

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 21

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: “The Safety of God’s Love”

1 John 4:13-21 ~ August 15, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To give believers confidence in their faith – and to take away their fear of judgment.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- AWANA – leaders needed – leader / worker meeting 8/11 – 6:30 p.m.
- Wycliffe Conf. childcare need
- Quarterly Business mtg. - today after 2nd service
- Waypoint Theatre – C.S. Lewis Screwtape Letters – today at 3:00 – see insert
- All-church social at the YMCA – 8/29
- Summer BBQ’s – Aug. 21

When announcing the quarterly meeting – talk briefly about the budget – ytd giving – thanking everyone for their faithfulness – and encouraging them to give for the remainder of the year.

Do you know anyone who is way too overconfident?

Many times, people are overconfident when they have no reason to be...or, they are overconfident because they have deceived themselves of the truth!

However, I think most people – if they were truly honest with you, are not confident in life, but have a great deal of uncertainty in life – usually leads to anxiety and fear. This is also true in the Church – it’s been my experience that many believers are uncertain or insecure regarding their faith.

A primary purpose of the book of 1 John – to give assurance or confidence to believers of their faith and standing before God.

“How do I know that I’m a child of God?”

“How do I know that I’m a Christian?”

We can be confident in our faith because... vs. 13-16

Once again, John gives assurance to his readers – and to us – that salvation is not earned by us – but given to us by God – and we can know with certainty that we indeed possess God’s love and His forgiveness of our sins. The first way we can know this is by:

He has given us His *Spirit* – vs. 13

“We” refers to all believers. All believers can know that God abides in us and we abide in God is because He has given us His Spirit. Paul wrote on this topic also: “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (*Earnest \$!*)

2 Cor. 1:21-22

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our life should not only be a great help in our life, but a great encouragement that our faith is real and genuine. The Holy Spirit’s presence speaks to the relationship we have with God. Often, a believer will have doubts about their salvation – and sometimes their doubt is due to a lack of ‘feelings’ in regards to the Holy Spirit. They have a notion that the Holy Spirit should bring upon them some sort of *spiritual experience* – some sort of mystical or supernatural occurrence. However, those things are rare and not the Spirit’s primary purpose. John continues and gives us some insight as to what the Holy Spirit does do in our life.

We *believe* in Jesus as our *Savior* – vs. 14-15

John seems to have put these things in chronological order. In order to have faith or belief in Jesus, God

must draw you to Himself and give you the gift of faith. The Spirit of God must work in your life and the Spirit's first task is to make it possible for you to believe the Gospel. So, according to John – not only do we have confidence in our relationship with God because of the Spirit's presence in our life, but also because we have belief in Jesus – that He is our Savior – that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins.

We live a life *marked* by love – vs. 16

The love of God should give you comfort – “...we know and rely on the love God has for us.” To rely on His love means it's dependable and sure – it's certain.

Once again, John states that “God is love.” (see vs. 8) He then repeats the same thought as vs. 13 – the indwelling presence of God in our life. However, here in vs. 16, John emphasizes that if we love others – this is an indicator for us of the mutual indwelling relationship we have with God.

This point about Jesus as the Son of God (vs. 15) and the Savior of the world (vs. 14) is an issue of doctrine – an issue of truth – and it reminds us that the truth of God is fully compatible with the love of God (vs. 16).

There is “...no tension at all between Christian love and Christian truth.” (*The Gospel and Epistles of John*, by F.F. Bruce, p. 111)

However, we see too often in churches that have a solid grasp of and firm commitment to the truth of God's Word that love seems to be missing in those congregations. Love seems to be a weakness in those assemblies. I'm not sure why – the reasons are probably as numerous as the number of people in those churches.

“Speak the truth in love...” – Eph. 4:15

For right now – let’s make sure we understand that truth and love are not competitors – truth and love are not opposite forces. God’s truth and God’s love should be a symphony that works in perfect harmony in our life.

The fact that we believe in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins – and that we love our fellow believers – is evidence that we “...live in Him and He in us”. (vs. 13). This love for others is not only our duty as followers of Christ – but also evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work and activity in our life.

The results of perfect love vs. 17-21

The great thing about the love of God is that it’s not just a theoretical idea – it’s not just pretty spiritual words that sound good – the love of God has the power to change our life! It changes everything about our life – our lifestyle – our attitudes and outlooks – our hope for eternity.

Let me first address this word “perfect” that many of our modern translations have in this verse. It’s translating a form of the Greek word *teleios*. But this Greek word (*teleios*) is translated by a number of English words that can sometimes confuse us. In English, when we read the word *perfected* or *perfect*, we think of something that was flawed, but has now been made flawless. However, this is not the meaning of the word in Greek. The true idea or essence of this word is in the sense of being complete, finished, or something that has been accomplished.

John 4:34

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to **accomplish** His work.” *accomplish* = teleioo – same word as 1 John 4:17

Jesus is not saying that He is taking a flawed work of God and perfecting it or making flawless – but that He is completing or accomplishing the work of God.*

John 19:28 - Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be *fulfilled*, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”

The word translated “fulfilled” is the same as the one translated “perfected” in 1 John 4:12 and 17. It does not mean take a flawed Scripture and make it flawlessly perfect. It means take a Scripture promise and put it into action and so complete it.*

James 2:22 is a very important parallel – speaking of Abraham... “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made *complete* by what he did.”

The word behind “complete” is the same as the word behind “perfected” in our text. How do works perfect faith? Not by making it flawless faith but by making it active faith. In other words faith is imperfect until it reaches its goal in good works. Then we can speak of it as “perfected” faith—not because it is flawless and beyond the need for improvement, but because it has attained the goal of action.*

(* These observations from John 4:34; John 19:28; and James 2:22 are taken from John Piper’s sermon, “Perfect Love Casts Out Fear”, May 26, 1985)

So – as we look at this idea of “perfect love”, let’s realize that it’s not flawless love (although that is the ultimate goal) – but love put into action – love not in theory but in practice.

Read with me vs. 17-18

We have *confidence* about God’s *judgment*. vs. 17-18

The thought of judgment – and the reality of Hell – seem to be dismissed as *religious scare tactics* by many people today. I don’t believe the lack of belief in these things is unique to the modern mind – I think humanity

has always rejected these truths because there is no way to come to grips with God's judgment or Hell without obeying God! So, instead of obeying God – people have simply dismissed these things as hyperbole or sensationalizing in an attempt to keep people in line. I say this because Jesus spoke often of God's judgment and of Hell. (Matthew 5:22, 29f.; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; 10:15; 11:22–24; 12:36–42; John 5:22–30). The word “hell” (*gehenna*) is used 12 times in the New Testament—11 of them from the mouth of Jesus!

This thought should cause non-believers to fear what lies ahead – but as believers, we should not fear God's judgment. In fact, John says we should have “confidence” on the Day of Judgment! Why?

Rom. 3:23-24

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Rom. 8:1

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...”

1 John 2:28

“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”

John 3:18

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”

John 5:24

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

We have confidence about our *life*. vs. 18

Present tense verbs throughout this verse.

Todd Thompson's "Confession"

We love others. vs. 19-21

Read vs. 19-21

Our response to the love of God for us – is to love others.

In typical Johannean fashion – the Apostle doesn't mess around – he is blunt and draws an unmistakable line of division. Hatred for another Christian is unacceptable. Hatred for another Christian shows you don't truly love God!

The command in vs. 21 is a repetition of what John said in vs. 11.

The commandment that John is referring to is probably Jesus' answer to the question about which is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:30-31). His answer (simplified): Love God – Love one another.

Application

Be confident in your faith.

Your life is in God – His life is in you!

The proof is that you have the Holy Spirit in you. The proof that the Spirit indwells you is not your feelings – it's not some mystical experience – it's not even a spiritual experience or ability. It's evidenced by your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins – and in your love for others.

Take comfort in God's judgment.

As a believer – you have nothing to fear about facing God. You are secure in Christ. The righteousness of

Jesus is your righteousness. You are one of God's own children – completely forgiven – no condemnation. Allow the love of God to guide your life. Allow the love of God to comfort you through life's joys and struggles. Allow God's love for you to spur you on to loving others.

Close in prayer