

1 John 5:6-5:21

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[0 : 00] Let's pray before we have a seat. Father, we thank you for this evening. We thank you for your words. I pray that you would shine your light into our hearts, into our minds, through your Holy Spirit.

In your name we pray. Amen. Please have a seat. Hello, folks. My name is Ryan Spear. It's been my privilege this year to serve as a curate at St. John's. That's kind of like a pastoral apprentice as I finish up my studies at Regent College.

And I have the great privilege of working with the youth, which is why I'm up here tonight. And I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with youth and young adults in the years to come. Now, we're in a series through 1st through 3rd John here at St. John's.

And our passage today brings us to the close of his first letter. Now, I want to start with a question. A question that this passage addresses.

When have you found your confidence shaken? Maybe you've wondered, how do I really know I have eternal life?

[1 : 15] How can I really trust in what I believe? And where do I get the ability to love other Christians? Now, these are the same questions that John's readers were asking.

And John wrote them this letter to reassure them. To remind them what they know about Jesus. What they have in Jesus. And how to live for Jesus.

Now, you see, it isn't that they didn't believe at all. It's not that they didn't know all about Jesus. It's that they didn't know they know.

Okay, so what do I mean by they didn't know they know? So this whole letter is written to believers. They believed the testimony about Jesus. That is, John 3.16 says, That God so loved the world that he gave his only son, Jesus.

To die on the cross for their sins. They believed this and hoped and trusted in eternal life. But what happened was, people who were supposedly their brothers and sisters in Christ had split off.

[2 : 27] And they split over two things. Teachings about Jesus. Teachings about sin. Now, these splitters, what they were doing is they were eroding confidence among the believers about who Jesus was, his identity, and what he did, what he accomplished for them.

And they were chipping away at the seriousness of sin and what living a forgiven life looks like. It's what you might call a crisis of confidence.

And now John is writing this whole letter to boost their confidence. So that they would once again know they know Jesus.

Know they have eternal life. And know how to confidently love their brothers and sisters in Christ. So let's get right into our passage.

Thankfully, John very nicely tells us exactly why he wrote this whole letter. Look in chapter 5, verse 13. He tells us, 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.

[3 : 43] Again, in one word, it's about confidence. The confidence believers in Jesus have. And our passage unpacks how we can live confidently when we know we have eternal life.

We can live confidently in three ways. First of all, it's in a who. Confidently trusting in Jesus.

Secondly, it's a how.

Confidently praying for our friends. And third, it's a why. Confidently knowing the truth. Who, how, and why.

All giving us confidence. Confidently trusting in Jesus. So let's turn to our first confidence. Who we trust in. So first of all, we can confidently trust in Jesus because of the testimony about Jesus.

So look with me. Verse 6 starts with, This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. So what's going on here?

[4 : 47] You see the word testimony or testify or testify shows up eight more times in the first few verses. What's happening? Why is he talking about this? It helps to know a little bit more about the lies that were being spread that were eroding their confidence.

The big idea is this. The people who had split away, they were throwing shade on who Jesus was and what Jesus did. They were calling into question the identity of Jesus as the true Son of God. They're saying things like, There's no way he could have been fully God and fully human. Just not possible. Doesn't fit with the latest trends. Doesn't fit with the latest research.

And they were calling into question what he did on the cross. What he did in his baptism. And what he did by giving the Spirit. And they were calling all of this into question in a way that was shaking their confidence.

See, these people would split away these liars. They had their own testimony. Human testimony. Human opinion. But John says, Don't trust the testimony of these liars.

[5 : 56] The testimony of God is greater. Why? So the water and the blood and the Spirit mentioned here, it refers to the identity and the work of Jesus.

In his baptism. In his death. And in the giving of his Spirit. And John says they all agree. All three agree. All of these things point to who Jesus is.

He is the Son of God. And Jesus and Jesus alone is the eternal life. What he's saying here is that you can have confidence. You can know you know.

Because your faith isn't built on opinion about Jesus. It's built on the person of Jesus. The same Jesus that was baptized and then a dove descended and his father's voice declared, This is my Son.

Is the same Jesus whose blood was shed for you on the cross. Is the same Jesus that is with you and in you through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 00] So when you receive this testimony, this sure witness of what is available in Jesus through baptism, through his work on the cross, and through the gift of the Spirit, you have Jesus himself.

You have a person. Not a human opinion. It's a knowing that's based on what he's done. And the promises he makes.

Now when I was a child, it was explained to me that to become a Christian, I needed to invite Jesus into my heart. Anyone else had that explained to you that way? Invite Jesus into your heart?

Now I didn't question this at all. Like five-year-old Ryan was like, Yep. Makes sense. In my heart. Got it. I didn't ask any questions about like, Where exactly in the heart? Are we talking about like the ventricles?

Or what's going on? I didn't ask any of that. Just seemed to make sense. But what I didn't know as a child was that not only would Jesus be in my heart, I would be in Jesus' heart too.

[8 : 09] This is what John is emphasizing here. He says the testimony is in us. And this life is in his Son.

And when you have the Son, when you have Jesus, he has you. And when he has you, you have eternal life.

And this is an eternal life that begins now. Life. Abundant life. And this is our first point. We know, we know, we have eternal life because of who we know?

Jesus. Our confidence is not based in human opinions about Jesus, but in the person of Jesus, confirmed in his baptism, death, and spirit in our lives.

That's our first confidence, who we receive our confidence from. So secondly, what do we do in light of this confidence? Well, John tells us, beginning in verse 14, we exercise this confidence in our eternal life by praying for our friends.

[9 : 20] So let's look at verses 14 through 19 next. So verses 14 through 19 follow right after the center of our passage, that you may know you have eternal life.

And answers the question, so how do we live when we know we have eternal life? And when we know we know we have eternal life in Jesus, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, it can be hard to know how to react when we see someone we love, a fellow Christian, sinning. I think sometimes we might over-correct in one of two directions. Either perhaps like an over-zealous confrontation, like, hey, just saw you sinning, you need to cut that out.

Or sometimes we over-correct in saying, not my place. You know, they need to live their life, and it would be awkward, wouldn't it? It's not very nice to talk to people about their sins.

But what John's talking about here in this kind of prayer is not some kind of, like, magical energy we send to God. It's not a getting whatever you want, period. Instead, John tells us we pray according to the will of God, which means in the direction of the heart of God.

[10 : 34] And the more our hearts become like His heart, the more we become participants in the life we seek for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And this business about, like, the sins leading to death and not leading to death, he's not, like, telling you, like, to figure out the ones that do lead to death and definitely don't do those, but the ones that do lead to death, like, ah, kind of cut it out if you can, but don't worry about it too much. What he's talking about here goes back to what the liars were saying. The sins leading to death were most likely the sins of those liars we talked about earlier. The lies they were spreading about Jesus and about sin.

So John wasn't saying, like, don't have compassion on them. What do he mean by saying, don't pray for this? Basically, remember, he says, pray that they would have life to those that are under the sins that don't lead to death.

So I think what he's meaning, what the subtext is here, is we pray instead for those sins that lead to death those who reject the truth and reality of who Jesus is, we pray for repentance.

[11 : 39] We pray that they would see the truth of who Jesus is and then through that repentance find life. But for our friends, those who have given their lives to Jesus, wholeheartedly commit themselves and are seeking actively every day to abide in him, John tells us, pray for them to have life.

What does this mean? Well, first of all, it means we pray for them. We don't gossip about them. Right? We don't turn to someone next to us and say, did you see what so-and-so was doing the other day?

That's pretty crazy. No, we don't do that. We don't ignore it either. We don't say, it's not my place, not my business. John tells us, we ask God that they would have life.

But don't they already have life? I think what he means here is that they would live knowing they know they have eternal life in the face of the sin that challenges them. They would choose the life that's already given to them.

They would choose to live and abide in the abundant life Jesus offers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Germany during World War II. He was executed by the Nazis shortly before the war ended.

[12 : 52] He wrote this beautiful book called Living Life Together. I think it's probably why the St. John's newsletter is named Life Together, if you've ever noticed that. But he had this to say about how we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

He said, spiritual love will speak to Christ about a brother more than to a brother about Christ. Let me say that again.

spiritual love will speak to Christ about a brother more than to a brother about Christ. He continues, spiritual love knows that the most direct way to others is always through prayer to Christ and the love of others is wholly dependent upon the truth in Christ.

Christ. So in other words, when we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, when we see them struggling, we exercise the same heart towards them as God has towards us, praying that they would embrace the eternal life that is already theirs.

and in verses 18 and 19 he gives his readers two more we knows. He says, we can pray confidently for our Christian friends because we know we are from God and God will protect us and rescue us from the destructive habits of sin.

[14 : 20] This is our priority as we live confidently in the knowledge of our eternal life. we prioritize praying for fellow Christians. Now to recap as we prepare to close, we're going to wrap up in just a few more moments.

So we talked about this confidence about who gives us confidence, Jesus. We talked about how we live confidently by praying for our friends and now we'll close by considering why we can live in confidence, why we can know we know we have eternal life.

Look at the final two verses, verses 20 and 21. John says, And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding.

Since verse 13, John used the word know seven times. But here he says understanding, not knowledge. Why? So look at this closely.

He says, The Son of God 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.

[15 : 36] What this means is this. This isn't just about information about who Jesus is, but it's the ability itself to know Him. It's like a sense we didn't know we had before.

It's the difference between blindness and sight, between deafness and hearing. Jesus gives us the ability to know Him. Pure gift.

This is why we can know what we know. Why we can know we know we have eternal life. It's not something we figure out or arrive at by clever deduction. It's a gift given to us by Jesus Himself because it's the gift of Jesus Himself.

This is why He ends His whole letter with this seemingly enigmatic phrase, keep yourself from idols. Which is where we end this evening.

You see, when we see Jesus for who He is, the true God and eternal life, we guard our hearts against any idol, any substitute to Jesus or counterfeit Jesus.

[16 : 43] We guard against any lie that there is a better life out there besides Jesus. So when you find your confidence shaken, when you're not sure you know you know you have eternal life, friends, your confidence is in who you know, not what you know.

You then confidently pray for your friends that they would have life when they stumble and sin. And you confidently abide in Jesus. remembering this, we know Him who is true.

We are in Him who is true. The true God and eternal life. I speak these things to you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen.