

Confidence in Christ and His Unchanging Word

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[0:00] Let us pray. O God, who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our hearing, Be with us now to sanctify unto us the truths that shall be delivered from them.

! Be with us specially to enlighten our minds by the Holy Spirit and by the mighty working of your power. O God, who has caused all the truth that shall be delivered from them.

O God, who has caused all the truth to the truth. Be pleased to strengthen those that do stand and comfort and help the weak-hearted and raise up them that fall. And finally, beat down Satan under our feet.

All this we humbly ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. We are finally in the last verses of our journey to John's first epistle.

And if you will remember, if you can recall, the issue... By the way, can I invite you to open your Bibles as we're wont to do? So you can follow along.

[1:14] It's page 1213 in your pew Bible. So please open it up as we follow along. Now, the issue at the heart of John's epistle is...

The issue has been a controversy among some in the church who claim to have access to true knowledge through their own special insights.

These are the ones that he had... Earlier in his letter says they departed from the truth. But these people claim to be Christians. They, in fact, claim to be spiritual super-Christians.

They say they have access to true knowledge through their own special secret insights. These people deny Jesus as Christ and Lord.

They deny the authority of God's Word through the apostolic message. And they deny the need for a righteous advocate before God. When they claim that they have no sin.

[2:15] So John writes... His letter is to the faithful Christians in the church. He writes to tell them... That in the face of these supposed super-Christians...

With all their perfection... And with all their secret knowledge... These faithful Christians should stand firm. Stand firm in the faith...

In which they have come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. He writes to these faithful Christians...

That although they are by no means perfect... They are sinners.

Although they still struggle with sin... He writes to remind them that they have been washed...

Through the saving work of Jesus Christ... The righteous one.

Who is the propitiation... For their sins. He writes to remind them that... This Christ... Their Savior and Redeemer... Has carried upon Himself...

[3:16] All of God's wrath... Reserved for them. He carried it upon Himself on the cross. And they're satisfying... All of God's righteous anger...

For their past... Present... And future sins. That's what John is writing to the faithful Christians. He writes to them to remind them...

That they have an advocate. That defends them... Against all accusations. No matter where those accusations might come. Whether external or internal.

They have an advocate... Who defends them. And He writes to remind them... And us... That those who are in Him... Who are in Christ...

Have been born of God. They've been given eternal life. They are no longer condemned to death... And the judgment of hell.

[4:15] So... In the face of falsehood... That surrounds them... And... That surrounds us... In our day... John wants to assure...

Us... As he assures them... That we are in God's family... If we love God... And if we love... Our brothers and sisters...

In the household of God. And he then tells us... In these verses... As he... As he... As he concludes... His epistle... That this love... That he talks about... Is seen... By obedience... To God's word... And by self-giving love... Towards one another... And... And... In... Here in verse 13... John gives us... An explicit reason... For why he wrote this letter... And this is his style... Even in his gospel... It wasn't until the last chapter... [5:13] The last chapter that he says... This is why I'm writing to you... And he's doing that here again... In his first epistle... Look there in verse 13... I write these things...

Who is he writing to? I write these things to you... You... Will believe in the name... Of the Son of God... That's who he's writing to...

The faithful believers... You will believe... In the name... Of the Son of God... And why does he write? He tells us... That you may know...

That you have eternal life... That you may have confidence... In your Lord and Savior and Redeemer... And look at the way he crafts it...

So who are the people he's writing to? Those that believe in his name... And you ought to know... That believing in Jesus' name... Is the same as believing in Jesus... Those are the same thing...

[6:12] That's John's idiom... To believe in Jesus' name... Is to believe in him... And so those who believe... In the name of the Son of God... Jesus the Christ...

The Savior... The Redeemer... The Anointed One... Those are the ones who are faithful believers in Christ... Because that is the only way you can come... To be born into the family of God... It is by this faith...

In Jesus... The Son of God... It's just like John says in his gospel... In John chapter 1 verse 12... To all who did receive him... Who believe in his name...

He gave the right to become the children of God... And John says also in John 3 verse 18... Anyone who believes in him... Is not condemned...

But anyone who does not believe... Is already condemned... Because he has not believed... Why are they condemned? This is only one criteria... By which people are condemned... Because he has not believed in the name...

[7:07] Of the one and only Son of God... And so for John... Believing in Jesus... Revealed... The Jesus that is revealed... In the eyewitness account...

Of the apostles... You don't get to make up your own Jesus... He's talking about the Jesus... That is revealed in the pages of scripture... Through the eyewitness... Authoritative account of the apostles...

If you believe in that Jesus... Contained in the words... Of the Old and New Testaments... Revealed in there... If you believe in that Jesus... You have eternal life...

And that's why he writes to you... To remind you... You believe in him... You can be confident... That you have the life of God in you... So those who receive this good news...

Of Jesus... Are those who have been entrusted... Who have entrusted their life to him... By believing and obeying him... And then John goes on... And gives...

[8:04] He gives four grounds... Of confidence... He's saying... I'm writing to you... If you believe in the name of the Son of God... You can be confident... That you have eternal life... And by the way...

Let me tell you... Ways you would... You can have additional grounds... Of confidence... That you do have this... Eternal life of God in you... And he gives us...

Four additional grounds... The first one... We can see it in verse 14 to 17... It's confidence in prayer... Confidence in prayer... John tells us...

That... Our Father hears us... And answers our prayer... Look there in verse 14... And this is the confidence that we have towards him... That if we ask anything...

Anything... According to his will... He... He hears us... John is here... Assuring us... That if we ask anything of God...

[9:00] And I know that it is... In keeping with his will... Don't skip over that... If you ask anything... In keeping with his will...

His revealed will... He will hear you... Not only will he hear you... He will answer... He will respond to your request... Isn't that the Lord's prayer...

After all... That our Lord teaches us... To pray that his will... Will be done on earth... As it is in heaven... And so...

Therefore... Verse 15... If we know that he hears us... In whatever we ask... We know that we have the requests... That we have asked of him... This...

That... That... This... And that is our confidence... As children of God... This is our confidence... That we can go to our Father... In prayer...

[10:02] And be... Assured... That he hears and answers our cry... What great confidence... To know that... That God in his mercy... Even commands us...

Right... He says... You can come to me... If you ask him I will... I will hear you... And then he... He commands us... To exhibit... That love for one another... In prayer... By praying for each other...

In verse 16... He says... If anyone sees his brother... Committing a sin... That does... A sin not leading to death... He shall ask... Ask who? God...

Ask God... 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 once you pray for that... In verse 17... All wrongdoing is sin... But there is sin that does not lead to death... Those verses might seem a little confusing...

[10:58] But what John is trying to emphasize is that... Our prayer for one another... Our prayer... For one another... Are examples... Of praying according to his will...

We can be sure that when we go to God... Praying for one another... We are praying according to his will... And he will hear us... This is the confidence we have...

As children of God... Notice that this is all within the family of God... These... He's writing to those who are born of God... And saying... You who are born of God...

Pray for others who are born of God... If you see them... Departing or committing a sin... The ones who are called to pray this prayer... Are those who have placed their confidence... In Jesus Christ... Those who are born of God... And the ones we are called to pray for... Are also fellow siblings... In the family of God... And again...

[11:54] John gives us the reality that... We will still stumble... Even as Christians... He takes it as a given... We would need to pray for one another... Because we will stumble...

If you see your brother or sister... Stumble into sin... What are you commanded to do? Does John say condemn them? Does he say make them feel...

Small and insignificant... As you rub their noses in their failing? Not at all... No... John says...

We are instructed... In fact, we are commanded... To pray for them... That God will give... A sustaining life to them... So that they might live...

And not die... And John differentiates... Two different kinds of sins... In these verses... He tells us... There is a kind of sin...

[12:48] That do not lead to death... And he tells us... That there is a kind of sin... That does lead to death... And John's emphasis here...

Is that... All sins... I want you to see... What he is trying to communicate to us here... He is saying to us... That all sins... Committed by anyone...

Who believe... In the name of the Son of God... Is forgiven... Do you hear... I want to say that again... If you believe... In the Son of God... You place your confidence in Him...

John has said it earlier... We have an advocate... Before God... The righteous... He is saying here... In these verses... He is saying... All sins... Committed by anyone... Who believes in God...

No matter how grievous that sin is... You might pay the consequences... For that sin in this world... But you will be forgiven... If you go to God in prayer... You can be confident of that...

[13:43] Brothers and sisters... Are you confident of that? You can go to God your Father... No matter the sin... No matter the stumble... No matter the error... You can go to Him...

You can take confidence... That He hears you... And He will forgive you... Because He has paid for your sins... He has carried your curse upon Him... He has paid the penalty... You are forgiven...

You can go to Him... No matter... That... There is no sin... If you believe in Jesus... No sin will... The death that John is talking about here... Is eternal death...

He is not talking about... All of us will die the physical death... Right? But He is talking about...

Spiritual eternal death... As Paul says in Romans 8.1...

There is no condemnation... For those who are in Christ Jesus... There is no condemnation... For you... Brothers and sisters...

[14:41] If you are in Christ Jesus... You can be confident... That your Lord and Savior... Will forgive you... Will... As redeemed you...

So we have that full confidence... We can go to the throne of grace... We can ask God... To give life... To us... Or to our weakened brother or sister... Can you imagine how rich... Our life together... As the people of God... Will be... If we take this seriously... If we really do take it seriously... If we freely lift up one another... Up to God in prayer... If our first response... Is when we see... A brother or sister... Falling into sin... If our first response is to... Go to God... In prayer for them... How rich would our... Communion and fellowship will be... And I love that John takes the fact... That we will sin... That we still sin... [15:42] As a given... But he also wants to remind us... We are forgiven... Your ongoing sin... Is not a barrier to...

The eternal life of God... As long as you go to God... And ask for forgiveness... You have a God... Who is a perfect advocate... Who intercedes for you... So on that basis... We pray for one another... We ask also... For one another's prayer... We covet each other's prayer... It's as John says... In his epistle... Confess... Confessing our sins to one another... Praying for one another... That we may be healed... But John tells us... There is a kind of sin... That do lead to death... Again... The death... He's talking about here... Is eternal death... Mind you... Eternal death... There is a kind of sin... [16:43] That leads to eternal death... Eternal death... What is that? It means there... That... There's a kind of sin... That will not be forgiven... All sins will be forgiven...

If we come to God... If we believe in Him... Right? But there is a kind of sin... That will not be forgiven... There is only one sin... That leads to eternal death... That keeps you... That keeps you... Outside of God's grace... It is the sin... Of unbelief... It is the sin... That denies that Jesus... Is the Christ... The Son of God... That is the sin... That... Cannot be forgiven... Why? Why do you ask? Because it's the... It's the one sin... That keeps you... From the means... By which you can be forgiven... That's what John... Has been telling us... In earlier in chapter 5... And even in the earlier... Verses of Epistle... There is only one way... [17:37] To life in God... It is through Jesus Christ... The righteous one... Who atoned for our sins... On the cross... It is by faith in Him... As the Christ... The anointed one of God... As the Messiah...

As the Son of God... It is confessing that... That brings you to new life... And if you do not... Confess that... If you deny that... That is the sin of unbelief... And that keeps you... Outside... Looking in... And that's what John... Means here... When he says... There is one sin... That leads to death... That is the one sin... And so... That's why... In our walk with each other... If you find somebody... A brother... Who claims to be a brother... Who is walking into sin... We are called to pray for them... Pray that God will... Bring them back... To life... If they do not come back to life... If they are still struggling... In our sin... We ought to... Let's not say that... We shouldn't pray for the unbelievers here... He is trying to tell us... [18:30] That we should then pray... Particularly for one thing... Primarily... Above all else... It's for that... That they will come to faith in Jesus Christ...

Pray for that first... Because that's... That's what they need... And then... Then John goes on... It gives us the second... Ground of confidence... He tells us that we are truly... Children of God... Because we have an hatred... A new hatred... Of sin... Look there in verse 18... 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... That's just a wonderful verse... We know that everyone who has been born of God... Does not keep on sinning... But he who was born of God... Protects him... Or her... And the evil one does not touch him... Again... Note the tense... [19:28] In that verse... Does not keep on sinning... It's not that you will not sin... It's not that you don't fall... It's not that you don't stumble... But you don't keep on sinning... If you are indeed born of God...

You have the new life of God in you... You have the Holy Spirit... Therefore your life will change... And is changing... You will bear the fruit... Fruit in keeping with repentance...

You will hate sin... That's the sign... Of those who are born of God... Hatred of sin... When you fall into sin...

From time to time... Which you will do... If God's life is in you... You will not wallow in that sin... You know... As a pig wallows in filth...

You will not wallow in that sin... You will be convicted... You will... You will sorrow... Over that sin... You will turn to God...

[20:26] In Christ... And seek forgiveness... That is what hatred of sin looks like... Do you know that...

The very fact that you're convicted of your sins... Is the fact that the Holy Spirit resides in you... That you have the life of Christ... Remember when we went through Ephesians...

Those who are dead in sin... Do not feel anything... Do not feel anything... The very fact that you are... You feel a pinch... And conviction... And sorrow over sin... Is the sign of new life...

The life of God that resides in you... I don't mean just... You know... Feeling guilt... You know... People in the world can feel guilt... And sorrow... Maybe because they got caught... Or because they... You know... This is... This is true sorrow...

And repentance... Because you've... You've... You've... Falling short of the... Of the glory of God... You recognize... Because out of love for God... Your Father... You know you've fallen short of a standard...

[21:22] And you sorrow over that... You beat your chest... And you go to Christ... You advocate... And you fall on your knees... Before the cross... And you confess...

And you can be confident... You're forgiven... You hate sin... That is a sign of those who are in Christ... John then goes on... And gives us a third sign...

Of confidence... That we are born of God... In verse 19... We know that we are from God... And the whole world lies... In the power of the evil one...

We recognize... To whom we belong... That's what he's saying there... You have a new... If you are born of God... You have a new attitude...

To the world around you... You recognize... To whom you belong... You know that you may... We may be in the world... But we are no longer of the world...

[22:18] Rather... We are of God... And being of God... We are aliens... And pilgrims... In this present world... That is fading away...

This world is not our home... It isn't... It is on this basis... That we live wisely...

In the world... Because we recognize... This world is in our home... We live wisely... We exercise discernment... Spiritual discernment... We... As John says in his letter...

In 1 John 4... Verse 1-5... We test the spirit... We test the spirits... To see if they are from God... Or if they are the spirit of this age... In God's age...

So if you are born of God... We should... You should expect... That the world... That what the world teaches... Will be in opposition... To God's word...

[23:14] You should expect it... It should not surprise you... And... You should always be ready to stand... Against the world...

You should be ready to defend God's truth... At whatever personal cost... It may be to you... We... As the people of God...

As the church of Christ... Must be ready... To stand upon God's truth... Upon God's word... And defend... That truth... At whatever personal cost...

To us... God being our helper... And this new attitude...

Brothers and sisters... Compels us... To say to those who are still... Under the bondage of the prince of this world... Who is the prince of this world? Satan...

[24:09] The devil... There are those who are still under the bondage... Of the prince of this world... Because we are no longer of the world... Because we are no longer... We have a new attitude to the world...

We understand that the world is in opposition... In opposition to God... We live in discernment... In wisdom... We test the spirit... And then we also... Are compelled to say to those...

Who are still in bondage... We are compelled to say to them... There is deliverance... There is a balm... In Gilead... There is freedom... There is life...

In Jesus Christ... The son of God... That is our message to the world... To the world... We reject the world's lies... And then we counter the world's lies... With the truth of the gospel... And lastly...

John gives us a fourth thing... That gives us confidence... Continuing confidence... That we are truly... Born of God... And that fourth thing is in verse 20... It's a new awareness of God... And we know that the son of God...

[25:08] 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... So what John is saying is... As we grow in discernment... Against falsehood... And lies... That comes from this fallen world...

We will also grow... In greater awareness... Of God... Our Father... We will grow... In our knowledge of God... Because he has given us understanding...

As John writes... We will grow in the knowledge of God... Our Father... That we may know him... Who is true... Now... The understanding that John is writing here...

Is not just mere knowledge... It's not just reading... And cognitive knowledge... What John means here... Is experiential knowledge... Relational knowledge... The kind of knowledge you have...

[26:09] Of a family member... Who you have... Who you have... An intimate... Familiar relationship with... That's the kind of knowledge... That we have of God... Our Father... Because we are his children...

So we have an intimate... Relational knowledge of him... And we will continue to grow... In a new awareness... And increase in knowledge of him... That is the promise... That God gives us... Because we are...

Sons of God... We are born of God... So let the world shout out... About its new discoveries... About its new manufactured truths...

We know... Who is true... We are in him... Who is truth... Personified... Jesus Christ...

He is the true God... And eternal life... Remember that...

[27:04] John says... He is the true God... And eternal life... Where else shall we go then? To whom else will you go? So...

As we finish this epistle... I want us to consider... How it might inform us... In this parish... How does what John writes here...

Inform how we live... Our life together... As the people of God... You know... One of the challenges... That the complexity... Of falsehood...

Of heresy... Of lies... Is evil in the church... And it's complex... And it's great... And it's insidious... It's a poison...

But we must take care... As the people of God... Who live by... The truth of God's word... We must take care... That in every facet... Of our dealings...

[27:59] With each other... We... Stand upon the truth... Of God's word... How do we live life together? We live life together... By...

Standing on the truth... It is from the truth... From the place of God's truth... In his word... Then that we go forth... In our relations to one another...

Think of it... If Christ... Truth personified... If Christ... Is truth personified... And if we have... Indeed have his... Unchanging word...

Of life... The Bible... That then... Is the metric... By which we relate... To one another... And if we don't...

Stand on that... Jesus Christ... As truth personified... And his word... As the metric... What would happen is that... Relational loyalty... Relational loyalty...

[29:00] Will... Always... Trump... God's truth... What do I mean by that? Your friendships...

Your... Family... Affiliations... Your... Inclinations... All of those things...

Will be things that we then... Come to latch onto... And those things... Will be the things that define us... Rather than God's truth... If we don't latch onto God's truth... There's going to be something...

That fills that void... And what happens... If we latch onto those things... Those things are good... They're not... Necessarily evil...

In and of themselves... Friendships... Right? Family... Different... You know... Sort of interests... Those things are...

[29:57] Benign... In and of themselves... But if they... Come to take the place... Of God's truth... In our hearts... And if it's on that basis... That we relate to one another...

We will... Continually walk away... From God... We will continually... Walk away from truth... Personified... Jesus Christ... And we... You... We have countless examples...

Of that... Don't we? Many... Who were formerly... In the faith... As John writes... Here... Have become apostate... They've denied the truth... They've walked away... Because relational loyalty... Is more important to them... Than God's unchanging word... So... Brothers and sisters... At Holy Trinity... Our relationships... Must be formed... Around God's truth... Contained in the Holy Bible... [30:52] That must be... Our rule of faith... In life... If we pursue... Relationships in this church... Based on who... We get along with... Solely... If we pursue... Relationships based on... Who agrees with me... On a non-gospel issue... If we make ourselves... The point of reference... Instead of God's word... We will undoubtedly... Grieve the Holy Spirit... And we will grieve the Holy Spirit... In two primary ways... One is... We will walk away... As the Episcopal Church... And the Church of England... And other liberal churches... Are doing... Right now... We will walk away... From the faith... Once delivered to the saints... By the apostles... Or... It's usually both actually... And we will... Be a church... Ruled... By personalities... Rather than... Obedience to God's word... We will become... [31:51] Selective... At what sins... We decide to call out... Among each other... And then we will become... Unrepentant... When we do sin... Because we will... We will build... Fashions in the Church of Christ... We will build walls... When there is... A place where there should not be walls... When we are one in Christ... We will build... Artificial walls... From one another... And you might think... This is an exaggeration... On my part... But I ask you... Isn't that what we've seen... In the church... John writes to? Isn't that what we see... In churches... Around us? Even in our day? We see many examples... Of churches... Who have departed... From God's truth... They just dressed up... Places of worship now... Devoid of all truth... They've been hollowed out... Their whitewashed tombs... They've departed... [32:45] From the life... Which is Jesus Christ... And we should not think that... We are... We are... We are... That cannot be us... The only way that is not going to be us... Is if we stand on God's Word... And stand on Jesus Christ... As the one who unites us... And brings us together... That is the only way... But if we decide not to stand on Jesus Christ... As the truth... And His Word... As our guideline... I tell you... I tell you with all... Soberness... That the center... Will not hold... And what's the thing that tempts us... From the center... Which is Christ... What's the thing that tempts us... Tempts us... It's idol worship... Isn't it? It's idolatry... In our day... We... You know... In our day... We don't erect golden cows... To worship anymore... Idolatry in our day... Is far more insidious... It's far more dangerous... [33:51] Because of its subtlety... Idolatry looks like... Surrendering to the world... Surrendering to the world's... Competing message... Surrendering to the world's... Gospel... Rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ... Idolatry... Looks like... Compromising... The truth of God... In order to accommodate the world... Idolatry looks like... Not recognizing that we battle... Not against flesh and blood... As Paul tells us... Idolatry looks like... Making our brothers and sisters... The enemy... Rather than... The world... The devil... And our own flesh... Which is the enemy... As the Bible talks about... Idolatry looks like... It looks like having a bunker mentality... [34:50] What's a bunker mentality... You might ask... It's the bunker mentality... That says... Those out there... Who are lost... Who are perishing... They're the enemy... Rather than saying... They are the lost... And we need to go out... With the gospel... To them... They desperately need... As we've been shown... The mercy of God... They desperately need... The mercy of God as well... They need the saving gospel... Of Jesus Christ... So in all these ways... Idolatry can sip in... If we lose sight of Christ... May it never be so... Among us... But if we are... If it is never to be so... We are going to have to stand firm... Stand firm in this confusing... And uncertain world... We are going to have to stand firm... On our one hope... And one confidence... That hope is Jesus Christ... And it's our fidelity...

[35 : 48] Which is our faithfulness... To His unchanging word... That is how we stand firm... So don't... Brothers and sisters... Don't fall for those...

Who will come along... And offer you means... Means of assurance... Other means of assurance... In this uncertain world... Whoever they may be...

They will offer you... The trinkets... And the lies of the world... Don't fall for it... Wherever they may be... God forbid... Maybe... God forbid they be...

From this pulpit... Or from the pews... Or from the perishing world... Out there... If anyone tells you... To look away from Jesus Christ... And His word... Run...

Run... Don't fall for it... That's idol worship... Keep away from it... And I want you to know...

[36 : 44] In closing... Notice that what John is... Trying to tell us here... Is that... The grounds of our confidence... The grounds of our confidence... Is objective... It is objective...

It is... And what is it? It's right belief... What is the right belief? Belief in Jesus Christ... The Son of God... And then it is also... Agape love...

Loving... Right? Loving... Actual action... Of loving one another... Within the household of faith... These are the objective tests...

Of true Christianity... And it's how... Robert Law... Sums up John's letter this way... It says... The grounds of our assurance... Are ethical... Not emotional...

Objective... Not subjective... To see... And tangible... Not microscopic... And elusive... And there are three...

[37 : 40] Belief... Righteousness... Love... By belief... It means belief in Jesus Christ... By righteousness... It means obedience... To God's commandment...

By love... It means love... It means love... To the brethren... A Christian is recognized... And recognizes himself... As begotten of God...

As born of God... When they... These signs... Of confidence in Christ... Believe righteousness in love...

So... Dear children... For that is what we are... Before God our Father...

Dear children... Keep yourselves... From idols... Let us pray... Heavenly Father...

[38 : 39] We confess that we need your help... We need your guidance... We need your protection... We need your wisdom... We need your courage... We need your son...

Jesus Christ... And his gospel... To be at the center... Help us... By your Holy Spirit... To keep him at the center... We pray...

In his glorious... And exalted name... Amen...