

Established and Ongoing Final Assurance – 1 John 5:13-21

Introduction – It is common today in many circles to dismiss any claim to assurance of salvation as presumptuous and instead to affirm that no certainty is possible on this side of death. It is also claimed that such “assurance” only leads to licentiousness and that uncertainty leads to a healthy pursuit of holiness. Quite the opposite, John’s purpose in his letter has been to establish a godly assurance that presses towards and empowers obedience, humility, and community, all in union with God the Father, His Incarnate Son, and the power and Person of the Holy Spirit.

That You May Know (v13) – How many times have we come to what this verse is telling us? Over and over again, John has made his point that he has written these things so that those who believe in the name of the Son of God would know (with great certainty) that they have eternal life. This “*knowing*” which is both objective and subjective is efficacious and drives us to continue to believe in the name of the Son of God in circumstance after circumstance, in the face of one false teacher after another, and against each and every attack from the world, the flesh, and the devil. John’s purpose for writing his gospel was that readers would believe (John 20:31) and his purpose for writing this epistle was that believers would know and continue to believe. Established in the true God, we are granted ongoing assurance in Jesus.

Assurance in Prayer (vv14-15) – Such confidence is displayed with a freedom of speech and boldness to approach God in prayer – any prayer. In contrast to some idea of a Gnostic elite or inner ring of priests, all who are in the Son are anointed with the Spirit and may approach the Father in prayer. That confidence assumed rightly that, as sons, we can expect our Father to hear us and respond.

Of course, we don’t always receive what we ask, and this teaches us that God is not a vending machine or genie in a bottle. However, in the context of confessing the true, sovereign God to Whom we have an intimate and immediate access, we are to discipline our prayers such that we grow in praying according to His will. This is not an excuse to simply pray “*if it be Thy will...*” but rather an expectation to grow in the knowledge of God and His will. And of course, this Sovereign we confess knows far more perfectly and exactly what we need, and He grows us up until we ask for the things we really, most deeply, want.

Assurance in Prayer for Others (vv16-17) – For some, the slightest infraction from another believer becomes an unforgivable sin. In contrast, our confession and assurance provides for us the opportunity to pray for others when they sin and to see God grant them life in response to those prayers (Job 1:4-5). And so, the way to deal first with sin in the community of believers is to pray, sharing with one another the responsibility for one another’s sins – which is reflecting the action of Jesus who took responsibility for our sins on the cross.

The Sin Unto Death – Context helps make this clear. We pray for others who have joined with us in acknowledging Jesus as their Advocate, their Savior, and the propitiation for their sins. We pray for them as brothers and sisters in Christ. But if someone has high-handedly denied that Jesus is the Son of God (and with that his need for cleansing from sin), then this kind of prayer is not efficacious. That is not to say that we cannot pray for God to turn such a stubborn one to Himself – it’s just that John is not addressing that kind of prayer.

Assurance Away from Idols (vv18-21) – Three strong affirmations end this epistle (*We know, we know, we know...*) and a final exhortation (*guard yourselves*). We *know* that those who are in Christ cannot be touched and ruined by the evil one (John 6:35-40). We *know* the stark antithesis of either being under Christ or under the evil one – there is no middle ground, no third way. And we *know* that we have this power to understand (and believe) because the Son of God has given it to us. *This is the true God and eternal life.*

This assurance keeps us from idols. John is not changing the subject of the epistle. While he has not been addressing idols fashioned from wood or stone, he has been addressing idols much like ours today. Idols of the mind, idols of false-teaching, idols of our own devising and imagination – these idols will cause us to stray from the sole confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God sent to take away our sin and the sin of the whole world. And so, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*