

Confidence for Christians

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[0:00] And as you come back to your seats, please grab your Bible and turn to 1 John chapter 5. I should say at the start that I've given you a full to bursting outline because I don't think we're going to make it all through it all today.

I said at the beginning of our series, 1 John can be a bit confusing. And I know if you found that as the Bible was being read, even though Kate read it brilliantly. It's kind of like, whoa, whoa. And I said at the start of our series, 1 John is a bit like a hot cup of tea on a cold winter's day.

We went to sip it slowly. And then when I was preparing the preaching program, I ignored my own vice. And I don't think we're going to get through it all. So you've got your outline. Feel free to take that home.

Email me any questions you have. I'm always happy to talk about God's word and how it applies to us. Hopefully that's given you enough time to turn in your Bibles to chapter 5 again. But let me begin by saying confidence can help us in life, can't it?

If you talk to any athlete or performer, they will tell you that confidence is a key part of their performance. And if you are having surgery, hands up if you want a surgeon who was not confident they could perform your surgery.

[1:15] Anyone? No. Confidence can help us in life, can't it? Even for ourselves, it can help us. For example, if you're confident, I mentioned this last week, that petrol prices are going up, then you're not going to buy a V8 guzzler.

Or if you're confident it's going to rain that day, you're not going to hang your clothes outside to get wet. Of course, there is such a thing as being overconfident, like this little fella here.

I'm not talking about that, thinking you can pull off the cheese with only a little helmet. I'm talking about a healthy level of confidence that can help us in life.

But here's the question, what can we really be confident of? If the last couple of years have taught us anything, it's not much, is it? I mean, who would have thought we'd have a virus that would turn the whole world upside down?

And we're still feeling the effects of it, aren't we? Who would have thought that Russia would actually invade Ukraine? And now he's calling up reserves and threatening nuclear war, holding referendums that are bogus.

[2:24] I mean, it's madness, isn't it? And who would have thought our own country would have moved so far from God so quickly? And then there's our own jobs, our own health, our own situations, which, you know, are kind of hit and miss, aren't they?

So what can we really be confident of? Well, today we come, as I said, to the end of 1 John, which was written to give Christians confidence. You see, John's readers had their confidence shaken, not by COVID or war or by their country moving further from the Christian faith, but their confidence was shaken by some in the church who had left the church and were now teaching them that Jesus was no longer the Christ, the anointed King who died for our sins, and so he was no longer the one who could give eternal life.

And so John wrote to give them and us confidence, which will help us in life. And as he wraps up today, he gives us confidence in four areas.

So as I said, I don't think we'll cover them all. The first area, though, is related to last week. So just have a look at the last verse of chapter 4, just before our chapter 5 today, where John finished last week by saying, and he's given us this command.

Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. But as I said last week, that's easier said than done, isn't it?

[3:54] And in fact, when it comes to all of God's commands, often it can be easier said than done. And so this week, John gives us confidence that we can obey, including loving one another, because we believe in Jesus.

So we're at point one in the outline and verse one in your Bibles. He writes, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well.

Now, before we get to the obeying bit, he starts off with two statements. At first, those who believe in Jesus are born of God. And then second, whoever loves the Father loves his child.

That is, other Christians, one another as well. But then what John does, he now unpacks each of those statements and shows how they fit together. But in typical John fashion, he kind of works backwards, starting with the loving Father to loving children.

So verse two, he kind of actually goes right back and starts with loving children. Verse two, this is how we know that we love the children of God. By loving God, the Father, and carrying out his commands.

[5:08] And his commands are not burdensome. Oh, sorry. In fact, this is love for God to keep his commands. So here, John starts with loving God's children.

And then he says, we do that as we love God the Father, which is what he just said in verse one. And we love God the Father by obeying his commands. You see the kind of steps he's taking here?

In our first reading, Moses told Israel to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. And then immediately, he gives them commands and tells them to obey. And that's because the way we love God is not by buying flowers or chocolates.

It's by obeying his commands. And so John has unpacked this first, that statement in verse one, by saying, in verse two to four, we love God's children by loving God, which equals obeying God.

That's the first part. But what's that got to do with believing in Jesus and being born of God? Well, John continues to explain in verses three to four, the rest of verse three.

[6:16] He says, And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, that is, our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Well, only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Here, John says that God's commands, like the command to love one another, are not burdensome for us.

That is, we can obey them. And they may sometimes be hard to obey, but they're not beyond our ability to obey. We are able to obey them.

And in fact, I think we want to obey. They're not burdensome for us. Because verse four, everyone born of God overcomes the world.

Remember, the world is led astray by the lies of the evil one. And so the world does not care about God, let alone want to obey his commands, does it? But we who have been born of God have overcome the world's disinterest and denial of God.

[7 : 24] God's Spirit has worked in our minds so that we know the truth and want to obey God's commands. Let me see if I can explain like this.

The other weekend, we had a very tense time, very tense moment in our family. It was the other Saturday night when the Swans beat Collingwood by one point. My daughter, one of my daughters goes for Collingwood, and I do not.

So at the end of the game, when I was getting really close and tense, I decided to be a bit cheeky and started cheering loudly for the Swans. And I was very promptly told, get out of the lounge room now.

It's my lounge room, right? Now, it was all a bit of fun, I think. And my daughter got her own back when the Swans were smashed yesterday. But here's the point.

Before we moved to Melbourne all those years ago, we did not care about the AFL, let alone cheer for it. I know many Melburnians still don't care, but go with me on this.

[8 : 25] When we changed states, we became born-again Melburnians, if you like. We overcame the New South Wales disinterest and denial of the AFL, so now we don't just follow it, but we want to cheer for it.

You see the connection? It's like this with God. Our spiritual new birth into his family is like we've changed states, you see. And it's come with a change of heart. We've overcome the world's denial and disinterest of God, so now that we actually care about God and even want to follow, obey God.

You see, God's commands are not burdensome for us because we've been born into God's family with a new heart. But how did that change of state happen?

How did that new birth occur? Well, the moment we believed in Jesus. That's what John goes on to say. Do you see the rest of verse 4 again? He says in verse 4, Everyone born of God overcomes the world.

This is the victory that has overcome the world. That is, the word even is, that is our faith, believing in Jesus. Who is it that overcomes the world and is born again?

[9 : 42] Well, only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. You see, it's our faith in Jesus that gives us a new heart, a rebirth into God's family so that we now care about God and want to obey God.

And so again, John's kind of working backwards here. He's unpacking that first statement in verse 1. We overcome the world by being born of God by believing in Jesus. It's just kind of working backwards from that statement in verse 1.

And so to try and put it together, because it can be a bit confusing, this is the logical order. We who believe in Jesus change states. We are born of God with a new heart. And so we overcome the world's denial and disinterest of God such that we can now obey God, which is actually how we show love for God and why we love His children too.

That's how the first five verses work together. Now, of course, we don't always listen to our new heart or conscience, do we? Sometimes we ignore our godly desire to obey and listen to our sinful desire to disobey.

Or we let our tiredness or our laziness drown out the godly instincts to obey, to love one another, to serve one another, to meet with one another here at church.

[11 : 11] Sometimes we listen to our old nature rather than our new heart. But we don't have to. John's purpose here is to give us confidence that we can obey.

And this confidence helps us in life, doesn't it? It gives us confidence to keep trying to obey, doesn't it? Knowing that we can. Being a Christian is sometimes hard, but it's not too hard.

It's not beyond our reach, which encourages us to keep going, to keep trying. Again, if I can illustrate like this, once upon a time, I used to play the drums.

Last week, we all realised that I can no longer play. But when I first started, my drum teacher encouraged me by saying, you've got it. You can keep the beat.

You've got this. Now keep practising. Add to this and add to this and grow. Having confidence that I could do it in a little bit encouraged me to keep practising at playing and growing in it.

[12:11] Well, similarly, having confidence that we can obey God now encourages us to keep practising, not at playing the drums, but at obeying God and growing in it. And so being confident you can obey God's commands, then will you keep trying to obey God's commands?

Well, John moves from giving us confidence we can obey to confidence we do have life. Point to verse 6 and 8, or 6 to 8. He says, Now again, it's a bit confusing here, but John is basically reminding us that we have evidence for Jesus Christ.

And this evidence is in the form of testimony. That word keeps popping up in this section here. The first is testimony from the Spirit. So in verse 6, the Spirit is called the truth because He always speaks the truth about Jesus.

Earlier on in 1 John, we saw in chapter 2 that He is the anointing we have from God, the Holy One, and enables us to know the truth. You know, works in our conscience and minds.

And so the Spirit is like internal evidence, if you like. He speaks to us so that the message of Jesus makes sense to us. It rings true for us.

[13:53] It's that gut feeling we have that thinks Christ Jesus is real. And that's the Spirit's testimony. The next is the testimony of the water, which is probably a shorthand way of referring to Jesus' baptism.

And at Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist gave his own testimony where he talks about how God sent the Spirit in the form of a dove to kind of mark Jesus out as the one who would baptize or give the Holy Spirit to others, who would be God's chosen one.

And at Jesus' baptism, it wasn't just John the Baptist who saw it. It was other people in history. And they've recorded it for us in the Bible.

And so this is external evidence. We've got it in our hands about Jesus' baptism that speaks about Him being the one who gives the Spirit. And then the third testimony is from the blood, which is probably a reference for, this is the easiest one, what do you think it's a reference for?

Yeah, His cross, the crucifixion, His death, by which He brings forgiveness. And that's what John talks about earlier in 1 John. His blood purifies us from all sin.

[15:14] And again, His crucifixion was witnessed by people in history and recorded for us in the Bible. It's also external evidence. And remember, I showed you this table back on our very first sermon to show you that what they recorded in history is what we have in our hot little hands here today.

Because here are other historical figures in history that we believe. And these are the copies of manuscripts we have from them. Plato 7, New Testament, 24,000.

British Museum, Chester Beattie Library, Northern Ireland. And the time between them writing and our earliest copy, I mean, there's other copies that have been disintegrated and lost.

Well, again, 1,200 years for Plato, 104 years for the New Testament. And in fact, that's conservative. Some scholars I was reading go for 90 years. The point is, we have very, very good evidence, external evidence, here in the Bible.

And so we have the Spirit who testifies to us internally. We have the eyewitness evidence in our Bibles about Jesus' baptism, which shows He's the one that gives the Spirit.

[16:28] And Jesus' crucifixion, which shows He's the one who forgives sins, both of which we need for eternal life. All of this is God's testimony to us. Jesus is real.

And if we accept human testimony in a court of law, when it's that good, why don't we accept God's? Verse 9. Verse 9, He says, We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because, well, quite frankly, it is the testimony of God, which He has given about His Son.

Of course, those who do accept it, who do listen to the internal promptings of the Spirit, who do listen to the external accounts of the Bible, believe.

But those who don't believe will ignore it and call God a liar. Verse 10. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony, but whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar because they have not believed the testimony of God which He has given about His Son.

It's like in a court of law again, if a witness testifies but the jury doesn't believe the witness, the jury is effectively calling the witness a liar, aren't they?

[17:50] It's the same here if we don't accept this testimony. But we need to because it determines our eternal destiny. You see verse 11?

And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life. And this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life.

Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. There's a... I thought it was a reasonably well-known story but people this morning told me they hadn't heard it before but it's of a wealthy man who shared his passion for art collecting.

I think Nicholas Sparks has twisted it and made it into a movie actually. But anyway, this was of a man who shared his passion for art collecting with a young son. And together they travelled the world collecting fine treasures at Van Gogh, Monet and the like.

But then the world went to war and the son went to serve his country. And sadly it wasn't long before the father received a telegram informing him that his son had been killed in action while saving another soldier.

[18:58] Some years later there was a knock at the door and the wealthy man was greeted by a soldier. The same soldier his son had saved. And this soldier gave the father a portrait that he did of his son.

Now it was by no means a work of art but it captured something of the son's appearance and personality and this sketch of his son became the father's most prized piece.

And when the man died the father died the art world was giddy with anticipation because his whole collection was about to be auctioned millions and millions of dollars worth.

But the auctioneer began the auction with this sketch of the son. And the auctioneer said who will open the bidding with \$100? Silence.

Silence. And so the auctioneer kind of lowered the price. Who will take this portrait for \$50? Still silence. Finally he asked will anyone take the son for free?

[20:08] Finally someone pulled up their hand and the auctioneer kind of banged his gavel and said sold. And then another member of the audience called out wow now we can get on with the good stuff. But the auctioneer said no I'm sorry the auction's now closed.

Yeah that's right. And when they asked why the auctioneer replied it's very simple according to the father's will whoever has the son has it all.

Verse 12 whoever has the son has life eternal has it all. New spiritual life now with every spiritual blessing a new physical life in the new creation with every physical blessing.

I mean that's it all isn't it? And we have God's testimony that it's real and true so that we can know we have it all eternal life.

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.

[21:20] You see John writes to us who believe in Jesus that we may have confidence we may know that we have eternal life. We have it all because of God's testimony.

And having this confidence knowing this reality helps us to live this life doesn't it? And knowing that we are already on the way to getting it all means we can actually sacrifice things now.

Knowing what's to come will more than make up for it that we won't actually miss out even if we sacrifice our time our money our effort to serve Christ and one another.

I was talking with someone last Sunday actually who's in their 80s and she was saying do you mind if I swap ministries and stop serving here to serve here and I'm kind of thinking right okay and this is what she said she said I don't want to stop serving my health is okay and I don't want to do nothing I want to keep serving here here is someone who has every worldly reason to kick up her heels and enjoy her retirement and yet because she knows she has life eternal she's more than happy to sacrifice her retirement to serve Christ and his church because she knows in the end she won't miss out she has it all how will being confident of eternal life shape how you live this life well I think

I want to leave time for questions so I might leave you with points three and four to look at on your own let me close for now though while we live in uncertain times we must remember that we can have confidence of some things in life as Christians like we can be confident that we can obey God which encourages us to keep trying to obey God doesn't it and we can be confident we have eternal life which encourages us to live this life in sacrificial service to Christ and one another knowing that in the end we're not going to miss out let's pray we'll do both let's pray our gracious heavenly father we thank you for this letter of one John and we thank you today particularly for the confidence we have in Christ thank you that because we have been born again and been given a new heart we can obey you and so help us we pray to obey you

[24:10] I thank you father that we can be confident because of your testimony that we have eternal life and so having this confidence help us we pray to live this life in sacrificial service to Christ and to one another knowing that in the end we really won't miss out help us in these things we pray in Jesus name amen amen