

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 6

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: **“Lifestyle Matters”**

1 John 2:3-6 ~ April 11, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To help us understand how obedience instills assurance / confidence of faith.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- New web-site! www.cdobaptist.org
- Fall Festival Cook Book – Recipes needed!
- Chipotle Burrito Day!

Opening Prayer

The issue before us today is one that many people struggle with. Many times they struggle in silence, and never talk with anybody about their internal worries.

What I’m speaking of is what’s called Christian Assurance. Many believers wonder if they are truly saved or not. They wonder if they truly have faith, if their conversion was sincere, if they are truly one of God’s children.

Over the years, I have had many discussions with believers who have questioned their own salvation. They have asked me:

“How can I know that I am a Christian?”

“I don’t feel any different as a Christian, I didn’t have a religious ‘experience’ when I came to Christ, is my faith real?”

“My conversion was a very emotional experience, how can I know if it was all emotions or if I truly believed in Christ?”

“I’m not sure if I’m a Christian because I’m still dealing with the same sins...I can’t seem to have any victory in my life.”

They have belief, but they struggle with *'feeling'* saved or being confident in their faith. Our passage today gives us some wonderful teaching that will help us have an assurance of our faith – assurance of our salvation.

Related to our assurance is our security as believers...so let's begin there.

The security of the believer is our confidence that God is faithful to His promise of forgiving our sins and that He will never reject His own children. This is seen in numerous passages.

John 10:28 tells us that we can never lose our salvation.

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that believers have been permanently sealed by the Holy Spirit.

"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory."

Romans 8:38-39 tells us that nothing – not even our own sin – can separate us from the love of God – the love of our Savior.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Security – the state or feeling of being safe and protected – protection against attack – knowledge that something of value will not be taken away – has the idea of being safe – being kept safe

Assurance – confidence in personal ability *or status* – freedom from uncertainty – overcoming doubt

Biblically speaking, **our security** as Christians – that God will never withdraw His forgiveness of us is grounded in the historical reality of Christ, His death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances. It's grounded in the infallibility of His Word – the Bible. It's grounded in the nature of God Himself – His faithfulness to His promises. **Our assurance** is gained from our Christian life experience. It is gained as we see how our life has been transformed over time.

Our security as believers – that once we are saved...once we put our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins – that we can never lose our salvation is a wonderful truth and one that should encourage us.

However, most of the people that I've talked who are worried if they are saved, believe in the security of the believer – they are wondering / doubting if they really are a believer!

Please turn to 1 John 2:3-6.

This kind of doubt is not new – it's something that the earliest Christians struggled with – and it's an issue that John deals with in our passage today. Remember, due to the Gnostics who were teaching a false message in the early churches of Asia Minor, that many of the believers in those churches were beginning to doubt their salvation. So, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes these words...

Read vs. 3-6

Remember, the Gnostics had taught that you could believe one thing – and act in a way that contradicted your stated belief! They

said faith was important only for your soul and your inner self – and your external actions had no connection with your internal belief. John contradicts their teaching once again...

Knowing God leads to obeying God. vs. 3

³ We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

The Atheist says there is no God...the Agnostic says that if God exists, He cannot be known. Scripture clearly teaches us that God exists, and He can be known...in fact, He wants you to know Him!

John makes it clear in this verse that there *is* a way to know God. He is telling us that he and many of his readers already know God – that at some point in the past, they began a relationship with God. The evidence of their relationship with God is their obedience to the commands of God. It's clear in the Greek, because of the term used (*entolē*), that John is not referring to the commands of Mosaic Law (*nomos* - although it would agree in principle with much of Mosaic Law), but to the commands of Christ.

John's purpose in writing this letter to the churches is to help them have confidence or assurance of their faith in Jesus Christ!

1 John 5:13

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

You can know that you know God.

“obey” - if we obey his commands. has the idea of keeping or even guarding the commands of Christ. It's not a passive posture we are called to, but one of alertness and attention to detail.

This Greek word was used to describe a sentry – as they were on watch guarding the city – watching for any sign of the enemy, ready for an attack. This is the posture we are to live our Christian life with – a clear understanding of the dangers in the world that can prevent us from obeying or keeping God’s commands. We should be alert because:

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...” 1 Peter 5:8-9

Notice that Jesus has not issued ‘ideas’ or helpful hints for life. He is not our therapist, but our Lord and Savior. He issues commands! We are not free to pick and choose which of His commands we will obey – He calls us and intends for us to obey all of them!

The lifestyle that leads to doubt vs. 4

⁴ The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

When all you have is a verbal claim to Christ – and your lifestyle before coming to Christ is no different from your lifestyle after coming to Christ – then doubt will begin to creep into your thoughts. You may look back to your conversion and wonder if it was genuine...if it was sincere... and with good reason.

This verse is very similar to **1:6** “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” Even though it is similar in some ways, it’s very different in others. In vs. 6 of chapter 1, I took the position that the

primary issue that John was speaking to was fellowship with God – having a vibrant, growing relationship with God. Here, in 2:4, we have a broader target. In this verse, I believe he is describing someone who is not a Christian. They think they are a Christian / a believer in Christ – but there is no evidence of their faith – and he calls them a “liar”. In other words, they are lying about being a Christian – about knowing God – because their life hasn’t changed at all! In fact, given the context of the Gnostic false teachers who were claiming secret knowledge of God and teaching that it was OK to indulge the flesh in whatever desires you had since all flesh is evil – this verse seems to be a direct contradiction of their teaching, and a direct attack at their lifestyle. “...the truth is not in him” – Much different than 1:6 where John says the person walking in darkness is not living by the truth. This statement in 2:4 is much more drastic – “the truth is not in him” For me, this points to a person who is not saved, even though they claim to know God.

Belief must impact your *lifestyle*.

Calvin, “...the knowledge of God, derived from the gospel, is not ineffectual, but that obedience proceeds from it.” (Calvin’s Commentary on 1 John)

This whole area is very difficult for many struggling believers – for those who have ongoing struggles with the same sins. It’s also an area that legalistic-leaning believers feel an obligation to reach a verdict about someone’s faith and declare it invalid or non-existent if they don’t see a transformed life.

Illus. – orange tree in backyard

When you look at this statement, you might ask, “How much impact / life change is enough?”

Some may ask, “How much do I have to change to have assurance of my faith?”

I think this is the wrong question to ask – for two reasons.

First, it displays a selfish attitude, if it is asked with the intent of “*I’ll do what is required, but nothing further. I’ll give God some of my life, but not all of my life.*”

Secondly, it’s impossible to quantify. I can’t tell you how much is enough. That’s not how God works – that’s not how He looks at our life. He didn’t look at us and only give us the minimum – He gave us His Son.

Rom. 2:4

“...the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience...”

Eph. 1:7-8

“...the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

1 John 3:1

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

Col. 3:9-10

“...you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

2 Peter 1:5-10

2PE 1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The lifestyle that leads to perfect love vs. 5-6

⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.

John now returns to the person who is living an obedient life. There is a progression here in vs. 5. John has taken us from knowing God to loving God – and from obeying God’s command to obeying His Word.

The point of vs. 5 is that when we obey God, the love of God will find it’s fullest expression. Jesus testified to what the greatest commandment was – and they both focus on love. First, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

Second, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. **Matt. 22:37-40**

Obedience = love

John 15:14, 17

“You are my friends if you do what I command... This is my command: Love each other.”

When we love God, we will obey His commands, which will always result in loving others. It is in this way that the love of God is made perfect in us – or made complete in us. This is not referring to a sinless state, but that the purpose of

God's love is not only to save us but to use our life to love others. This is a trait of Christian maturity.

5b-6

This is how we know we are in him:

6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Application

Examine your life...are you obeying God's commands?

John is not saying that we must be perfect...but we must be moving toward Christ.

Ask yourself, "*What is the purpose, direction, and focus of my life?*" If Christ and His commands are absent from your answer, you have a problem.

The good news is that the problem has a solution. No problem is too big for you when God is part of the solution.

If you look at your life and you see that transformation has taken place...if you see evidence of God's truth in your life, you can be assured of knowing Christ and you can be confident in your faith – "...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." **Phil. 1:6**