

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Confident in God's Presence

1 John 3:21-24

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It's a blessing to be able to be here and before you to this morning to open God's word for you, knowing the variety of difficult life situations that many of you are facing. I think this passage of scripture today is going to be just a supernatural encouragement to you and a blessing to your heart and certainly the intention of the apostle when he wrote it.

We are going to 1 John, chapter 3 and you can turn there and turn with the sense of anticipation of expectation for the Lord to bless you in this time because He uses His word to bless His people.

And so as you are turning there, last time we introduced the topic of assurance of salvation. This is one of the reasons why John wrote this letter. He says that:

I have written so that you would know that you have eternal life.

Well, this knowledge that he talks about, this assurance that God promises in His word is not simply a head knowledge that we check off the box and move on to something else. This is designed to move our hearts in a spiritual direction that is extremely powerful and has a profound impact on the way that you view yourself in light of a holy God as you consider yourself in God's presence.

Last time we saw that one of the compelling grounds of the assurance of salvation is the evidence that there is true love coming out of your life for other Christians—we explained that in depth. We looked at verses 18-20, look at those for just a moment just by way of quick review and introduction. 1 John 3:18-20:

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth because we will know by this that we are of the truth and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us. For God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

And so now, having established that love for the brethren is a mark of true salvation, an indispensable mark, if you don't love Christians you are not a Christian yourself, having established that point, we are now going to move on in the text in verses 21-24. And understand that what John is doing in this passage that we are about to look at is he is explaining the spiritual result that should flow from knowing that you are a true Christian. If you know that you are a

true Christian, if you have an assurance of salvation, that has a profound implication for your vertical relationship with the living God. Let's read the four verses, beginning in verse 21 and then we will try to unpack them in the time we have here this morning. He says in verse 21:

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. This is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

This passage describes a vital transition in your spiritual growth, not only in terms of dealing with things on a day to day, week to week basis, but in your overall spiritual life in viewing your sanctification as a whole, there is a transition that should take place where you move from doubts and uncertainties and all of that to a place where you have spiritual confidence before God.

Let's say that you are a true Christian who has doubts of your salvation as John is describing there in verses 19-20. He is describing someone who has a condemning heart "And whatever our heart condemns us" he says in verse 20. The point of this passage is to draw you out of that, to give you understanding so that you can move from those debilitating and crippling doubts about the reality of your salvation in to a place where you can have settled confidence before God—that's the point here. Your heart has condemned you for whatever reason, but following John's instruction through these first three chapters of this letter, you have examined your life, you have looked at what God says in His word and you have looked at your life and you can truly say that "Yes, I believe in Christ, I believe that He died on the cross and rose again for my salvation, I believe that. I have turned from sin, I have put my faith in Him to the best of my ability and as I examine my life, I see love for the brethren coming out, not perfectly and all, I know I have failed, but I love Christians, I love the people of God."

And you go beyond that and looking at the end of verse 20 where it says "For God is greater than our heart and knows all things." Basically you are saying that "I'm not trusting in these aspects of my life, but ultimately I'm trusting God for His final gracious, merciful verdict on my life because God is greater than my heart, I trust Him who knows all things, to recognize the reality of the situation and to have mercy on me in the end. And even though you, looking at my life might be able to find easy to point out the imperfections and the remaining sin in my life, I know I appeal to God, God knows that I have truly trusted Him, God knows that my salvation is real and I rest in Him." And your heart settles in the final knowledge and the omniscience of God. You have gone through that process and so having gone through that process, over time, this isn't a five-minute kind of self-test as though you are checking the oil in your car, these are matters of profound searching examination. But you come to the point where you say "My salvation is real. Now, what does that mean?"

In the simplest and most basic term, but in the most eternally significant terms, it means that your sins are forgiven, it means that God is not going to hold your sins against you, that He does not hold them against you and He will not hold them against you because His wrath on your sin was satisfied in Jesus Christ. Look at chapter 1:7 for example. I keep going back to these key

verses. Your salvation is real, what does that mean, look at the end of verse 7, it means that “The blood of Jesus, His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It means that the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. The stain of sin no longer attaches to your soul, God has erased that and made you clean as it were in His eyes.

In verse 9 He says:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As a matter of your status before God, there is no sin on your account because that sin was all transferred to the account of Jesus where God punished it and now the righteousness of Christ has been applied to your account and you stand with your sins fully forgiven with the demands of God’s law fully satisfied on your behalf and your salvation is real. God no longer deals with you as the sinner that you once were.

Now, what are the implications of those magnificent truths for your spiritual life? This is of eternal significance. What is the implication of that from your spiritual life now?

What that means is that your conscience which was previously accusing you and condemning you because of your continued sins that you see cropping up in your life as a believer, your conscience was accusing you of that. The significance of this issue of forgiveness is that your conscience is now silenced on that, those accusations are silenced. Your conscience should be, can be, will be at peace because the blood of Jesus Christ satisfies the demands of your conscience. Your conscience is now clear, it is not because you have never sinned, it is because your sin has been paid for by a wonderful and merciful savior and it starts to increasingly dawn on you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus—no condemnation. If in the court of God you have been declared righteous and your sins are forgiven, then the lesser court of your conscience cannot bring accusations that God has set aside.

God says the demands are fulfilled. God views you as righteous in Christ, the righteousness of Christ clothes you. Your conscience cannot appeal beyond that to still condemn you. Your conscience is silenced in the face of the powerful, almighty work of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people. Look at chapter 3:21, he says: “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us...” Now that we worked through the implications of salvation, we see that our salvation is real, we understand that if our salvation is real our sin is forgiven, there is no condemnation now in Christ Jesus, then, verse 21: “...we have confidence with God.” Another words, what you see happening in these short two or three verses of scripture is we have gone from a condemning conscience to a heart that has confidence before God—confidence, that’s the subject of our message this morning.

We are going to examine the Christian’s confidence before God as we see it in this passage. We are going to structure this around three points that should encourage and bless your heart. First point here this morning as we dive in to the text.

1. Confidence in His Presence

First of all, as a Christian, you should have confidence in His presence. As you think about yourself in the presence and the light of the reality of an omniscient, all knowing, holy and majestic God, the reality of salvation is such that you should have confidence in His presence and not be afraid—not be afraid of terror, not be afraid of judgment still coming upon you. When you understand that Christ has satisfied the demands of God’s justice fully on the cross, then you realize that there is no justice, there is no judgment left to be poured out upon you because God poured all of His wrath out on Christ on the cross. His wrath has been satisfied—that’s the sense of the word “propitiation” that you see in this letter. His wrath has been satisfied, it has been turned away and therefore, if you belong to Christ, you should move from doubt to confidence in the presence of this holy God. Look at verse 21 again:

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God...

The operative word “confidence”, it means boldness. In secular Greek they use this very word to speak of a citizen’s right to freedom of speech, the right to speak publicly, to be able to speak boldly, to be able to speak fearlessly, especially in the presence of one of higher rank or higher authority—that’s how that word was used in secular Greek. John and the rest of the Bible take that word and apply it to the Christians’ attitude toward this holy and majestic God. He is saying that as a believer, your position is one of bold confidence before a holy God, a fearless confidence before a holy God.

And when he is describing it here he is describing a present confidence. Look at what he says, he says:

...we have confidence before God and whatever we ask we receive from Him (there in verse 22)

This is a confidence that yields in to a trusting relationship with our heavenly Father, present confidence, right now, this is what belongs to us, this is our birthright.

And if you move over to chapter 5 as he talks about the assurance of eternal life in that verse that we have looked at so much, chapter 5:13, look at what follows, watch how this flows, he says:

I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Present possession of eternal life, and what does that yield in to, verse 14 “This is the confidence...” same word, this is the boldness, this is the assurance, this is the fearless confidence we have before Him:

This is the confidence that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us...

Present confidence, right now. I’ll probably repeat this a time or two in the message, but understand my Christian friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, understand this that if you

have lived your Christian life with the sense of doubt and a sense of troubling lack of assurance and all of that, understand that that is not the scriptural pattern for the way believers are supposed to live. You are supposed to be a Christian who is confident that your salvation is real, that you have a fearless boldness before God because the work of Christ is so perfect on your behalf and doubt is not in those niggling, struggling doubts are not the pattern of Christian life as the Bible presents it to us. If that's you, that's the way that you have been experiencing your Christian life, understand that that's not the way it is supposed to be.

There is another realm of spiritual growth that God intends you to move in to where those doubts are laid aside permanently. You don't go up and down depending on your latest spiritual performance. You don't rise in greater confidence when you had your quiet time and then wonder if your salvation is real if you missed it. I mean look, that's where some people live. No, there is a greater abiding confidence, that is supposed to be the mark of Christian living. This is the present that he is describing and that should be the mark of a growing Christian. If you lack that kind of confidence in your Christian life, then understand that here is the room for you to grow spiritually and it is something that you should run after and say "Oh, would I love to have that." Well, God intends for you to have that, that is the point of these passages, this is why John wrote so that you would know that you have eternal life and move beyond doubt to boldness and confidence in His presence.

What is interesting about this theme of confidence in John's letter is that it is not just the present confidence that he is describing. He goes further and says this is the confidence that belongs to us in the future as we contemplate the Day of Judgment when God brings to account the deeds of men. Look at chapter 2:28, I love this, he says:

Now little children, abide in Him so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away in shame at His coming.

When Christ returns, Christians are going to be confident in that day. As great and terrible as the day of Christ's return will be, it is not a threat to true believers because we belong to Him. We are the children of God, we are the ones that He purchased at the price of His own blood, He owns us, we belong to Him. So when He returns, where He is at, that's where we are going to belong. There is not going to be a sense of uncertainty and shame for those who know Christ, who had been walking in the Spirit. When He arrives, this is just going to be the natural next progression and one that Christians are going to be perfectly comfortable with and feel bold and courageous at His coming not shrinking away.

These are amazing words, look at chapter 4:17 where the same theme is repeated. Get this, where ever Christ is, you belong there, that's really what this is saying. Christ is in heaven, you die, you go and you belong there, it's going to be home to you. Christ returns to earth, you are going to belong there, He is going to own you, He is not going to turn you away. We are walking by faith not by sight now, we are in the presence of His Spirit and in invisible sense we belong there because that's why He bought us. He came to save His people from their sins, to purchase His people with His own blood, we belong to Him, this was His eternal purpose. And so of course we have confidence, of course we have boldness, not in our performance, but in the

purposes and the perfect salvation of Christ yields over to great confidence and boldness when we know that this salvation is ours.

Christ's work on our behalf was, and is perfect, without flaw, nothing to add to it. Christ's work on our behalf, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession before the Father on our behalf settles our status with God for ever. There is no going back in to a state of condemnation because once we are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation for those who belong to Him.

The scripture talks about this confidence elsewhere. I want you to see that this is not an isolated theme. Ephesians 3:12 says:

In Christ we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

Bold, confident access to God, that's what it means to be a Christian, that is one of the primary aspects of being a Christian that we have bold confident access to Him. Turn back a few pages to the book of Hebrews, I want you to see this in a couple of places in the book of Hebrews, beginning in chapter 4. And as we are looking at these next couple of passages, I just want you to see how this confidence is based on the work of Christ on our behalf. This is not a confidence that is self-generated, it is not a confidence based on my imperfect obedience to God, my imperfect love for Christ, my imperfect love for His people. No, it is because Christ has done something on my behalf that I have this confidence. Hebrews 4:14-16, he says:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Based on this work of Christ who has passed through the heavens, based on the work of this great high priest who has suffered for our sins, based on Him—verse 16:

Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

This passage assumes that you have need, it assumes that you are dependent, it assumes your weakness, it assumes the sin that remains in you still needs grace to cover it and to be cleansed from. And in light of that dependent position, it still says let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, let us come boldly to the throne of God. Conscious of the reality of the work of Christ on our behalf, trusting in Him alone, based on that, we come confidently to God because that is what He has appointed us to do. He has called us to His throne, He has called us to come boldly and confidently to Him—this is amazing. This is another instance where my tongue does not have the words to describe the grandeur of what we are discussing.

God calls His people to come to Him with confidence because He is satisfied with the work of His Son and His Son stands in heaven now as it were, representing us with His completed work

before the Father, there is no hindrance, no barrier to your fellowship with Him, you come and declare yourself confidently and boldly based on that.

Turn over to Hebrews 10:12, speaking of Jesus he says:

He has offered one sacrifice for sins for all time and He sat down at the right hand of God.

His work is finished, He did it one time, that's all it took, the Catholic mass is a fabrication that is a blasphemy against God. Based on that perfect sacrifice of Christ, look at verse 17 where it says:

Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

Look, if you have trusted Christ for your salvation, God says I'm not going to call your sins to account any longer, I'm not going to remember them, I'm not going to bring them up and condemn you again, I've already dealt with the punishment of that in Christ. Verse 18:

Now, where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

We rest in the finished work of Christ. We receive Him for our salvation and we rest in Him. We realize that He has done it all on our behalf and therefore, we are confident that our status with God is secure, not because of us, but because of Christ and therefore we are secure and that our sin will no longer be called to account and be something upon which God casts us in to hell. No, not for the Christian, sin has been put away from the Christian.

What is the implication of that, you say? Verse 19, it is the same thing that John is emphasizing in 1 John. Verse 19, therefore brethren, based on this finished work of Christ, based on God's promise to remember our sins no more, based on the fact that there is no need for an offering for sin any longer, therefore coming from that, flowing from that, as a consequence of that:

Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Conscience silenced in the recognition of the perfect sacrifice of Christ which satisfied the demands of God's law on our behalf, now applied to our account. You stand in a perfectly righteous position before a holy God and that gives you confidence, what flows from that is confidence, realizing that there are no barriers left. There is no separation, you have been brought in to union with Christ. God accepts us based on the merit of Christ and that silences doubt.

If you know that you are a Christian and yet you still find yourself dealing with doubt, those two things don't go together. Being a Christian means that your doubts should be silenced when you

have gone through the examination that we have been talking about over the past few weeks. God saves us in order to bring us in to a confident relationship with Him—that is magnificent, that is awesome, that is tremendous, that changes the way that you view life and eternity. Confidence, boldness, fearless speaking before a holy God, that gives you a sense of how great the work of Christ was on our behalf. You can measure the greatness of His work by the result that it produced and somehow now sinners are able to go in to the presence of the holy God boldly and confidently.

Now, if you are confident in His presence, you are confident in the reality of your forgiven status before Him, your acceptant status before Him, then something else is going to be true that John leads us in this passage.

2. Confidence in Prayer

It is not just confidence in His presence but it is confidence in prayer. Having this settled confidence in our heart, it is now to work its way out in the way that we pray to God. Turn back to 1 John 3:22:

And whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandment and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

Whatever we ask, we receive from Him. We go to God confidently, praying and expecting Him to answer our prayers. Now that we are reconciled to God in this confident relationship, it is only natural, it is only expected, it is the right and natural consequence for a child to come to his Father. And so we pray to Him and depend on Him for the things that concern us. What this passage does is it shows His eagerness to answer, it shows His eagerness to bless us. We are confident because of Father blesses His children, we are confident because God blesses Christians in their relationship with Him.

And for those of you that have been questioning God over these past few days and weeks because of circumstances of life have turned against you, haven't gone the way that you wanted or expected, don't let your circumstances turn you in to questioning the reality that John speaks about here. Even though the cloud of circumstances hangs over your life, look beyond the cloud of circumstances to see the Son of God's continued favor upon His children, it is the only way that it could possibly be if you are truly reconciled to Him, He saves us to bless us, the Father blesses His children.

Turn back to the book of Matthew, chapter 7. There should be no question in your mind whatsoever about God's intentions to bless you if you are a Christian. It should be settled in your mind that God is favorably disposed to those who belong to Him, this is what Jesus was speaking about in Matthew, chapter 7, we looked at this passage three years ago maybe, I don't know. Matthew 7:7, Jesus says:

Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Look at the way that He appeals to the nature of a father's relationship to his son to illustrate this point for the believer in his relationship with the God of the universe. He says in verse 9:

What man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf will give him a stone, or he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

What kind of perversion is that? What kind of father in his right mind, when his son comes to him with a need, doesn't meet that need gladly and eagerly and out of the abundance of resources that he has to provide for that need? Jesus says take that human illustration and with our sinful, imperfect father's dealing with sinful, imperfect son, if that principle can be true in that kind of horizontal relationship, think about what must be like in a vertical relationship with the holy God where you have perfectly reconciled to Him. Look at verse 11:

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him.

His intentions are good, what more can I say? What more can scripture say to impress that upon your mind? What more can you look at when you look at the cross of Calvary, when you see Christ suffering on the cross for your sins so that you could be forgiven and brought in to an eternal relationship with the holy God, that He would bless you throughout all of the halls of eternity. How could you look at that and think anything other than God is good. Fellow Christian, you have got to pour the concrete pillar of that in to your mind and never move off that anchor of faith—God is good, all the time and without exception.

Now, little word about this answered prayer. First of all, it assumes that you are asking, not to ask in order to receive, if you are not praying, you are not asking. Don't be disappointed that what you feel you need is not somehow being supplied. God ordains prayer and we humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge our dependence before Him. We acknowledge in confidence; we are confident when we go. "Lord, I am dependent, I cannot provide for myself, I need you." But that is perfectly consistent with being bold and confident in His presence, "I need you, but I am confident that you will provide, I am confident in your good intentions toward me and so confident in that, I am here all the more."

And John tells us here also in verse 22, look back to verse 22 again, that your sense of answers, your sense of receiving things from God is also tied to a holy condition of life. Whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. These promises of answers to prayer presume you are asking, they presume you are living in obedience to God. Don't expect to be harboring an unconfessed sin and expect God to be blessing and answering your prayers. What kind of travesty is that? What kind of joke is that? No. If you are truly reconciled to God and you want to be conformed to His will, you want to obey, you want to do what is pleasing in His sight because that obedience shows that we are God's children and God blesses that obedience with answered prayer when you pray according to His will. Look again in chapter 5:14, the magnitude of this promise, whatever we ask we receive from Him comes in a context, not to be perverted by foolish and immature minds, but

those who understand the realities and the prerogatives and the responsibilities of being a believer. Verse 14:

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Matthew 6:11:

Father, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And so your whole spirit of prayer is not one of selfish attainment and selfish granting of what you want, but your concept of prayer is oriented and driven by your desire to seek the will of your Father done.

There is nothing in this that would support a name it and claim it kind of philosophy and approach. The perversion to talk about prayer as though it is the means for us to get our earthly wants and if you don't get your earthly wants somehow you are not right with God, that is foolishness. This is talking about someone who is assured of his salvation, who has humbled his heart before Christ and received Him and is humbly, submissively has shown by his obedience to God's will, humbly, submissively seeking God's will in the outworking of the circumstances of his life. It is in that context that John says whatever we ask we receive. In that kind of asking, in that kind of context, in that kind of spirit, is to be done with confidence, to be done boldly. "Father, I boldly pray for your will to be done in my life, I boldly pray that you would accomplish your purposes in my life. I am in your presence, asking for your will without any hesitation whatsoever than you are favorably disposed to me because I am assured of my salvation, I know that that means that my sin is forgiven, I know that that means eternal purposes are at work in my life and so I am confident."

Contrast that with the doubt that James condemns in James chapter 1. This confidence, also James does not use this precise word, you see the theme here—confidence contrasted with doubt. James 1:5:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all generously without reproach and it will be given to him.

There is the theme of God's goodness, God gives generously and as we ask, He gives in response to our asking. But he says in verse 6:

But he must ask in faith without any doubting. For the one who doubts is like the serf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.

If you are plagued with doubt before asking God for things, before you start praying for God about your circumstances, come back and resolve the doubts in the means that John has given to us, looking to Christ, remembering the fullness of His sacrifice on your behalf, understanding the marks of a true Christian, saying "Ah, yes, I am reconciled to God, I belong to Him, I see evidence of His Spirit working in my life, especially over time, therefore, I come to Him with

confidence and without any doubting.” Don’t dig yourself deeper in to a hole praying when you are doubting. Step out of prayer, work through your doubts and then come back. Your doubts say that you are questioning Him, you shouldn’t expect God to honor the doubting prayers. Go back and re-establish the confidence that belongs to you if you are in Christ and then come and say “Father, I come to you as a son and I come with confidence and I pray to you according to that.” Hebrews 11:6 says:

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

When you come to prayer, foremost in your thinking should be “This is wonderful because I’m coming to prayer, I’m coming, seeking God, and I know that He is going to reward me.” Jesus said three times in Matthew 6:

...your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

His disposition is such as to bless you. And so, you put His character forefront in your thinking as you come and you trust and you pray in that manner. You come with confidence, you come with boldness because you believe what God says in His word.

Look at verse 22, he says you do the things that are pleasing in His sight. How do we please God and experience this life of answered prayer? John wraps it up in one command that has two aspects to it. Look at verse 23:

This is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as He commanded us.

We believe in the name, we believe in the name of Jesus Christ. What does that mean? We don’t use the word “name” in the same way that the biblical culture did. To believe the name means that you commit yourself to all that His name means, all that His name represents. He is the one mediator between God and man. He is the divine Son who came from heaven to seek and to save the lost. 1 John 4:14:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

You believe that, you commit yourself to that. Matthew 1:21:

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

I believe in the name of Jesus that way, I believe that. The historical man, Jesus of Nazareth was the divine Son, sent by God to be the only savior of man. And when I believed in Him, He saved me from my sins and He continues to work in my life. He is fully God, fully man, He is the one interceding for sinners in heaven. You commit yourself to that, you repose all of your confidence in that, you believe the name, the name of the one who will save His people from their sins. That’s the commandment, that’s what God commands, that we would believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

And so I would do well to pause here and simply ask you, do you believe that about Jesus? Do you believe that He is the divine savior, full deity, sacrificed on the cross for the forgiveness of sinners and that when you put your faith in Him, He saved you forever—do you believe that? That's God's commandment, God commands us to believe that and trust ourselves to it without reservation, without hesitation. And when you believe that, (this is amazing) when you believe that, having been prompted and brought to that even by the prior work of the Holy Spirit, that pleases God. God is pleased with your trust in Jesus and it testifies to the reality of your salvation.

Notice that the commandment is of two parts, we believe in the name of His Son and we love one another. This is tying back in to the theme that we have seen earlier in chapter 3. This belief in Christ and loving His people go together, you can't split the two, you can't separate one from the other. If you believe in Christ, you will love His people and you cannot love His people without believing in Him. Those two things go inextricably together and those life commitments to Christ and the brethren are what give you confidence in prayer. You see the work of Christ on your behalf, you see it manifested in your own life in loving the brethren and you say "Look, this is real, I have been transformed in to somebody that I was not beforehand. God has changed my life and this is real and these things show forth the unseen spiritual reality that the Bible describes and therefore, this must belong to me and therefore I can go to God confidently in prayer." There is a whole lot of theology that goes in to being confident before God, isn't there?

Remember last week I said you can nod. Do you agree with that if you are tracking with me, if you are still awake? And just incidentally, it points out how sorrowful it is that churches abandon the central place of preaching and their worship in their service. If you don't study the Bible, if these things are not proclaimed and taught, you can't know the real confidence that the scripture talks about.

Now finally, we talked about confidence in His presence, confidence in prayer, one final ground of confidence for today is:

3. Confident in His Person

You are confident in His person, the person of the blessed Holy Spirit. Look at verse 24, he says:

The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

When we believe in Christ, His Holy Spirit prompts assurance in our hearts that we belong to Him. It is not a purely rational, mechanical, logical thing to go through. The Spirit of God is informing your assurance as you contemplate these things. The Spirit of God is drawing you to believe and trust in the things that God has revealed in His scriptures. And this verse says that God abides in us and you abide in Him, it is a statement of true salvation. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. We utterly reject the idea that someone could be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit. We utterly reject the idea that you must have a second

experience in order to receive the Holy Spirit after salvation—we deny that false teaching. Romans 8:9 says that if a man does not have the Spirit of God, He doesn't belong to him at all. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit in him, this is the Spirit whom He has given to us.

In keeping with the idea that in the theme of confidence that John has been expressing here in this passage, you remember in John 3:8 Jesus said the work of the Spirit was like the blowing of the wind, He said:

The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going, so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

You don't see the wind; you don't see the Holy Spirit. So how do you know that the Spirit is abiding in you? Well, how do you know where the wind is blowing? You see its effects, you feel it on your face, you hear the sound of it blowing through the trees, you see leaves blowing across the field and you say "Oh, the wind is blowing." You don't stop and have some metaphysical crisis and say "I can't see the wind; I wonder if it is really blowing or not." You don't think that way, that would be ridiculous, they would carry you away if you started talking that way.

Understand that in the same way, you don't see the Holy Spirit, but you unmistakably see His effects and you recognize the presence of the Spirit by the effects that He produces. And so, kind of wrapping up this passage that we have looked at over the past couple of weeks, when you see yourself, you see someone believing in Christ, imperfect though their life may be, when you see yourself, you see someone loving the brethren struggling with sin, though they may still be, when you see them oriented toward obedience, resisting sin, desiring to keep His commandments though falling short, when you see that kind of obedience to God's word, when you see those effects in your life, you can have confidence that the Spirit of God has acted upon you and is bringing those things to pass.

Just as you see the effects of the wind blowing, you say "ah, the wind," you see these effects and you say "Ah, the Holy Spirit." This is the unmistakable mark of the Holy Spirit and that understanding points you to the realities of salvation that lie behind that, that this is in keeping with God's work of salvation that He accomplishes in the lives of His people. Christ died for us 2000 years ago on a cross, now the Spirit has brought that to bear on our own hearts individually and applied it to our hearts and we see the effects coming out of our lives and you say "Ah, salvation is real. I am a forgiven man in the presence of God. He beckons me in to His presence to bless me and I go there confidently in response."

All of this understanding points you to the ultimate confidence in God's person. God, based on the work of Christ accepts you now and will continue His work until you are in His presence forever. Philippians 1:6:

I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Listen to me, if you can see that and you see these things, you say “I see this in my life, I am a Christian.” Then there is only one way that you should be walking out the door in a couple of minutes, only one way. You should be walking out with a profound sense of joy, a profound sense of gratitude to God that He has done this in your life and that this is just a foretaste of the glories yet to come. You should go out with the renewed sense of commitment to pursuing holiness in your life. That’s the only proper response to the holy God that has saved you and it is only proper for you to be committed to seeking holiness in your own life, and you should go out with the sense of confidence in prayer because this is what God has ordained—joy and holiness and prayer and gratitude, all flowing from your grateful heart to this God who has truly saved you. God has saved you with the intention to bless you now and throughout all eternity—bless His holy name.

Let’s pray. If you are here and do not know Jesus Christ, would you just take this moment as God’s invitation to you to repent of sin and to turn your life over to Christ so that you could enter in to the realities of this great salvation? Would you believe even now in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved?

Father, we thank you for these wonderful things. This isn’t the easiest passage to interpret, but we see its thrust. We see that you have appointed us as believers to have confidence before you, to come before you boldly, without fear of judgment, without fear that you would turn us away. No, rather that we would come before you confident of your intention to bless us. We acknowledge Father that from time to time we don’t have that high view of you, we have at times question your goodness. Father, we don’t just acknowledge that, we repent of it, that is a shameful thing for your people to believe that you could be anything other than good to us. We repent of that questioning and doubting spirit and say before you that we have the utmost confidence in you, we are bold before you because we understand the merits of Christ Jesus. It is in Him that we have our confidence and He has opened up the gates of heaven to us, He has opened up the gates of your presence to us, He has opened the floodgates of grace and mercy in our lives. We ask you to bestow those blessings Father according to your will, according to your goodness. Father, for those who have come in here discouraged and doubting, Father, may the truth of your word so turn that around in their hearts that they walk out now with joy, confidence and peace in believing because of the perfections of our great savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in His name that we pray Father, believing His name, confident that we will have answers from you according to your will. In Jesus’ name. Amen.