

1 John 4:13-21

Assurance, Confidence, & Evidence

I. INTRO

- A. I read this week that when someone is unresponsive, you're supposed to do a few signs of life checks
 - 1. Response – jostle them and talk loudly to see if they react
 - 2. Breathing – listen and look for normal signs of breathing
 - 3. Movement – see if they move
 - 4. Pulse – check for a pulse
- B. 1 John's letter is about the same thing. How do you check for a spiritual pulse?
- C. Well, after 11 sermons, we are approaching the summit of John's argument
- D. Throughout the letter we have seen three signs of true spiritual life
 - 1. Doctrinal - confessing Jesus Christ came in the flesh, believing the gospel in accordance with the Apostolic witness (define) handed down from John
 - 2. Ethical - walking in the light, a growing desire to obey, root out sin, etc
 - 3. Relational - loving the family of God; if God is love, we should love
- E. In this passage, 1 John 4:13-21, the streams come together in a confluence
- F. We essentially are going to see how they gather in John's mind
- G. As you read John, John's epistles, and Revelation, you realize how much of his thought process goes back to his favorite word → ABIDE
 - 1. To abide is to stay close to Jesus, to remain, to saturate, to marinate, snuggle up
- H. I can just hear John, "Little children, just stay close to Jesus."
- I. If you stay close to Jesus you will be confident of your salvation and you will see evidence of his work in your life!
- J. The flow of this passage, in the pulling together of these threads is this:
 - 1. Assurance of salvation, Confidence of salvation, Evidence of salvation
 - 2. John doesn't separate these as neatly as my outline does; they overlap

II. [13] By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. [14] And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. [16] So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

- A. When I teach courses, I often talk about how ABIDING is used three ways in John's writings
 - 1. Position → belief
 - 2. Posture of your heart → He is the vine, I am just a branch
 - 3. Process → stay close to Jesus
- B. John wants us to **KNOW that we abide** in him and he in us.
 - 1. God doesn't abide in everyone. He abides in those who have come to know and believe the gospel by faith

- C. John's first claim is that if you are a born again believer, God abides in YOU.
 - 1. This is why Jesus had to die on a cross; why his blood had to spill
 - 2. In the OT, they would kill a perfect lamb and put its blood on the altar to purify it, to purify the temple, to allow God to be with his people
 - 3. Jesus died and God put the Lamb of God's blood on the altar of your heart to purify it. Why? So he could move in! So he could abide.
- D. Then John names two ways you KNOW if you abide in Him and He in you

E. FIRST: Because you have the Holy Spirit

- 1. Question: "How do I know I have the Spirit?"
- 2. Great question, Bill. B/C the church and people in the church are gonna give you all kinds of answers
 - a) One side of the fence expects a specific emotional experience
 - (1) Fall over? Speak in tongues? Fire on my head?
 - b) The other side of the fence fears any talk of experience
- 3. When we look at 1 John as a whole, I think John's answer tends to point to Spirit-shaped confession, obedience, and love as evidence (3 signs of life), not a single dramatic feeling, but also not platonic nothingness
 - a) Some people are more or less emotive than others
 - b) Some people are more or less sensitive spiritually
- 4. So, how do you KNOW you have the Spirit? Look for Spirit-shaped faith and fruit, NOT just one dramatic moment or feeling.

F. SECOND: By our confession of Jesus

- 1. *[14] And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*
- 2. "We" refers to the Apostles (c.f. Chapter 1)
- 3. John has an apostolic claim about Jesus. Who he is, what he did, why he died, that he rose, the teachings of Christ, etc.
- 4. John is saying that if YOU confess (not just with words but with words and heart) the apostolic faith, then you are saved → God abides in you
- 5. Paul puts it this way in Romans 10:9, *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*
 - a) Lighting candle to Caesar
- 6. Christ/apostolic gospel first → Spirit-produced confession and fruit second.

- G. John kind of summarizes it in *v[16] So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

- 1. Remember from last week, "God is love" is Jesus' death on cross
- 2. So to say, "We have come to know and believe in Jesus' sacrifice"

- H. But the point in v13-16 is this → **The Spirit gives ASSURANCE of salvation**

III. *[17] By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but*

perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. [19] We love because he first loved us.

- A. Love is perfected in us means that God's love is working in us, maturing us, changing our affections, changing our passions, changing our desires, working life in us.
- B. He argues that that maturation process should lead us to confidence on the day of judgment
 - 1. Why does God want us to be mature?
 - 2. He says "Because as he is so also are we in the world"
 - 3. What does THAT mean?
 - 4. Notice John says "as he is," not "as he was."
 - 5. As Christ was a manifestation of love and faith in the world, so not we are a manifestation of love and faith
- C. If you are seeing all three signs of life (confession of truth, love, and obedience) in your life, that gives you assurance
- D. When you see those over time, that assurance grows to be confidence
 - 1. Confidence in your standing with God
 - a) God actually DOES forgive me. He actually IS with me. He really DOES love me. I actually AM growing. I AM saved.
- E. That's been the best feedback I have received about this sermon series.
 - 1. Many of you are growing in CONFIDENCE in your salvation b/c your assurance is being solidified.
 - 2. What a beautiful thing. That's John's goal.
- F. What is the result of CONFIDENCE in our salvation? The loss of FEAR
 - 1. Now, what's John talking about? Fear of spiders? Fear of not being able to pay your bills? Fear of losing a loved one to cancer?
 - a) No, John isn't referring to any of those
 - b) John isn't saying, "If you struggle with anxiety you probably aren't saved" // Nope.
 - 2. Contextually and specifically (b/c people love to take this verse out of context), John is referring to fear of JUDGMENT & wrath
 - a) He is referring to a fear of God punishing you
- G. If you are in Christ, you don't need to fear punishment from God and you shouldn't fear punishment from God. WHY?
 - 1. B/C like we said last week → Jesus was your propitiatory sacrifice
 - 2. You have the righteousness of Christ given to you
- H. Knowing you are LOVED by God and his LOVE lives in you b/c Jesus, the Author of Love lives within you removes fear from your life, fear of hell and torment
- I. In other words. When you KNOW God loves you, you aren't afraid that you "might not make it" into heaven
 - 1. Assurance grows into confidence
- J. **The Spirit gives us ASSURANCE of salvation, and over time that assurance grows into CONFIDENCE in the Father's love for us.**
 - 1. After all, it's not that I loved him, but that he loved me.

IV. *[20] If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

- A. So John began with assurance (b/c he has given me his Holy Spirit),
 - 1. moved to confidence (no fear of judgment or wrath b/c Jesus paid it all),
 - a) and now he ends with evidence.
- B. As we have discussed so many times → John is all about belief and LOVE
 - 1. Not sentimentality, but love that looks like the love Christ has for us
 - a) To lay down our rights for others
 - b) To forgive those who hurt us
 - c) To serve the difficult
 - d) To say the hard things with grace b/c it's the loving thing to do
 - (1) Warning our friends about eternal judgment
 - (2) Pointing them to Jesus
 - 2. Why? Because we LOVE them
- C. How do you KNOW that I love God?
 - 1. Not b/c I cry during sermons (though that might give you some measure of my affection, or I might just be a baby)
 - 2. No, it is in my LOVE for the people around me → what OTHERS see
- D. In other words, how can YOU have assurance and confidence that Pastor Bill is a true believer?
 - 1. Well, if you don't see my love for you and the people around me
 - 2. If you don't see my love for my wife
 - 3. If you don't see my love for my kids
 - a) That's a problem
- E. Love for the invisible God is made visible in our love for believers.
- F. Which is why John ends with this throat punch → you can't say you love God while hating one another
 - 1. Question: "What does John mean by 'hate'?"
 - a) He's talking about a settled refusal to love, not just every time you have conflict or a difficult relationship.
 - b) Difficult relationships are real, and they might constantly resurface
 - c) But there's a difference between a settled decision to HATE you and an acknowledgement that our relationship is tough
- G. The Spirit gives us assurance of salvation. That grows into confidence, no fear of God's wrath. And when we rest in the Father's love like that, it flows through us to others.
- H. Love is the external EVIDENCE of our salvation.**
 - 1. But remember, it's how GOD, how the CROSS, defines love...

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Chatting with a friend this week, he commented on a book he just read
- B. Every religion besides biblical Christianity is WORKS based. Jesus is about FAITH. Salvation is a gift, not earned

- C. B/c our temptation is to try and WORK and EARN, we always lean towards drifting into moralism // behavior modification
- D. John really presses against this and goes in the opposite direction
 - 1. The movement of John's thought process always runs from God's initiative to our response.
- E. Consider this: The Father loves → the Son is sent → The Father draws us to Jesus → the Spirit indwells → We receive assurance from the Spirit → We gain confidence from the Spirit → We manifest love from the Spirit
- F. We love because he first loved us
- G. We are the product of HIS work. Our faith is a gift
- H. So what's the action step? What's the call here? The call is first to abide, not to try harder.
- I. **Receive the assurance God gives, live out of the confidence Christ has secured, and let that love become visible.**
- J. But let's get real practical with some examples:
 - 1. If you have assurance and confidence before the father, then you don't need to beat yourself up every time you mess up bc the wrath is paid
 - 2. If you have assurance and confidence, you don't need to punish and pay penance – Jesus paid it all
 - 3. If you have no fear of judgment (the highest, most serious form of judgment), then you don't need to fear people → they aren't your judge
 - 4. If you have no fear of judgment, then you don't need to fear the future → your future is secure even if you die
 - 5. If you have no fear of judgment, then you don't need to fear loss → if God prepared for your eternity, won't he continue to sustain you thru loss?
 - 6. If you have no fear of judgment, do you really need to be in control, or can you trust the God who is writing the story?
 - 7. If you have assurance that GOD is in your side, does it matter if that person likes you?
 - 8. If GOD loves you, abides with you, and bent low from heaven to earth to be with YOU, do you really need another half bath to make you happy?
- K. Friends, the more we understand the LOVE of God for us in Christ Jesus, the more we experience freedom from all kinds of fear and insecurities
 - 1. If God loves you... and he does... do you really need to be afraid?
- L. Jesus said it best. John 15:9, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.
 - 1. As the Father loved me (Jesus)...
 - 2. So have I loved you...
 - 3. Stay in my love. Abide in it. Remain in it. Saturate in it. Marinate in it.
 - a) And you're going to smell and taste really good.