

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 2, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *A Sure Foundation for Our Faith* *1 John 5:6-13*

“⁶This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. ⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”
-1 John 5:6-13 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD JOHN:

- (1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience. Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...
- (2) **DATE = A.D. 90-95** - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have

been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D.

- (3) **PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus** – It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life.
- (4) **RECIPIENTS = Different audiences** - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.
- (5) **PURPOSE = Multiple purposes** - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4**, *“⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”* How may a Christians joy be full if they lack assurance of faith, or if they are unsure that that are even a Christian and assured of salvation? Why do you think that is?
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1-2**, *“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* What affect does sin in the life of a Christian have on his or her assurance? Why? What is John telling us here that might help?
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13**, *“¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* Why do you think this (assurance) might have been a stated purpose of John’s writing? Why so important?

“⁶This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. ⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”
 -1 John 5:6-13 (NKJV)

A SURE FOUNDATION FOR OUR FAITH (1 John 5:6-13)

Edward Mote's life was a testament to the transformative power of God's grace. He was born in 1797 to pub-owning parents, young Edward grew up without any knowledge of the Bible or the loving presence of Christ in his life. But his own words Mote recalled, "So ignorant was I that I did not know there was a God."

But God had a plan for Edward Mote's life. As a young apprentice cabinetmaker, Mote's life took a pivotal turn when his master brought him to the Tottenham Court Road Chapel. There, under the passionate preaching of John Hyatt, Mote encountered the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and embraced Him as his Savior and Lord. This experience would forever change the course of his life.

Despite his newfound faith, Mote continued to work diligently as a cabinetmaker, eventually establishing his own successful business. However, his heart was now filled with a deep love for hymns and a desire to express his gratitude to God through music.

1834 Edward Mote walked to his workshop in Holborn, London, the words of a chorus came to his mind, "On Christ the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." By the end of the day, he had penned four verses of what would become one of the most beloved hymns of all time.

The following Sunday, Mote visited a friend whose wife lay ill. As they gathered to sing a hymn and pray together, Mote realized he had forgotten his hymnal. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the verses he had written just days before. The words brought great comfort and peace to the ailing woman, and Mote, moved by the impact of his composition, added two more stanzas and had 1,000 copies printed to share with others.

In 1836, Mote's hymn, now titled "The Solid Rock," was published in the groundbreaking collection "Hymns of Praise, A New Selection of Gospel Hymns" – the first known use of the term "gospel hymn." The song's powerful message, rooted in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27), resonated with congregations far and wide.

At the age of 55, Edward Mote answered God's call and became a Baptist preacher. For 21 years, he faithfully served the Strict Baptist Church in Horsham, Sussex, never missing a single Sunday for any cause. His congregation offered to give him the deed to the church property as a token of their gratitude. Mote, however, humbly declined, saying, "I do not want the chapel. I only want the pulpit, and when I cease to praise Christ, then turn me out of that."

At the age of 77 Edward Mote's health gave way. As he lay on his sick bed, Mote's unwavering faith shone through. He said, "I think I am going to heaven. Yes, I am nearing port. The truths I have preached I am now living upon, and they will do to die upon. Ah! The precious blood, which takes away all our sins. It is this, which makes peace with God."

Today, “The Solid Rock” remains a timeless reminder of the unshakable foundation we have in Jesus Christ. Through countless generations, this hymn has brought comfort, hope, and encouragement to millions of believers, assuring them that their eternal hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

As we sing this cherished hymn, let us remember the incredible journey of Edward Mote – from the godless streets of London to a life dedicated to sharing the gospel. May his story inspire us to trust in the unwavering love and grace of God, knowing that in Christ alone, we stand upon the solid rock.

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

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil

His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay

When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne

On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand

VERSE 1: *“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”*

- (1) *What are some things that people today build their hope on? Why do you feel that they turn to these things for hope? What is wrong with hoping in these things?*
- (2) *In what ways does Jesus’ blood and righteousness give us hope? Explain*
- (3) *What “sweetest frames” do people sometimes trust in that can prove fleeting? “Sweetest frames” likely refers to important relationships in our lives... the love of our life (a spouse), our children or grandchildren, friends, our church family, we lean on these things thinking that these can bring lasting happiness and fulfillment, meaning and purpose... “If I just had children or grandchildren I’d be happy!” “If I could just find a mate, get married, find love I’d be fulfilled!”... and we lean of these things as the sweetest things in life. The problem is those things, as sweet as they are and they are some of the sweetest blessings in life, but the can’t do for you what Jesus can do for you. Those “sweetest frames” we lean on will one day be gone.*

VERSE 2: *“When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil”*

- (1) *What “darknesses” do we possibly encounter in this life that may make us feel that God face is hidden from us, or that He doesn’t see us? Why do these things affect us this way do you think?*
- (2) *The hymn writer speaks of resting on God’s “unchanging grace,” how might this help in in those season of darkness we may go though?*

VERSE 3: *“His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay”*

- (1) *The hymn writer speaks of God’s/Jesus’ “oath,” His “covenant,” and His “blood” in verse 3. What is he referring to? **These all speak of His promises. “Oaths” are His promises that are irrevocable... a solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness. “Covenants” can be loosely compared to promises, but often with more weight behind them. Covenants are sacred, and often take place between God and mankind. They can resemble a contract in some ways. The Hebrew word is “berith.” The root word for berith refers to cutting, because of the way covenants were made early in history. Originally, when covenants were made, they resembled a type of blood pact, requiring sacrifice to be sealed. In some ways, it preceded the sealing of God’s promise to redeem humanity from its sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. “His blood” is a direct reference to the oath and covenant in His blood that saves us and make us right with God, the forgiveness of our sins sealed in his blood.***
- (2) *How do these “promises” of God give us support (strength) when our lives are overwhelmed by the flood of problems, struggles, sins, challenges and our life begins to give way as verse 3 says?*
- (3) *Who is our hope and stay, and what is meant by the word “stay” do you think? Explain how these oaths, covenants, His blood give us staying power?*

READ: Matthew 7:24-28

“²⁴ Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” -Matthew 7:24-28 (NKJV)

- (1) *According to this passage what gives one a sure foundation in their life? Explain*
- (2) *What kind of things may threatened the foundation of our life?*
- (3) *What are the dangers of the wrong foundation in a life? Explain*

Skeptics frequently allege that Christian conversion is merely a “psychological phenomenon” that can be explained in purely naturalistic terms. *What does that mean do you think, and do you agree or disagree?*

Let me explain... in this view, conversion to Christ is a purely subjective (personal, individual, particular for you) experience. It’s nice if it works for you, but you shouldn’t try to impose it on everyone else or say that those who do not believe as you do are wrong. To each his own. If you say that Jesus Christ changed your life, the skeptic will reply, “That’s great for you, but it doesn’t prove that Christianity is true for everyone else. *What do you think about this? How would you answer/respond to this?*

In this view...

- *Buddhism changed Richard Gere’s life*
- *Scientology changed Tom Cruise’s life*
- *Cabalistic Judaism seems to have changed Madonna’s life*
- *So if you want to look at changed lives, there is plenty of evidence that Christianity is not the only religious truth out there*

How do you counter such arguments?

There is value in subjective, inner assurance of the truth of the gospel for believers. But we need a more sure foundation for our faith than our subjective experience alone provides.

Throughout 1 John, the apostle has been addressing the matter of authentic Christianity. False teachers had caused confusion in the church and had left, taking a number of people with them. They claimed to have secret knowledge about Jesus Christ, but their teaching contradicted the apostolic witness to Christ. John repeatedly shows that authentic Christians believe the truth about Jesus Christ, they obey God’s commandments, and they love one another. He began the letter by affirming the certainty of what the apostles knew about Jesus Christ in 1 John 1:1-3, *“¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

John wasn’t relaying some inner, subjective vision or philosophy. He was telling about his objective experience with Jesus Christ. You can’t get much more objective than seeing, hearing, and touching! Jesus Christ is God’s witness to us through the apostles who spent three years with Him. In our text, John comes back to this objective witness with which he

opened this letter. **He wants us to have a sure foundation for our faith.** Authentic Christian faith rests on God's testimony to the person of Jesus Christ.

Believing God's trustworthy witness to His Son gives us a sure foundation for our faith.

There are two parts to John's words in 1 John 5:6-13:

2 Parts to a Sure Foundation for our Faith in 1 John 5:6-13:

- (1) **God's trustworthy witness (1 John 5:6-9)** - In 1 John 5:6-9, John shows that God has given a trustworthy threefold witness to His Son.
- (2) **God's witness to His Son (1 John 5:10-13)** - Then in 1 John 5:10-13, he shows that believing God's witness to His Son gives us a sure foundation for our faith, with the aim (verse 13) **"that you may know that you have eternal life."**

Let's examine each of these two things individually...

GOD HAS GIVEN A TRUSTWORTHY THREEFOLD WITNESS TO HIS SON (1 John 5:6-9)

"⁶This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. ⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son." -1 John 5:6-9

- ➡ Regarding verses 6-8, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** states (*Life in God* [Crossway], p. 68), **"Now there can be no question at all but that these three verses are not only the most difficult verses in this epistle, but I think ... that they are the three most difficult verses, in a sense, in the entire Bible!"** I could find other verses that are much more difficult than these perhaps (like Hebrews 6:4-6), but his point is well taken, that these are difficult verses...

2 Things to Deal with in Understanding 1 John 5:6-9:

- (1) **The textual problem**
- (2) **The interpretive problem**

First, we must deal with the textual problem and then, with the interpretive problem.

The Textual Problem:

The textual problem is that the **New King James Version** (and the KJV) reads as following in **1 John 5:7-8**, **"For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth:**

the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” It is certain that the phrase beginning with *“in heaven”* (verse 7) through *“on earth”* are not a part of John’s original letter and should be omitted.

- There are no Greek manuscripts with this additional phrase before the 15th century.
- It comes from a marginal comment that was incorporated into the text of an Old Latin 5th century manuscript. (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], pp. 129-130 gives a full account of this.)
- The original text is accurately represented in the New American Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, and the New International Version
 NASB = *“⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”*
 ESV = *“⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”*
 NIV = *“⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”*

That is the textual problem with these verse.

The Interpretive Problem:

The more difficult problem is to determine what John means by his reference to *“the water and the blood”* in verse 6 and to *“the Spirit and the water and the blood”* verse 8.

- It is certain that John is establishing the historical factualness of the incarnation and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and citing God’s testimony to substantiate it.
- In Jewish thought, a point is confirmed in a court of law by the testimony of two or three witnesses.
- John here brings forth three witnesses that agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- He also seems to be refuting the false teachers by using expressions that were already familiar to his readers, but which are not so readily understood by us.
- Hence the difficulty of interpreting these verses...

There have been four main interpretations (On views 1, 2, & 4, I’m following John Stott, *The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], pp. 177-178; I think he misrepresents Calvin’s view, as does James Boice, *The Epistles of John* [Zondervan], p. 163).

4 Main Interpretative Views on 1 John 5:6-9:

- (1) **View 1: Some understand the water and the blood as a symbolic reference to the sacraments of baptism and communion = Martin Luther’s View** - This was Luther’s view and several commentators say that it was Calvin’s view. But it is not Calvin’s view, which I will explain in a moment. This view is unlikely for two reasons. First, while water may well stand for baptism, blood would be an unusual symbol for the Lord’s Supper. John would not likely omit a reference to Christ’s body if he meant the Lord’s

Supper. Second, John says that Jesus *came* by water and blood, which points to His past historical coming, not to any ongoing spiritual coming through the sacraments.

- (2) **View 2: Some link this passage with John 19:34-35, where John testifies to the blood and water that flowed from the spear wound in Jesus' side = St. Augustine's View** – John 19:34-35 says, ³⁴ *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.* ³⁵ *And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.* St. Augustine and some other ancient commentators held this view. At first glance it seems logical since John wrote both passages. Both texts emphasize the water and the blood, and both emphasize the idea of testimony. But the similarities are not so close upon further examination.
- In 1 John, Jesus came by water and blood, whereas in the Gospel, it was blood and water that came out of Jesus.
 - In 1 John, the water and blood bear witness to Jesus, whereas in the Gospel, John bears witness to the blood and water.
 - In 1 John, the water and blood seem to bear witness to Jesus' divine-human person, whereas in the Gospel, the blood and water bear witness to Jesus' human death, and perhaps to the salvation provided by it.
- (3) **View 3: Some viewed the terms “water and blood” as referring to the Old Testament rites of purification and blood sacrifice, which Jesus Christ fulfilled in His earthly ministry = John Calvin and C.H. Spurgeon's View** - A third approach is that of John Calvin (*Calvin's Commentaries* [Baker], pp. 256-257). C. H. Spurgeon seems to have followed Calvin here (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* [Ages Software], sermon 3252, “By Water and by Blood”). Calvin viewed the terms as referring to the Old Testament rites of purification and blood sacrifice, which Jesus Christ fulfilled in His earthly ministry. Thus, as Spurgeon explains (*ibid.*), “By the terms ‘water’ and ‘blood’ we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ's work for his people.” While this is true on a secondary level, I do not think that it is John's primary meaning. He is setting forth facts that establish God's testimony to the person and work of Jesus Christ as historically revealed. While Jesus' person and work do cleanse us from sin and pardon us, those are not the historic facts to which John is directing his readers in order to refute the heretics.
- (4) **View 4: Thus the most satisfactory interpretation takes water as a reference to Jesus' baptism (at the outset of His earthly ministry) and blood as a reference to His death on the cross = Tertullian's View** - This was Tertullian's view (c. 160/170-c. 215/220). It is the best view because in the context, John is emphasizing the historical foundations of the faith. Both His baptism and the cross are historic experiences that bear witness to Jesus' divine-human person. At each of these events, the Father intervened in a miraculous way to bear testimony to His Son. At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit descended

on Him as a dove and the voice from heaven declared (Matt. 3:17), “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” At His crucifixion, the sky was darkened, the earth quaked, numerous resurrections took place, and the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51-53).

This interpretation also fits with what we know of the historical setting of 1 John. The Cerentian Gnostics, whom John refutes throughout the letter, taught that Jesus was a mere man upon whom “the Christ” descended at His baptism and from whom “the Christ” departed before His death. These false teachers could not conceive of how a divine Savior could have died on the cross. To refute this serious heresy, John shows that Jesus was the Christ (God’s Anointed) before His baptism, where that fact was authenticated by the Spirit. “Came” implies that He came to earth from heaven. Since the Gnostics agreed that Jesus was the Christ at His baptism, John adds (5:6b), “not with the water only, but with the water and the blood.” This is to say that He was the Christ during and after His crucifixion.

Then John adds verses 6c-8, “...*And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*”

As mentioned, the Holy Spirit bore witness to Jesus at His baptism and at His death. Spurgeon (*ibid.*, “The Three Witnesses,” #1187, p. 552) points out that in Leviticus 8, when the priests were consecrated, they were washed with water, anointed with oil (a type of the Holy Spirit), and the blood of a sacrificial ram was applied to their ear, thumb, and toe. Even so, Jesus our great High Priest was washed with water at His baptism, anointed by the Spirit, and offered His own blood as the final and sufficient sacrifice for our sins.

John’s point here is that God has borne witness to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of truth bore witness to Jesus at His baptism, when He identified with sinners, although He Himself did not need to be cleansed. He testified of Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, through His miracles, His teaching, and His obedient life. He bore witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, initially through John the Baptist’s witness (John 1:29), but supremely at the cross. He confirmed that witness through the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The Spirit bore further witness when, in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, He descended on the church at the Day of Pentecost. He further affirmed the witness to Jesus through the miracles that the apostles performed. We have that witness in the New Testament.

Thus John’s point is that God’s threefold witness to His Son—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—is trustworthy. In a court of law, truth is established when numerous witnesses say the same thing and when those witnesses are shown to have credible character. John shows

us that the three witnesses all agree, and they are not just the testimony of men, but of God Himself.

Thus John argues **verse 9** of our passage, **“*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.*”** Every day we trust the testimony of fallen men, who are fallible at best. We could not deposit money in a bank, ride in a car, buy food at the grocery store, take an aspirin for a headache, or do any of the many things we do in our daily lives if we did not trust the witness of men. John is saying, “If you trust in men every day, can’t you trust what God has testified concerning His Son?”

If you’re not familiar with God’s testimony, you can read it in the New Testament. Be careful, though, to read it prayerfully and with a submissive, searching heart, asking God to open your eyes to His truth. If you come at it as a proud skeptic, demanding proof, you will come away empty, because God is not in the business of giving proof to proud sinners. If you come at it with preconceived notions of what the Savior should be like, you are likely to miss Him, because He is not a Jesus who fits your every desire and whim. You can’t make up a Jesus of your own liking. You must accept God’s testimony to the Jesus of the Bible.

The Jews of Jesus’ day, including the disciples, couldn’t conceive of a Messiah who would suffer and die, even though Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, along with the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, clearly predicted such. The risen Lord Jesus pointed out to the men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:25-26), **“*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*”** Luke adds (24:27), “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” The Scriptures give us God’s clear testimony of His Son.

What should we do with this testimony? Clearly, we must receive it or believe it personally. If we do not believe it, as John shows (5:10), we make God a liar. If we do receive it, we have a sure foundation for our faith:

BELIEVING GOD’S WITNESS TO HIS SON GIVES US A SURE FOUNDATION FOR OUR FAITH (1 John 5:10-13)

“*¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*” -1 John 5:10-13

John outlines three benefits of believing God's testimony to His Son and one danger of disbelieving that testimony.

3 Benefits of Believing God's Testimony to His Son:

(1) **Believing God's testimony gives us an inner witness, whereas disbelieving His testimony calls God a liar (1 John 5:10) -** *"¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son."* If we believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we have the testimony in ourselves. John is referring to the inner witness of the Spirit to the truth regarding Jesus Christ.

The external witness is the objective testimony of the New Testament, through the apostles, to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That is the primary foundation that shows that Christianity is not merely psychological. But, when you believe that testimony about Christ, as we saw in our last study, it is because God has changed your heart. You have become a new creature in Him. You were dead in your sins, but now you are alive to God in Christ. You were blind to the truth of God's Word, but now you see. You were a rebellious God-hater, but now you are an obedient God-lover. When you believe, you have this inner witness in yourself.

But the one who rejects God's testimony to His Son through unbelief makes God to be a liar, which is a serious matter! None of us likes to be called a liar, especially in the context of trying to help someone. If I offered a street person a check for \$100 and he grabbed me by the lapel and said, "Prove to me that this check is good," I'd have good reason to take my check back and leave him to his misery. If he ripped my check in two and threw it back at me, he would not experience the blessing I offered him. If a critic angrily says, "Prove to me that Jesus is the Son of God and I'll believe," he is doing far worse than tearing up my check. He is calling the only true God a liar. He is trampling on the gift of God's Son, who would forgive all his sins if he would receive Him. God has given more than sufficient testimony to His Son. If you receive that external testimony, God will give you the additional inner testimony that He is true. If you reject His external testimony, you will also lack the internal witness.

(2) **Believing God's witness to His Son gives us eternal life (1 John 5:11-12) -** John sums up God's testimony in verses 11-12, *"¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."* These important verses emphasize several vital truths...

3 Vital Truths:

1. **Eternal life is God's gift, not something we gain through our good works or efforts** - It does not require some special secret knowledge, as the heretics taught.

Like any gift, you must know about it (in this case, God has testified about it) and you must receive it. If you have to earn it, it's not a gift.

2. **God's gift is eternal life** - Nothing could be a greater gift! Because of our sins, we were spiritually dead, alienated from the life of God. God gives us as our *present possession*, not only unending life, but also His very life. He is the author of life. Jesus promised that if we believe in Him, we shall live even if we die, and that everyone who lives and believes in Him will never die (John 11:25-26). In other words, physical death will not rob us of this eternal life with God.
3. **Jesus Christ is everything** - If you have Him, you have eternal life. If you don't have Him, you do not have the life. As someone has said, "Christianity *is* Christ!" All of God's promises are yes in Him (2 Cor. 1:20). All that God offers us, He offers in Jesus Christ. He is the only sure, solid foundation for your faith. The most important question in the world is the one Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). Peter's answer, inspired by God, is the only correct one (Matt. 16:16), "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Do you believe this testimony that God has given about His Son? If so, you have eternal life. If not, you do not have the life and you will perish if you do not repent and believe!

(3) Believing God's witness to His Son gives a sure foundation so that we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13) – *"¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."*

"These things" refer to the entire letter. John has written this letter so that his little children will not be unsettled by the false teachers. If they believe in the name (= person) of the Son of God, then they may know that they have eternal life. John doesn't want us to *hope* so, but to *know* so. You can know because God's testimony about His Son is trustworthy. Your faith must rest in Jesus Christ alone, not in anything or anyone else. If your faith is in Christ, then you have the inner witness of His Spirit, that you are a child of God. You have the evidence in your life that He has changed your heart. You now believe the truth about Jesus. You obey God's commandments. You love God and others.

John's gospel (John 20:31) was *"written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."* His first epistle was written so that you who already believe in the name of the Son of God would not be shaken by false teaching, but rather, *"so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

CONCLUSION

If you don't know whether or not you have eternal life, nothing is more important than to make sure. Go back and read again God's testimony to His Son in the gospels. See the witness of the Spirit throughout the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus

Christ. God's testimony to Jesus is the foundation of our faith. Christianity is not just a psychological experience. It rests on this solid witness.

But, then, you must believe God's testimony about His Son. If you're neutral or ambivalent about it, you are not believing it. Worse, you're calling God a liar. John Stott writes (p. 182), "Unbelief is not a misfortune to be pitied; it is a sin to be deplored. Its sinfulness lies in the fact that it contradicts the word of the one true God and thus attributes falsehood to Him." Repent of your unbelief, of the audacity of calling the God of truth a liar. Accept His testimony to His Son and receive as a gift the eternal life that only the living God can impart.

3 Ways to Build a Firm Foundation in Christ:

- (1) **Remain devoted to Christ alone** – If we are going to build a firm foundation in Christ we must first learn to adhere continually. This ultimately means that when it comes to Christ — He has no equal. We must choose to remain hopelessly devoted to Him and Him alone. The psalmist put it this way in **Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me."**
- (2) **Trust in the Lord to provide** – Secondly, in order to build a firm foundation in Christ we need to anticipate joyfully. The truth is that the closer we draw ourselves to Him, the more we will find ourselves trusting Him. Trust gives birth to confidence, and when both are at work in the believers' life, there is a powerful expectation that should manifest itself in many ways. John tells us in **1 John 5:14-15, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"** Throughout our walk with the Lord, we will find ourselves in need. We need not conclude that each time reference is made to a need, that it must be financial in nature, because this is not the case. Our needs naturally go from the physical, to the mental, to of course the spiritual, and in each case we are assured that the Lord will meet that need as our trust and confidence is in Him. We are to joyfully anticipate Him to bring about the proper answer and response.
- (3) **Worship the Lord** - This all leads to the third way in which we can all build a firm foundation in Christ. One of the most difficult things to do whenever we encounter the various tides of difficult circumstances that at times, at least from our vantage point, seek to both overwhelm and overturn our faith, is to worship Him. Each test and trial we face should not only be met with, but also end with us adoring Him increasingly. The apostle Peter said it this way in **1 Peter 1:6-9, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls."**

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why must we emphasize God's objective witness to Christ and not just our subjective testimony of a changed life?
2. If the Christian faith rests on historic evidence, in what sense does it require faith? Is the evidence alone enough to produce faith? Why/why not?
3. How important is assurance of salvation? What are the practical ramifications? What should a person do who lacks it?
4. What implications does our text have for witnessing to lost people? What should we emphasize?