

SESSION 10 – WEEK OF 21 MAR. 2021

TRUE CONFIDENCE AS GOD'S CHILDREN

SCRIPTURE: 1 JOHN 5:14-21

Theme:

God desires for us to be confident that we are His children, and to ground our lives in His love and protection.

Key Verse:

“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.” (1John 5:18)

Context

John brings his letter to a conclusion, reminding his audience of a purpose of His letter, that they might know that they have eternal life. (5:13)

As we have discussed over the past few weeks, knowing that we have eternal life is evidenced in our love for God through our love for our brothers. Now, John asks us to consider: How do we live with confidence as children of God who truly have eternal life?

Read 1 John 5:14-21

Core Questions for Discussion

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

1. In V14-15, John says that we will receive whatever we ask of God, if it aligns with His will. What encouragement and confidence do you draw from this verse?

- As children of God, we can have confidence that God will hear us whenever we bring Him our prayers and petitions.
- However, when we pray, it is important for us to align our prayers to God's will. In these verses, John emphasizes that prayers that align to God's will be heard.
- Aligning our prayers to God's will comes through knowing and building a deeper relationship with Him. Just as how we come to know a friend better by spending time to get to know their personality and character, it is the same with God. This comes through spending time

Does God really give us everything that we ask for?

It is easy for us to misconstrue verses like 1 John 5:15 and Philipians 4:13 with the idea that God will give us anything our hearts desire.

However, when we buy into this idea, we mistake God to be a wish-fulfilling genie. Romans 12:2 reminds us that as God renews our minds, we will come to know and to esteem His good and perfect will. 1John 5:14 itself reminds us that our asking ought to be according to God's will, not our own. (See also James 4:1-3.) Hence, when we desire what God desires, He will give us everything we desire.

For further reading, see <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/six-prayers-god-always-answers>

with Him daily in prayer and reading His Word. When we discover who He is, we are greater able to discover His will for us and our lives.

- When we God does not give us what we pray for, we can also take heart to know that what we prayed for is not in accordance to His will. If His will is good and perfect for us, what we prayed for may not be good for us in the long-term and we can trust in God's sovereign wisdom.

2. What does John encourage us to pray for? (V16)

- John says that if we see a fellow Christian sin, we should pray for them that they will receive life, which God promises to give.
- Recall what we've learnt over the past 10 weeks. How great is the love of God that He has given us eternal life? Although here in 5:16, John refers to Christians, we should also reflect about our friends who have yet to come into fellowship with God and with the body of Christ (cf. 1John 1:3)
- Perhaps you may encourage your group to take some time to think of people who have yet to hear about the Gospel. As John has said in His Gospel, people who do not know Christ continue to live in darkness. Take some time to pray that these people will come into the light. Is God prompting *you* to be a light to them?

3. John ends his epistle by emphasizing the blessings and the calling of a child of God. What are some of these things? What confidence and hope does this give you amidst the challenges of living in a sinful and troubled world?

- John says that children of God:
 - do not continue to sin.
 - find protection in God who keeps them safe.
 - live in a world that is under the control of the evil one
 - receive their understanding of who is the true God from the Son of God.
 - being in Jesus Christ.

What are the sins that lead, or not lead, to death?

Do you feel puzzled when you read vv. 16-17? Isn't the penalty for all sin death and eternal damnation? The following comments may help:

"In the context of 1 John, the sin that leads to death must be related to the statement in 5:12. [...] The sin that leads to death, therefore, is the sin of rejecting Christ's atonement, the sin of calling God's testimony a lie (1:10; 2:22; 5:10). [...] The brother or sister who is sinning the sin that leads to death has a heart that has not been transformed by the new birth. Despite their self-identification as a Christian and their presence in the gatherings of the church(es), they have refused to believe in Jesus Christ, to follow God's commands, and to love their brothers and sisters. As Kruse suggests, "the sin that does not lead to death is the sin of the believer ... the sin that does lead to death is most likely that of the unbeliever." Scholer also emphasizes that "the 'sin not unto death' is one which a believer can and does commit and the 'sin unto death' is one which a believer does not and cannot commit."

-Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (2014), pp.234-236.

"The sin that does not lead to death and damnation is any sin that we commit that, by God's grace, we are capable of truly confessing and repenting from."

- John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-the-sin-not-leading-to-death-in-1-john-5>

- John reminds us that as we have been transformed by God's love, we cannot continue to sin and live as if we have not received Christ's love. As John has mentioned throughout his epistle, we love because He first loved us.
- John does not sugar-coat the challenges of living in the world. He understood the challenges that Christians go through. There were temptations of sin around every corner, for the world was 'under control by the evil one.' He also knew that their beliefs were challenged and they were confused as to what was true and who to believe in.
- What are some sins that you are struggling with? What are some practical ways that you can remind yourself of your confidence and hope in Christ and work towards overcoming your struggles?
- However, he shares hope that children of God can know and be confident in, for God protects his children and the evil one cannot touch them. We can remember that everyone who is born of God will be protected by Him and will overcome the world. (1 John 5:4)
- Remember that God is love and through this love He has given us eternal life. This is the truth that we need in our life amidst the lies and doubts that the world gives us.

Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

4. *If you have time ...*

Take some time to look back on the 10 weeks of our study of 1 John.

What are some key themes that have emerged? (*Hint: revisit the sermon titles at our website, <http://www.brmc.org.sg/category/worship-service-times/pulpit-calendar>*)

The Word of God should not leave us unchanged but discovering God's truth through His Word should transform our lives. How is God using these themes to mould and transform your mindset, your activity, your way of life?

For instance: Is Jesus your light? Are you living entirely in His light, or are you partly walking in the shadows? Do you have the assurance that you're born of God? Do you trust that in Christ, we have overcome the world? In whom or what is your confidence really placed? How does this confidence show through in your everyday pattern of life? In what ways can you identify with the struggles of John's audience? Is God calling you to know a deeper love for Him? Is God calling you to soften up your hearts towards a brother or a sister in Christ? Is the Lord prompting you to demonstrate love in material and sacrificial ways? Is your love for our unseen God seen through your love for brothers and sisters?

Suggestions for Prayer

5. We could pray for:

a. Ourselves:

- i. Has your confidence in God been negatively impacted due to sin and spiritual apathy? Or due to an experience of pain and suffering? Or due to fear of the evil one? Has your confidence been misplaced, or displaced onto other worldly priorities? Would you share these struggles with your group, and commit to pray for one another that God might daily grow in us the true confidence as His children?
- ii. What has God revealed to you over the past few weeks? Will you pray that God will set the truth that He has revealed deep in your heart? May you discover the love behind the eternal life God has given you. Ask God to take the head knowledge of His love and transform your heart such that you may marvel at His love.

b. Others beyond our small group:

Love for the people around us. Is there a brother or a sister whom you are struggling to love? Ask God to show you His love for him/her and may His love for you be an overflow into that person's life. Is there someone you know who has not discovered God's love? Would you, as a group, lift up that person to God in prayer that they may receive eternal life from Jesus? Would you ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with this person, and for opportunities to demonstrate love to this person in practical and material ways?