting in our flourishing in belief our flourishing in obedience our flourishing in love for one another so be assured it's Jesus life in us that makes us resilient let's pray God thank you so much for 1st John thank you for these ongoing reminders years of eternal life in us that started now that that shows itself in belief in obedience and love thank you Lord Jesus for calling us out of the world we are in the world but not of the world we want to be faithful to you while we're here God would you Father pour out your

Holy Spirit upon us in greater and greater measure and cause us to live to flourish to live the abundant life Jesus spoke of God would you would you do a great work in us all for the glory of your name amen