

## Week Eight: Assurance that We Belong to God

### OPENING PRAYER

READ | 1 John 5:1-21

<sup>1</sup>Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup>This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. <sup>3</sup>This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup>for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

<sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup>the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. <sup>9</sup>We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. <sup>10</sup>Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. <sup>15</sup>And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. <sup>16</sup>If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. <sup>17</sup>All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

<sup>18</sup>We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. <sup>19</sup>We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. <sup>20</sup>We know also 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—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup>Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

### DISCUSS

1. In verses 6-12, 'water' refers to Jesus' baptism and 'blood' to his death. What point is John trying to make and how does he make it?

*[These verses form an argument that can sound strange to our ears and can be somewhat hard to follow. Still, the basic point is simple enough: "Jesus Christ is who he claims to be—God in the flesh who offered himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin that we might be reconciled to God. Therefore believe in him or else forfeit eternal life." John is pointing to historical events that prove that Jesus is the Christ. As in a court where one must provide the testimony of two or three witnesses in order to win the case, his evidence or testimonies are the following: a) Jesus was baptized, and at that baptism the Holy Spirit descended on him and the Father's voice rang out saying, "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased"; b) Jesus was crucified as a sin-bearer and rose from the dead, thereby proving that the sacrifice was complete and acceptable; and c) Having believed on him, God speaks further testimony to our own hearts that Jesus is the Christ who has made us alive. The three pieces of evidence or testimonies together prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is God in the flesh, our savior. For the sake of the group and for practical impact on people's lives, try not to spend very much time trying to understand John's argument or speculating on other references to water, blood and the testimony of God. Instead, focus on his main point and its implications. Jesus is the Christ. Choosing to receive or reject this testimony is the most crucial decision a person can make in this life. The question with which we are all faced is this: Have you received this testimony? Your reception or rejection of the evidence is determinative both for your present life and your future life.]*

2. Verse 13 serves as a summary of the book of I John. Looking back over the book, can you recall some of the things John has said can assure us we have eternal life? How does our belief in/of these things affect a) whether we have eternal life and b) the degree to which we now experience eternal life if it's ours?

*[It's to enable readers to respond to the question, "Do you have the Son and with him life?" that every chapter of this book has been written. John, of course, wants them to be able to answer, "Yes," and to be secure and assured of their standing before God. That Jesus, the Son of God, died for sins and rose from the dead is our only certainty. He is our righteousness, our acceptance, our welcome, our completeness before God. If you confuse the grounds for your assurance of acceptance with the means of assurance of acceptance then you turn the Christian faith back into a performance oriented religion, and lead yourself back into obeying God out of fear and insecurity. To speak theologically, making this mistake confuses your justification with your sanctification. The means of assurance needs to be seen as supporting evidence that you have genuinely placed your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and that your righteousness is a gift of God.]*

#### APPLY

1. John writes in verse 3, "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome." What do you think 'not burdensome' means? Do you find this to be true in your life?
2. In the final verse John writes, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." What is an idol? No two people's idols are exactly the same... How do you go about discovering your main idols? In light of John's message in this book, why might this exhortation be an appropriate way to conclude?

*[An idol is anything that occupies the God's place, anything that drives your life, anything in which you trust to make you happy and determines your behavior. Our hearts are idol factories and we are called to continually rooting out idols. To do this, you must first discern what your idols are. Become utterly ruthless with yourself in asking the questions: a) "Is there anything besides God that is driving my life, and causes me to do things which are contrary to his commandments, or becomes the false motivation to keep his commandments?"; and b) "Is there anything besides God that I believe I must have in order to be happy?" You must convince yourself that these things, when elevated to a position where they determine your behavior and happiness, are dangerous and destructive to you. They pull you away from God, cause you to see him as less than sufficient to meet your needs, and cause you to insult him through disobedience and lack of contentment in him. They jeopardize your life. This is not to say that these things, whether they be success, acceptance, a companion, prosperity, or health are inherently bad in and of themselves. They are not, and it is not necessarily bad to desire them. It is only when they are elevated to a place in which they do not belong that they become evil—when a good thing becomes an ultimate thing. Idols are one of the central concerns of Scripture and deserve to be explored more. We are only touching on it here. Still, it is a completely appropriate way for John to draw things to a conclusion. Since idols compete with God for our hearts and make fellowship with God an impossibility, then to exhort us in this way only makes sense. Idols are at the heart of our problems. We must do everything we can to remove them and keep ourselves from them.]*

#### CLOSING PRAYER

- Prayer suggestions:
- > That the Holy Spirit would enable us more and more to be assured that we truly belong to God, and that from this we would be increasingly secure and confident in His love for us
  - > That our idols would be more and more revealed to us, since idols compete with God for our hearts and severely impede our fellowship with Him