

Confidence we have Life

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[0 : 00] We're getting a new series in the letter of 1 John and because it is a new series we'll spend a bit of time on the background and purpose but you will need your Bibles a bit later when we get to the text itself so please do turn there to 1228 for later on.

Well I wonder if you've ever had your confidence shaken. I remember when I first started teaching I was my first day fresh out of university I was feeling pretty nervous I was told you never let the kids see your fear.

So I came in and I was very straight faced in the morning and then after lunch I came back in and then it wasn't too long before the kids started laughing and pointing at me.

I went what? Did I spill my lunch down the front of me? Is my hair messy? It turns out that the fly of my pants was down. And it was very embarrassing and it certainly shook my confidence and I didn't go back to that school for casual teaching again.

Our confidence of course can be shaken in lots of different ways in life can't it? It can be shaken at work if you get a bad report from your boss.

[1 : 19] It can be shaken in terms of going out because of the climbing COVID cases. It can be shaken in terms of our ability to pay bills because the price of petrol and food and interest rates keeps going up and up and up.

Of course the thing that helps us in all those areas of life is knowing that God is sovereign. We may have to adjust things but he promises to provide.

In his timing which is often different to our timing of course. But he does promise to provide. What's more Jesus is still the Christ which means the anointed one the king.

Who has promised us eternal life. And so whatever we miss out on this life will be more than made up for in the next life.

But what happens when our confidence is then shaken in those things. Where we begin to wonder if it's really true.

[2 : 21] If Jesus really is the Christ. If we really do have eternal life. I'm guessing you've all heard about the recent census results.

The media has seems to take great delight in reporting the drop of Christianity in Australia. For the first time ever it's now less than 50% who ticked the Christian box.

It's gone from 61% in 2011 and in 10 years down to 44% in 21. In fact I saw an article on the ABC and it said the latest census has a message.

God is dead and we have killed him. Quoting the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. And when we see so many people leaving the Christian faith in our country.

It can cause us to worry about our future. And it can even cause us sometimes in our darkest moments to wonder.

[3 : 21] Have we got it right? You know is Jesus really the Christ? Do we really have eternal life? And the reason I mention this is because this is similar to the background of 1 John.

You see a number of people had left the Christian community. They'd no longer ticked the Christian box on their census if you like. And now they were instead denying that Jesus is the Christ.

And more than that they're now trying to lead others astray. And so later on in chapter 2 John writes many many antichrists have come.

And this is how we know it's the last hour the last days. They went out from us. They left the Christian faith. And whoever denies Jesus is the Christ.

Well such a person is the antichrist. It kind of makes sense doesn't it? If you deny Jesus is the Christ and you're anti him being the king. But then he says as for you see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.

[4 : 25] And this is what he promised us eternal life. I'm writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. You see these antichrists who left are now trying to lead others astray.

And it seems to have shaken the confidence of this Christian community. And so John writes to give them confidence to help them really know. The word know comes up 34 times in the letter.

And while he gives us lots of reasons why he's writing. Like to complete his joy about those who lead Australia and so on. The big reason comes at the end of his letter.

He says I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God to you Christians. So that purpose you may know you have eternal life.

They may be confident they have eternal life. In fact he follows a similar pattern as he does to his gospel. In his gospel John's gospel he begins by talking about the beginning and the word.

[5 : 34] And he does the same in his letter doesn't he? Though in his gospel book he speaks about the beginning of creation. That the word gave physical life. Just like we heard in our first reading from Genesis.

Where God's word spoke and gave physical life. Whereas in his letter he's talking about the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Which they saw and heard.

And in his gospel the big purpose statement also comes towards the end. He says but these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.

And so his gospel in other words is really for non-Christians. That they may believe in Jesus and have eternal life. It's still great for us Christians which is why it's still worth us reading it.

But it's especially good for non-Christians. And if that's you here today or online. Then please I encourage you read John's gospel. And see who Jesus is.

[6 : 34] That you might have life in his name. But in his letter it's for a slightly different purpose isn't it? He's writing to those who already believe. So that you may know.

You may have confidence. That you have eternal life. It's for us Christians in particular. Although you may have noticed already that John is very wordy.

He often circles back on themes he's mentioned before. To show how they're all interconnected, interrelated. In fact as I've been preparing this.

I've been getting headaches. Because it's like going around and around again. And so it can be frustrating reading this letter. And so the solution I think is to treat it like a hot cup of tea on a cold winter's day.

What do you do with that? You wrap your hands around the mug and slowly sip it. And it warms your body. Well we're going to wrap our heads around one John by slowly sipping it.

[7 : 39] And because I think it will warm our souls. It will give us reassurance and confidence. And John does this in a number of ways.

But today by reminding us that our life in Christ is based on evidence. So point one verse one and two.

I'm going to have the verses on the screen as well for those in aged care homes. But you can follow along in your Bibles if you like. John writes, Notice a couple of things here.

First notice how it speaks about Jesus. You see the end of verse one. He calls Jesus not just the word like he does in his gospel. But the word of life.

Yeah. And this life is not so much the physical life. That the word created in John's gospel or in Genesis one our first reading. It's actually talking about eternal life.

[9 : 02] Because if you look at verse two. When this life appeared. He proclaimed to them the what? The eternal life. Which was with the father. And appeared to us.

In other words right from the start. John speaks about the eternal life. Found in Christ. Because this is the big reason. Why he's writing remember.

That they may know. They have eternal life. So how can they know? Well again today. Because. John and the apostles. Witnessed it.

Do you notice all. The eyewitness language. In verse one. That which we heard. Have seen. Looked at.

Touched. You see. They have rubbed shoulders. With Jesus. In history. They have seen. Heard. Looked. Touched. They've seen what he can do.

[9 : 59] How he can bring. Life. By giving sight to the blind. And legs to the lame. And in fact. He can even give new life. By raising the dead. Like the son of the widow.

From name. And in fact. John has even seen. Jesus. Rise from the dead. Himself. Which proves.

He really is. The Christ. I mean. Who else has risen from the dead. For which we have evidence for. But it also proves. He can raise us too. Give us.

Life. Eternal. With a new body. In a new creation. The point is though. This eternal life. In Christ. Is based. On evidence. Eyewitness.

Evidence. And this is what he proclaimed to them. As John says in verse two. The life. Appeared. We have seen it. And testify to it.

[10 : 55] And this is what we proclaim to you. The eternal life. Found in Christ. In other words. John is saying. This is not some fairy tale. We've seen it.

Says John. You can bank on it. And so they can be confident. Of eternal life. And they can know. Jesus will raise them. To new life. Because John.

Saw Jesus himself. Rise to new life. And we can know it too. For what John has proclaimed. He then wrote down. In his letters.

In his book. And so he has. Proclaimed it to us. Not by his verbal word. But by his written word. Like the gospel of John. In the Bible. And we can trust.

That it's been handed down to us. Faithfully. And reliably. That what you have. In your hands. Right. At the moment. Is exactly what John. Wrote down.

[11 : 51] In the Greek language. Originally. Why can we trust it? Well let me. Give you a couple of historical reasons. Since how we're talking about confidence today. By way of. So the first reason is.

We actually. Have a. Relatively small. Time gap. Between our. Earliest copies. Of the New Testament. And when it was first. Written. And so there hasn't been.

In historical terms. A great deal of time. For a new version of Christianity. To rise up. Which was different. To what John wrote about. So by way of comparison.

The writing of Homer. I'm sorry. Not Homer Simpson. Homer the Greek poet. Who wrote the Iliad. For example. There is 500 years. Between his writing.

And our earliest copy. That we have in a museum. Somewhere today. Okay. 500 years. The writings of Julius Caesar. Who wrote the Gaelic Wars. And so on. And 900 years.

[12 : 46] Between his writing. And our earliest. Copy. The philosopher Plato. 1200 years. Between his writings. And our earliest. Copy.

The New Testament. A maximum of 104 years. Between the New Testament. And our earliest copy. Which I realize. Still sounds like a long time. But in historical terms.

It's not. It's not enough time. For a new version. Of Christianity. To rise up. And have writing circulated. And the like. In other words.

That we can trust. The transmission. Of the New Testament. From John to us. Because we have really old copies. Relatively close. To the time. They first wrote about. In fact. Some parts. Historians think.

There's only a 40 year gap. Parts of Matthew's Gospel. For example. They think it's only a 40 year gap. And so we can trust. What we have. Is what John wrote.

[13 : 41] That's the first reason. The second reason. We can trust it. Is because we have loads. Of copies. And so we can check them. Against each other. To make sure. You know. Is that an error. Of a scribe writing it down.

Or is this what was actually. Written down. And transmitted. You know. If you've got a hundred manuscripts. And they all say one thing. And then two manuscripts. Say a different thing. Then which one's right?

The hundred. Isn't it? And this is just a typo. Of the scribe. And by way of comparison. Again. Here's a table. At Plato. We have seven copies. Of his works. With a 1,200 year gap.

Julius Caesar. Ten copies. With a 900. Homer. A 643 copies. With a 500 year gap. The New Testament. We have 24,000 copies. With a maximum.

104 year gap. Probably less. The evidence. Is such. That a former director. Of the British Museum. Sir Frederick Kenyon.

[14 : 39] Wrote. As early as 1940. And we've actually. Found the Jesus Papiari. Since then. Saying that. The interval. Between the dates. Of the original composition. When they first wrote.

And the earliest. Extant evidence. The copies we have. Become so small. For the New Testament. That. It is in fact.

Negligible. Is what he says. Historical terms. He goes on to write. The last foundation. For any doubt. That the scriptures. Have come down. To us substantially.

As they were written. Has now been. Removed. You see. You can be confident. That what you have. In your hands. Really is.

What was first. Written down. By John. And the apostles. And he says. He has proclaimed. To us. In his word. What he saw.

[15 : 33] What he heard. What he touched. And so. Our faith. In Christ. Is not blind faith. You know. How sometimes. People say. That Christians.

Have blind faith. It's not. It's rational faith. Reasonable faith. Because it's based. On. Evidence. Like the eyewitnesses.

Of John. And so. Despite the census. Despite. Our friends. Or family. Or whatever. Our society. Says. We have.

Every reason. To believe. Jesus. Is the Christ. Christ. And every reason. That we do have. Eternal life. But the purpose.

Of proclaiming. This life. In Christ. To them. Is not just. For eternal life. Later. It's also. For a life. Of fellowship. Now. Point two.

[16 : 28] Verse. Three. These next two points. Will be quicker. John says. Verse three. We proclaim. To you. What we have. Seen. And heard. So that.

You may have. Fellowship. With us. And our fellowship. Is with the father. And with his son. Jesus. Christ. You see.

We often think. We should proclaim. The good news of Jesus. So that people. Can be saved. From judgment. For life. Eternal. And that's right. But it's. More than that.

But when God. Saves us. He doesn't leave us. By ourselves. Does he? He brings us. Into his family. Where we have. Fellowship. With one another.

And with God. I mean. Have you ever. Got chatting. To a stranger. This happened. To my. Parents. Who went on a cruise. Pre-COVID. Of course. I got chatting.

[17 : 26] To some strangers. They hadn't met before. And very quickly. Realized. That they were. Christians. As well. And immediately. The tone. Of the conversation.

Became. Much. More. Familiar. The tone. Lifted. There was. Greater ease. Because we had. This bond. In Christ. Have you ever. Experienced.

That kind of thing. Because when we are. Saved. We're not just given. Life eternal. Later. We're brought. Into a fellowship. With one another. Now. To care for.

And support. God. And it's not just. With each other. But with God. Himself. Says John. That's why. He will later. Call us. The children. Of God. Because we are.

Brought into God's. Family. Where he is. Our father. As you know. You see. Life in Christ. Doesn't just mean. Eternal life. Later. It means. A life. Of great. Enjoyable.

[18 : 18] Fellowship. Now. And we. Express. This fellowship. With each other. And with God. In different ways. We express it. By gathering. Together. As family.

As we're able. We express it. By participating. Or fellowshiping. In the Lord's Supper. Together. By loving. Each other. As brothers.

And sisters. By obeying. God's. Word. And by partnering. With each other. In service. And with God. In prayer. To see.

Others. Come to Christ. And grow. In Christ. This is one reason. I love. Church. I know. It's cold. At the moment. I know.

It's hard. To come. I know. There's COVID. That sort of thing. And they're all reasonable things. But. The reasons. I love. Gathering together. As church. Is because. It gives us. A chance. To express. Our fellowship. In all those ways.

[19 : 11] Not just. In the service. But after the service. We're having morning tea. This morning. For those who are able to stay. Which we always. Not always.

We often. Talk about. In terms of. Continuing our fellowship. Over morning tea. Don't we? Because it's a chance. To express it. By asking after each other. Loving one another. In fact.

Our fellowship. Will continue. Even. Into glory. For God's goal. For us. Is to be gathered together. In fellowship. With one another. And with him. Forever. But don't worry.

If you're looking around. Going on forever. That person. Will all be perfect. So there'll be no complaints. Or arguments. But if this is God's goal. For us. If this is why. John.

Proclaimed Christ. To us. For fellowship. Then it kind of matters. Doesn't it? It matters. How often. We meet together. Again.

[20 : 08] COVID. Health. Holidays. And all that sort of stuff. Permitting. And it kind of matters. How we treat. One another. Doesn't it? If we're in fellowship. With each other. And it kind of matters.

How we treat. God. Too. John. Will have much more. To talk about. In terms of how we treat. Others. And God. Later. Because verse 3. We proclaim to you.

What we have seen. And heard. So that. You may also. On top of eternal life. Have fellowship. With us. And with the father. And his son. But like their confidence.

Of eternal life. Their fellowship. Was also under threat. For if these. Antichrist. Lead them away. From Christ. Then they'll miss out.

On both. Won't they? And so. John writes. Not only to give them. Confidence. Of eternal life. But so that. They'll remain. In Christ. And the fellowship. He gives.

[21 : 04] For this is what. Brings. John. Joy. Now final point. Point 3. Verse. 4. He writes. Well he says. We write this. To make.

Our joy. Complete. And complete. Because he's already had the joy. Of proclaiming Christ. To them in the first place. But he wants to. Now complete. That joy.

By seeing them. Remain. In Christ. In the second place. John. We'll also talk about. Remaining in Christ. More in the letter too. But he speaks here.

In terms of joy. Because. Seeing them. Remain in Christ. Is what makes. His day. It's what lifts. His heart. It's what matters. Most. To him.

For it will mean. Ongoing. Fellowship. With them. And eternal life. For them. In fact. He says. In his third letter. He says. I have no.

[21 : 59] Greater joy. On the screen there. I have no. Greater joy. Than to hear. That my children. Are walking. In the truth. What is it. That brings you. Joy.

You know. Is it. A nice. Hot cup of tea. On a cold. Winter's day. Is it. Seeing. Your grandkids. Playing nicely. Together. Or doing well. At school. Or university.

Is it. Hearing a good. Report. From your doctor. Or. That. COVID. Has. Vanished. If only. They're all good things.

That bring us joy. But can we say. With John. That we have no. Greater joy. Than to see. Others. Our fellow brothers. And sisters. Walking in the truth.

Of the gospel. People. Because if it is. Then we'll persevere. In praying. For our kids. And grandkids. And each other. That they will continue.

[22 : 56] In Christ. Or come back to Christ. We'll persevere. In encouraging. One another. Even thinking creatively. About how we can encourage. The kids and grandkids.

Who never want to listen. To family. Thinking creatively. How we can encourage them. Back to Christ. And walking in the truth. I still remember. This was years ago.

When my kids. Were much younger. And one of them. Telling me. They were nervous. Before. A spelling test. They were grade two. I think it was. Nervous about a spelling test.

And so. They prayed. Before the test. That God would help them. To remember. All the spelling words. And I think that day. They got nine out of ten. Instead of the four out of ten. They normally get. But I tell you what.

What gave me more joy. Was hearing. That they prayed. They were walking in the truth. This is what brings us joy. Seeing one another. Walk in the truth.

[23 : 52] Of the gospel. It does for John. It's what matters most. For it brings fellowship. Now. And eternal life. Later. But the big application for us this morning.

Comes from the big point. That our eternal life in Christ. Is based on eyewitness. Evidence. Like John. Who proclaim. What he saw.

Heard. Touched. And so we can be. Confident of it. So much so. We can even. Sacrifice things. In this life. For Christ. Because we are certain.

We have eternal life. That will more than make up for it. Christianity. May be declining. Here in Australia. We may. Increasingly.

Feel. Like we're on. The outer. Although the ABC article. Did say. It's booming. In Africa. Latin America. And even parts of China. And by 2060.

[24 : 49] Christianity. Will still be. The largest religion. In the world. But even. If not. Even if. We feel. Here in Melbourne.

Amongst our family. And friends. And society. On the outer. The evidence. This means. We can still. Be confident. That Jesus.

Really. Is the Christ. And that we really. Do have. Eternal life. Let's pray. Our gracious.

Father. We do. Thank you. For this letter. In your word. Which gives us. Confidence. That Jesus. Really. Is the Christ. And that we really. Do have. Eternal life.

It gives us. Confidence. In many ways. And today. By reminding us. That the Christian. Faith. Is built. On evidence. Strong.

[25 : 43] Historical. Evidence. Like the eyewitness. Testimony. Of John. And his apostles. Help us. To remember this. We pray. Particularly. When we're feeling. On the outer.

That we might continue. To have confidence. In Christ. We ask it. In his name. Amen.