

Sermon: “What to Believe about Jesus and Our Salvation”

Text: [1 John 5:13-21 ESV](#)

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Introduction: There is much confusion in the Body of Christ today about the question: “How can I be sure I am saved, how do I know?” The biblical phrase from [John 3](#): “born again” has taken on even political overtones. It certainly has produced a lot of uncertainty and confusion in the Church. It has fanned the flames of heresy that you have to feel and act a certain way or you are not saved. Nothing could be further from the truth - or Jesus, who is The Truth ([John 14:6](#)).

There should never be uncertainty about your salvation. The Apostle John, sixty years after Jesus had ascended to the Father, wanted the Church to be confident of her relationship with Jesus Christ. Today, we still can know we are saved when we are concerned and care about:

I. What God Wants Us to Know

[1 John 5:13-15 ESV](#) ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

The Apostle John wrote at the last of the first century to reassure the Church of her position “in Christ.”

A. We Need to Know God’s Word.

Primarily, God wants us to know Him, to have a relationship with Him. Our coming to know God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit does not happen in a vacuum with good intentions. This sacred relationship with God must come from an understanding of God’s Word. This is developed through reading, study and meditation. The Bible is full of promises to be enjoyed and commands to be obeyed. The Word is called the sword of the Spirit. It is a spiritual weapon to fight off evil and defend ourselves from the devil.

B. We Need to Be Found Praying.

God loves to hear from us daily. In any relationship worth having there must be two-way communication. Prayer gives us a round-the-clock opportunity to talk with God. God is always listening. He hears every prayer. He can’t wait to hear from you.

Analogy: We have all waited for mail, a post or a text, or an important phone call - some communication from a loved one. God waits on us like that, but ALL of us could be better communicators (not so much in style, but in frequency).

1. Obedience and love are frequently tied together in Scripture. We pray out of love and receive an answer IF we are obedient.

I John 3:22 ESV ²² and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

Confidence = openness. The more we pray the more confidence is developed. The reason some are so unsure is they don't pray often, and they have little experience with God.

2. John tells us in his Gospel that remaining or abiding "in Christ" is a condition for prayer.

John 15:7 ESV ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

3. John instructs us to pray according to God's will. This is another reason to know the Bible. Jesus himself, when he was facing the cross, submitted to God's will and said:

Matthew 26:39b ESV ^{39b} "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

C.H. Dodd writes: "Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfil our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of His will." i.e., for good and for the Kingdom.

Most of the time, prayer is thought of in terms of asking God for something we want, but real prayer ought to be asking God what He wants. Prayer is indeed talking to God, but ought to be more about listening. If we pray for anything regularly, it should be for grace to accept God's will and strength to carry it out.

Most of our relationships could be vastly improved by more dialog and a great deal more listening *before* we talk. Our relationship with God is no exception.

The early Church devoted herself to "the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." - **Acts 2:42 ESV**

We can be assured we are saved when we are concerned and care about:

II. What Our Brothers and Sisters Need

I John 5:16-18 ESV ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. ¹⁸ We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

If a brother or sister has fallen into sin, we should do everything we can to see they are restored. Even the idea of Church discipline in the NT is with the purpose of restoring that person to a righteous path and back into the fellowship.

A. Intercessory Prayer

Not only do we need to pray to God for ourselves, we need to be aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters. To demonstrate our concern for brothers and sisters in Christ, we should also pray on their behalf. This is called intercessory prayer. This is not gossip which is usually full of envy and has an agenda to devalue, damage or even destroy. Prayer should never be selfish and only directed for personal needs. As Wescott put it: “The end (goal) of prayer is the perfection of the whole Christian body.”

- 1. We naturally pray for those who are sick - and we should, but it should be just as common for us to pray for those who are straying away from God - those walking the wrong path. Love and discipline go together.**

James 5:13-16 ESV ¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

- 2. There are limitations to prayer. God will never violate a person’s free will.**

What about this “sin that leads to death?” Our brothers and sisters need:

B. Understanding

Early in the Church’s history some had thought there was no forgiveness for sin committed after one’s baptism. This led to all kinds of problems as it related to administering baptism, and trying to time death.

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV ⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

There is no biblical doctrine of “once saved always saved” or what is sometimes called “eternal security.” Every healthy relationship requires the cooperation of all the parties. Love needs to go both directions with God.

Illus. Anorexia is as much a problem of one’s mind and perception as well as a physical malady, and it has its application in the spiritual world. It is possible to close your heart so tightly to the influence and presence of God’s Holy Spirit that repentance becomes a moral impossibility. Just like a person can starve the body to such an extent that the digestive system shuts down and food is not only not wanted, but rejected. So, the soul may go on refusing offers of grace until there is no desire or appetite to live in a way that pleases God. - Plummer, p. 167

This becomes like the sin that causes death from which there is no recovery.

Later in the Church there were those who thought apostasy was unforgiveable, e.g. those who denied Jesus in the context of being tortured. But then what of Peter who denied Jesus, yet who repented and confessed his love of the Master later. He was not only restored as a brother, but put into leadership.

It could be argued from this very letter that for John the most deadly of all sins might be to deny Jesus really came in the flesh. Gnosticism could not comprehend the incarnation. John said this was a sign of the antichrist (**I John 4:3**).

I John 4:3 ESV ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus - is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

You see John is not so much talking about a “deadly sin,” as a sin that will take you toward death - especially if it becomes routine or habitual. There is a vast difference between a person who sins and hates it, and one who sins and has no regret or remorse. This latter approach to life may take you to where you might never repent and turn toward God. That kind of persistent sinful lifestyle will not be forgiven. Sin becomes easier with practice. Afterwhile no thought or caution is used at all.

If a brother or sister is in this condition, they need to be confronted in love to show the church cares about their eternal life. Drifting away from God is usually a little at a time.

We can be assured we are saved when we are concerned and care about:

III. What God Wants Us to Do

I John 5:19-20 ESV ¹⁹ We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Salvation is not just some mental exercise. We must know the Truth, yes; but we also must be concerned enough to do something positive for the Kingdom in the lives of others as well as ourselves.

A Christian should understand that his/her personal holiness and character reflect upon Jesus and His Church. People see us and evaluate our Savior based on our lives. That's pretty scary some days!

A. God wants us in the battle.

When a person is saved, he or she is a new creation and he crosses over from death to life, but they are still in the flesh even though they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A person who has received the gift of salvation will still sin. The point Plummer makes is: "A child of God may sin, but his normal condition is resistance to evil."

Westcott adds this: "The Christian has an active enemy, but he has also a watchful guardian. A Christian is not a person who never fails; he is a person who gets up and goes on every time he falls."

We are at war against the devil and those who are his allies. This conflict is dangerous!

B. God wants us to remain in Him.

Our relationship with God and other Christians, if it is strong, will help keep us pure and holy. It is called accountability. Attend church regularly, get in a study group, pray, read your Bible daily if possible. What you fill your mind with and how you spend your time will shape you.

I John 5:21 ESV ²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

We must love God more than anything or anyone. You might remember Jesus' question to the Apostle Peter before he could be reinstated as a leader. **John 21:15 ESV** ¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "**Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?**" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

An idol is anything or anyone that gets in the way of your full devotion to God. Is there something or someone that is a barrier between you and God, this morning?

Conclusion: Assurance of our present and future relationship with God should not lull us into some spiritual smugness. It should spur us on to encourage others, to love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:22-25 ESV ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Illus. In a conversation with a circus trapeze artist, the performer admitted the net underneath was there to keep them from breaking their necks, but added, “the net also keeps us from falling.” He went on to say, “Imagine there is no net. We would be so nervous that we would be more likely to miss and fall. If there wasn’t a net, we would not dare to do some of the things we do. But because there is a net, we dare to make two turns, and once I made three turns - thanks to the net!”

We can make mistakes with God, too, and not die. He is there to get us back up so we can succeed. In a world that is full of uncertainty and fear, it is great to know that some things never change. One thing that never changes is God’s commitment and love for His children. **“Jump, I’ll catch you,” God says.**

Isn’t it wonderful to know we are not only safe for now, but saved for eternity.

C.H. Spurgeon is quoted as saying that he was so sure of his salvation that he could grab onto a cornstock and swing out over the fires of hell, look into the face of the devil, and sing, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine.”

When the storms of life, the winds of trouble, and a sea of discomfort and emotional agony seem to overwhelm, we have to say with the songwriter, “Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness...We dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.”

If you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, you ought to know it!

If you are not a Christian, you will not go to heaven no matter how good you are. If you want to be sure to go to heaven, you must accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.