

Title: **HOW CAN I KNOW THAT**
I AM ONE OF GOD'S ELECT?

Text: 1 John 5:1-13

Subject: *Three Infallible Witnesses*
Of A Believer's Saving Interest In Christ

Date: Wednesday Evening – February 6, 2008
Todds Road Grace Church, Lexington, KY

Introduction:

When I got to my office this morning, the very first thing I read was a letter from a dear lady in deep trouble of soul. It was a letter expressing a great heartfelt concern. This is what this heavy laden soul wrote...

“I know that God will save his Elect and only his Elect but Mr. Fortner I am terrified that I am not one of them and I don't know what to do.

I have not slept through the night for nearly 6 months now, constantly waking up in the night and so afraid. Much of the time it is very hard for me to pray and when I do pray it feels like I do not pray.

My eyes have turned into a fountain of tears and I literally feel as if I could be crushed under the weight of depression and fear and pain that I am feeling in my soul.

I am so afraid and filled with fear and despair much of the time. I cry to The Lord and beg Him to have mercy on me, to wash away my sin and give me a new heart and save my soul, but I am just not sure He will. On top of that I am bombarded with blasphemous thoughts and I am continually fighting against them and praying and confessing them. I hate them but they plague me and I feel hopeless and helpless.

It feels like I am two people and that I am fighting myself. Fighting my own thoughts and impulses and feelings.

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I am really scared. I don't know what to do but I really am terrified. I am terrified of not being in Christ and of dying in my sins. I am terrified that he has cast me away and that he will not have mercy on me. In a nutshell, I am terrified of not being his elect. What can I do?"

I cannot tell you how many times I have read that or heard those words from people all over the world in the last 40 years. Everywhere I go, I meet with men and women struggling with this same heavy, heavy burden. How can I know that I am one of God's elect? That is the question I want to answer in this message. I want to answer it by the Spirit of God and from the Word of God, with the utmost clarity and simplicity. — **HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I AM ONE OF GOD'S ELECT?**

- We know that **there is an elect people** in the world, a multitude which no man can number, loved by God from eternity, chosen as the objects of his grace, and predestinated to eternal life, who must be saved.
- We also know, from the testimony of Holy Scripture, that the Lord Jesus **Christ established righteousness for that elect multitude by his obedience to God** as their Representative, bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and died in their place under the curse of the law, satisfying Divine justice, putting away sin, and effectually accomplishing eternal redemption as the Substitute for God's elect.
- My question is this: **How can I know that I am one of God's elect?** How can I know that Christ died for me, as my sin-atonement Substitute? How can I be assured of my own, personal saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Proposition: I want to show you from the Word of God that there are certain, infallible witnesses by which believing sinners may be assured of a saving interest in Christ.

The Word of God speaks about "*the assurance of hope*" and "*full assurance of faith*" (Heb. 6:11; 10:22). How can any sinner have that full assurance of hope and faith? Turn to **1 John 5. In this chapter the apostle John shows us who the children of God in this world are. He gives, by Divine**

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inspiration, certain, indisputable, infallible witnesses by which believing sinners may know that they have eternal life. In fact, he tells us plainly that the purpose of this Epistle is to give assurance to God's elect. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (v. 13).

Verse 1 – *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."*

John's statement is emphatic. Anyone in the world, any man or woman, anyone old or young, anyone here who believes that Jesus, that Jesus revealed in the Scriptures, is the Christ, is born of God.

Do you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Prophet, Priest, and King? Do you trust him as the Lord your Righteousness? Do you trust Christ as your sin-atonement Substitute? If you do, you are born of God.

Your faith in Christ is not the cause of your being born of God, but it is the evidence (Heb. 11:1). And the fruit of faith is love. All who are born of God love God, and love one another.

The sinner who believes
In Christ's atoning blood
Is justified from all things and
Saved by the grace of God.

Yet, sin within remains!
When vile corruptions rise,
Then Satan tempts us to despair
And God's free grace despise.

Our flesh with him agrees,
And says we cannot be
Partakers of God's saving grace
And yet such sinners be.

But faith looks out of self
And trusts in Christ alone.

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Our hope is not in what we do,
But what our Lord has done!

His blood and righteousness,
The anchor of our souls,
Assures us in the teeth of sin
Free grace has made us whole!

NOTE: Our love for God and for one another is so shallow, fickle, and sinful that we dare not make it a basis of personal assurance. But it is an identifying characteristic of God's people.

Verse 2 – *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”*

Love is made manifest by works. My love for my wife is not revealed to me by my deeds. But my deeds of love reveal my love to my wife and to others who see those deeds. And our love for God and his children is revealed by our works. It is not revealed and known to us by our works. But it is revealed and made known to our brethren.

John is not making our works a basis of personal assurance. He is telling us that God's people identify one another by their works of faith and love (1 Thess. 1:2-3; Heb. 6:9-10).

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3) “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; (3) Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”

(Hebrews 6:9-10) “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. (10) For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

Verse 3 – *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”*

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Love obeys God in all things with a willing heart. But if I am to find personal assurance in my love for God my obedience to God must be both willing obedience and perfect obedience. If my obedience is not perfect, my love is not perfect. I cannot have any assurance if my assurance is based upon personal love and obedience. My works cannot give me assurance. And my love cannot give me assurance. But there is a solid foundation upon which true assurance may be built.

Verse 4 – *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.”*

I am certain of this: That which is born of God cannot die. Those who are born of God shall be triumphant. If you and I are born of God, we are more than conquerors in Christ. We shall overcome Satan, the god of this world. We shall overcome the lusts, which are in the world, the religion of the world, the cares of the world, and the trials of the world.

Verse 4 – *“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*

Faith, drawing strength from Christ, works wonders in the earth (Heb. 11:33-34).

(Hebrews 11:33-34) “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

And faith, drawing strength from Christ, persistently and ultimately overcomes the world. In other words, John is telling us that faith alone is victorious. Faith alone conquers. And this victorious faith is *“our faith.”* It is the gift of God, as truly as the breath in our lungs is the gift of God. But it is our faith, as truly as the breath in our lungs is our breath.

In verse 1 John said, **“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”** And **he assures us that faith produces both love and good works. But he draws us away from love and good works as the grounds**

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of assurance. Our confidence is not in the victory of our love, or in the success of our works, but in the triumph of our faith. **Because Christ, the Object of our faith, is triumphant, our faith shall be victorious too.**

John is laying a foundation for confidence and assurance. But in order to do so, he must show us that neither our love, nor our works will support our souls and give us a confident, assured hope. If we would have assurance of a saving interest in Christ, our assurance must be built upon Christ alone.

In verses 2 and 3 John speaks twice about keeping God's commandments. Is he telling us that the only way we can have assurance is by obeying God's law? Is he bringing us, as most do, back to Moses and the yoke of bondage, that we may build our assurance upon our works of obedience? God forbid! If you will look back to chapter 3, verse 23, you will see that he tells us plainly, that we keep God's, we "*keep his commandments*" law is by faith in Christ, only by faith in Christ. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, all those commandments that were once galling and grievous are now delightful to the believing soul, because faith sees all the law fulfilled in Christ. **Assurance is a matter of faith, not of works.** That is John's doctrine here. Assurance must be fetched from without, not from within.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness:
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the 'whelming flood:
When all around my soul give way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

Verse 5 – "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

It is not faith in myself, or faith in my love, or faith in my works, or faith in my faith that overcomes the world, but faith in Christ, the Son of God. **The singular basis of assurance then is faith in Christ, the Son of God. Faith**

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is not a leap in the dark, but the reasonable response of the heart to God's Revelation.

Now, if we rest our immortal souls on the merits of the man, Jesus Christ, trusting that he is indeed the Son of the living God, we must have undeniable, irrefutable proof that he is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God, and that this great God-man has accomplished eternal redemption for us. Where is such proof to be found? John gives it to us right here in verses 6-8.

Under the Mosaic law, every claim presented in legal matters had to be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. And every claim presented in a legal suit today must be established in court by two or three irrefutable witnesses. Here, the Apostle John produces **three irrefutable witnesses by which every believer may justly lay claim, in his own heart, to eternal life in Jesus Christ, with full assurance.**

Divisions: Everything vital to my soul is here established by three infallible, irrefutable witnesses. Here are three witnesses to...

1. The Deity Of Christ (v. 6).
2. The Accomplishment Of Redemption By Christ (v. 7).
3. The Believer's Saving Interest In Christ (v. 8).

3 WITNESSES TO CHRIST'S DEITY

First, here are three witnesses to the deity of Christ (1 John 5:6). — We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Why? What is the basis of our faith? John tells us: -- "*This is he which came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*" Here is the witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

1. THE WORD

We know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God **because he came by water.** What does that mean? **Water is an emblem for the written Word of God** (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5). We know that Jesus Christ, our

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Lord, is the Son of God, the anointed One, because he came according to and in fulfilment of all the types, promises, and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Word of God (Lk. 24:27, 44-47).

(Luke 24:27) “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

(Luke 24:44-47) “And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. (45) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Our faith regarding the Deity of Christ is founded upon the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Scriptures of the Old Testament plainly foretold virtually everything about Christ.

- His Incarnation and Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14; 9:6)
- His Submission and Obedience (Isa. 50:5-7)
- His Betrayal (Ps. 41:9)
- His Crucifixion (Ps. 22:69)
- His Substitutionary Atonement (Isa. 53)
- His Resurrection and Exaltation (Isa. 45:20-25; 53:9-12; Ps. 68:18-20)

All the types and pictures of the Old Testament vividly portrayed our Savior's Person and Work.

- Noah's Ark
- The Sacrifice of Isaac
- The Passover
- The Tabernacle and Priesthood

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- The Mercy-seat
- Daniel in the Lion's Den

We know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, because he came by Water, by the witness of the Word of God in the Old Testament.

2. THE BLOOD

We know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God **because he came by blood.** — *“This is he which came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.”* Had the Lord Jesus met every other stipulation of the Old Testament, had he been a perfect man, of the seed of Abraham, and of the seed of David, had he performed great miracles and even raised the dead, we could not believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, unless he had voluntarily poured out his life's blood unto death upon the cross for the atonement of our sins by the satisfaction of divine justice.

He claimed to be the Son of God. He demonstrated his power as God. Then he proved it by his sacrifice. The sinlessness of his life, his obedience to God, and his miraculous powers are not sufficient to prove Christ's Deity. We see his Deity when we see the death which he accomplished as the sinner's Substitute upon the cross (Matt. 27:54). **His death was...**

- *a voluntary act* (John 10:17-18),
- *a vicarious atonement* (John 11:49-52),
- *and a victorious accomplishment* (John 19:30).

We know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God because he came by Water and by blood. We see the glory of God in the face of our crucified Redeemer.

3. THE SPIRIT

And we know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, **because the Spirit bears witness to his deity.** — *“It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”*

- John the Baptist recognized Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God, by the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism, in the form of a dove.

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- On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit bore witness to Christ's exaltation and enthronement as King, by his descent upon the assembled church.
- And the Spirit bears witness to Christ's Deity and dominion through the preaching of the gospel, convincing sinners, chosen and redeemed by him, that he has the power as the God-Man Mediator to give them repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-32).

Every believer knows, with absolute assurance, that Jesus Christ is God the Son, the Son of God, our sovereign Lord, and our almighty Savior by the witness of the Word, the witness of the Blood, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of verse 6.

3 WITNESS TO REDEMPTION

Look at verse 7. Here are three witnesses to the accomplishment of redemption by Christ (1 John 5:7). — *"There are three that bear record in heaven."* **Bear record of what?** That Jesus is the Son of God? No. Heaven needs no evidence of that! **These three bear record in heaven that God has given us eternal life, in strict accordance with his just and righteous law, by the merits of Christ's obedience and death as our Substitute.**

The three Persons of the Holy Trinity bear record in heaven that Christ has accomplished redemption for God's elect by his blood atonement. — *"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."*

1. GOD THE FATHER

God the Father bears record that redemption is accomplished by his acceptance of Christ as our Representative and Surety (Heb. 1:1-9; 6:19-20; 10:11-14). When the Father raised Christ from the dead and received him back into heaven as our Mediator, he accepted all his elect in Christ and bare record that redemption's work was done (Eph. 1:6; John 17:1-5). — **"Of righteousness because I go to my Father!"**

(John 17:1-5) "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy

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Son also may glorify thee: (2) As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (3) And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (4) I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. (5) And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

2. GOD THE SON

God the Son, the living, eternal Word of God, the second person of the blessed Trinity, bears record of his people's right to eternal life by his perpetual advocacy and intercession at the Father's right hand (Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2; Heb. 7:24-25; Heb. 6:20). The record he bears, which secures the eternal salvation of God's elect, by which we merit heaven and eternal life, is twofold: *his righteousness* as our Representative and *his satisfaction* as our Substitute.

Illustration: *The Rent Veil*

(Romans 8:33-39) “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. (34) Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. GOD THE SPIRIT

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God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, bears record of the accomplishment of redemption, by effectually applying the blood of Christ to the hearts of god's elect in effectual calling (John 16:14; Heb. 9:13-14).

(John 16:14) "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you."

(Hebrews 9:13-14) "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The Spirit of God takes the merit of Christ's blood and righteousness and reveals to God's elect their acceptance with God by the gospel.

In effectual calling chosen, redeemed sinners hear the gospel. But they hear more than the bare word of the gospel. They hear the Spirit of God speak in their hearts! Each one hears God speak pardon to his own soul by the gospel of his salvation (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:16).

This is the record of heaven. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit point to the blood and righteousness of Christ and say, "*It is finished!*" Redemption is accomplished!"

"**And these three are One.**" — The three Divine Persons are one God. But more, the record of the Father, the record of the Son, and the record of the Spirit are one. What is that record? **Redemption is accomplished by Christ alone!** Every chosen sinner has the right to enter into heaven by the blood gate, by the merits of Christ. — "*God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*"

3 WITNESSES TO GRACE

But how can I know that I am one of God's elect? How can I know that God has given me eternal life? How can I be assured of my own saving interest in Christ? Read verse 8. Here are three witnesses to the believer's saving interest in Christ (1 John 5:8). — "*And there are three that bear witness in*

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earth, the Spirit, the Water (the Word), and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

Notice how the order is given. The witnesses to Christ’s Deity are, first, the Word, then the blood, and then the Spirit. The witnesses to redemption’s accomplishment are, first, the Father, then the Son, and then the Spirit. The witnesses to our saving interest in Christ are, first, the Spirit, then the Word, and then the blood.

1 **THE SPIRIT’S REVELATION**

A saving knowledge of Christ begins with the revelation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

CONVICTION — No one on earth can know and be firmly persuaded that he is one of God’s elect, one of those for whom Christ died, but by the special revelation of God the Holy Spirit. No man can, or should, convince another of his salvation in Christ. Only the Spirit of God can convince a sinner of grace and salvation in Christ (John 16:8-14). And if he convinces, you are convinced.

(John 16:8-14) “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (12) I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. (13) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.”

COMFORT — He is called the Comforter because he conveys to our hearts the comfort of our election, redemption, salvation, and eternal acceptance with God (Rom. 8:14-17).

(Romans 8:14-17) “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of

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bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.”

At the time appointed, he manifests the glory of Christ's Person and the merits of his work, creating faith in the hearts of elect sinners (2 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Tit. 1:2-3; 2 Pet. 1:18-20).

2 THE WRITTEN WORD

This saving knowledge of Christ is based upon the record of the written Word of God, symbolized by water (Tit. 3:5). I remind you that when John uses the word “*water*,” he is almost always talking about the Word of God. The Spirit bears witness on earth, and the witness is given through the Word. The revelation of God's Spirit and the record of God's Word always agree.

The Spirit never operates independently of his written Word. He reveals Christ supernaturally in the hearts of men. But he reveals Christ only through the instrumentality of gospel preaching. He takes the record of God in his Word and makes it the voice of God in a man's heart! He declares in our hearts that our redemption is accomplished by Christ's obedience and death as our Substitute (Heb. 9:12-14)

What is the record of God's Word?

- Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
- Christ has accomplished redemption for sinners.
- Every sinner who believes on the Son of God has eternal life!

3 THE BLOOD APPLIED

This saving knowledge of Christ is neither more nor less than faith in his blood. This is my assurance, all my assurance, my only assurance. God the Holy Spirit has revealed Christ in me by the Word of his grace, effectually causing me to trust him, his blood and his righteousness, for the whole of

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my acceptance with God. Trusting Christ, I have assurance of my saving interest in him.

Faith is the echo of my heart to the voice of God's Spirit speaking to me by the gospel. The warrant of my faith is the Word of God alone. And the warrant of my assurance is faith alone (1 John 5:9-13). Faith fetches full assurance to the believer's heart, not from within, but from without, from the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the naked Word of God.

“Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving.
I trust the written Word of God.
Naught else is worth believing!”

Read the Word of God one more time. Assurance is never connected with love, or works, or joy, or repentance, or even perseverance. In the Word of God assurance is always the fruit of faith alone.

(John 1:11-12) “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:”

(Acts 13:38-39) “Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: (39) And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

(Romans 15:13) “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

(Colossians 2:2-6) “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; (3) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (4) And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. (5) For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your

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order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. (6) As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him:”

(Hebrews 10:22) “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Faith takes God’s bare Word, without any other testimony or evidence, and finds the comfort of full assurance in the finished work of Christ alone. If we seek assurance upon any other grounds, by signs, feelings, evidences, good works, or anything else but faith in Christ alone, we make God a liar!

Will you, or will you not receive the witness of God? Will you, or will you not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

(1 John 5:9-13) “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

AMEN.