

Epistles of John Chapter 6 the Confidence

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having confidence in God, which is based on the record of His gift of eternal life, and leads to a deeper understanding and satisfaction of knowing God.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, John 3:36, John 15:7, Romans 8:16, Ephesians 1:13-14, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 1:9, 1 John 5:13-14

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Confidence In God"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound confidence believers can have in their relationship with God, rooted in the assurance of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. He explains that this confidence is not merely intellectual but is confirmed by the Holy Spirit, providing believers with peace and assurance of their salvation. Simpson further elaborates on the importance of praying according to God's will and believing in the fulfillment of those prayers, as well as the sanctifying power of Christ that keeps believers from sin. Ultimately, he highlights that true knowledge of God comes through a personal revelation and relationship with Him, which brings lasting satisfaction and rest to the soul.

Transcript

"This is the confidence that we have in him." (1 John 5: 14.)

The universe is held together by the one great law of gravitation. Society is held together by the one great law of confidence, in the family, the commercial world, and the larger circle of tribes and nations. The spiritual world is held together by the law of faith which binds man to God, and adjusts him to his fellow man, even as the law of gravitation binds the solar system and the larger universe.

The apostle John, whose great heart and divine intuition reached to the essential principles of things rather than mere outward forms, having unfolded already the great principles of life and love in this epistle, now leads us to the law of faith and the principle of confidence, which underlies all spiritual life and experience. Again and again we find in this epistle the expression "we know," and in the closing chapter it rises to the highest and most comprehensive range of spiritual truth and experience.

I. WE KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life." No truth has become more pronounced and more practical and powerful for good in

the Christian teaching of our day than this; that it is the privilege of every child of God to possess not only a hope of heaven, but a full assurance of his acceptance in Christ. Two blessed facts enter into this assurance. First, we have eternal life, and second, we know we have it. Nothing less than this can satisfy an earnest soul. The more valuable an object is, the more necessary it is that our title to it should be sure. You are willing to purchase a bill of goods for fifty cents without a title of deed, but you would not purchase a house and lot at ten thousand dollars without a title guarantee. The foundation of this assurance is very clearly stated in this passage. It is not our personal consciousness, our happy feelings, our new experience or our better life. But it is a record that God has given and that God requires us to believe. "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." The record is very simple and easy to be believed. It is not that we may have eternal life, but that God has already given it and laid it at the feet of every man who will receive it. The gift has been bestowed, the proffer has gone forth. God is committed to us and we have only to endorse the Word that He has given, put our name in the promise and claim the salvation as our own. Not only may we do this, but we are commanded to do it and very solemnly told that "he that believes not God has made him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son." In His great love God has adjusted the offer of the Gospel to our intelligent nature. He has given us an understanding, a will, and a reasoning mind, and He meets our intelligence with a simple business proposition offering to us the free gift of eternal life on the simple condition that we accept it and begin to count it our own. Then He reckons it to us according to our reckoning by faith. He puts us in the place we put ourselves, and the gift is ours for the taking. A man, therefore, may have eternal life just as simply and certainly as a citizen of the United States could have become the owner of a free grant of land in the great West by putting in his claim according to the offer of the government and settling upon the land as his own. As we read these lines, if the question is still unsettled, we may decide it now and receive the precious gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But it is not all a matter of intellectual faith or decision of the will to believe. The moment we commit ourselves to God's Word, and count it true for us, God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, imparts to the soul a distinct sense of its acceptance and a conscious assurance of His peace and love. This is what is meant by the statement, "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." In the very act of believing there comes to the soul a rest, a satisfaction, and a confidence born of the Holy Ghost and attesting the great fact which our faith has already claimed. There are two seals. First we must affix our seal to the simple document. "He that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true." That is the seal of our faith. But now comes the second seal of the Holy Spirit's touch. "After that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Thus we may know that we have eternal life. Beloved, have we this confidence?

II. "WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE DESIRED OF HIM"

Having settled the question of our salvation by faith we now go on to apply the same principle of faith to our whole Christian life, and we receive the answers to our prayers by the very same principle which enables us to take the first step. Indeed, a right faith at the start will be of infinite help to us all the way through, and a halting confidence for our salvation will make us halting Christians to the end of the chapter. The first thing required of us when we pray is that we ask according to His will. "This is the

confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." We should spend more time in determining what to pray for than in pleading for it afterwards. His will is revealed in His Word, and every promised blessing within the covers of the Bible is a proper thing to ask and believe for. His will is very large and generous and covers all our needs of spirit, soul, and body.

Then, having asked according to His will, we are next to believe that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. This is according to the command of our Lord during His earthly ministry. "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." We may not have the actual thing for which we have prayed in tangible and visible possession, but we have the petition. His consent has been given. The request has been honored. The decree has been passed. The blessing is on the way and the delivery will come in God's due time. We can afford to wait. We can afford to suffer. We can afford to be tested. We have His Word and we count the things that are not as though they were. This gives to prayer a definiteness and a force which are most satisfying. Without this our prayers are mere ventures, like the soap bubbles which a child may blow into air and they float away and disappear, and he never expects to see more than one in a score again. True prayer, like the echo, should come back to us, first in the shout of praise and then in the glad song of deliverance. This is the prayer that can help others and can call into action all the forces of omnipotence for the work of Christ and the salvation of men. This was the way Christ prayed. "Father, I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that You hear me always." And this is the way that Christ has bidden us to pray, for He has said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

III. WE KNOW THAT HE SANCTIFIES AND KEEPS US

"We know that whosoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." Most of our spiritual failures arise from discouragement. We go out expecting to fall, and of course we fall. If we would but know that there is One within who is mightier than our weakness and stronger than all the strength of our foes, and that He is keeping us and will keep us, we should not fear and would not fall. It is confidence that keeps the soul.

This confidence, however, must be founded upon a right understanding of God's way of sanctification. First we must learn to distinguish between our new self and our old self. We must count the old life as wholly renounced, and refuse any more to fear or obey it. We must recognize ourselves as having a new life, born of God, and as free from sin as the rose is free from the soil or the sand that touches it, but cannot defile it; as the seafowl is free from the defiling strain of the miry waters in which it plunges; as the Son of God was free from the pollution of the world through which He passed with His immaculate holiness. Then we must learn that sin consists not in the temptation of the evil one or in the various moods and feelings which he may throw over our minds and hearts, but in the deliberate attitude of our will. The evil thoughts which Satan hurls upon us like fiery darts, are not our sins but his, unless we accept them and endorse them. We can throw them off as the rose washes off the dust of the highway, as the seafowl sheds the brine from its burnished wing, as the ship throws off the waves that threaten to submerge her. We can say to the tempter that these thoughts are yours, not mine. I refuse them. I am not defiled. I will not sin and I will not fear. God accepts our will as our real action and counts us victorious according to the fixed purpose of our hearts. Then we must also understand that sanctification is not our holiness, our self-perfection, our goodness, but, as so well expressed here, the keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him we stand, in Him we overcome, in Him we are perfect. So He that was begotten of God keeps us and that wicked one touches us not. To know this is to be armed with omnipotence and clothed with victory. Beloved, is this the confidence that we have in Him?

IV. WE KNOW HIM

This is the best of all. Our confidence is not merely in His Word, His answers to our prayers, His help in our conflicts, but in His own character and love as He has revealed Himself to us and taught us as the sum of all knowledge to know Him. And so the most sublime height of this whole epistle is reached at last. "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." Higher than all blessings received, deeper than all truth revealed, back of all that He has said and all that He has done, is what He is Himself and what He is to us. But, before all this can become a fact and an experience, there must come to us a divine revelation and a divine understanding. And so the apostle tells us that He "has given us an understanding, that we may know Him." This is something the natural heart cannot know itself. This is something that genius and learning cannot find. This is something that eloquence cannot make plain. This is something that must come to us through the direct vision of the Holy Ghost, giving us a new conception, a divine intuition, a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our very hearts.

Therefore, it comes to pass that many of the most gifted minds of earth are dark and blind with respect to the knowledge of God. To them He is but a name, a possible force, a remote and unreal fact. By all their searching they cannot find out God. Talk to them about the delights of His presence and it is all to them as an unmeaning sound. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit." There is nothing more sad than the helplessness of the human heart to reach the conception of God and to realize the presence of Christ. It is one of the most precious gifts of divine love. It is as new a sense in the soul as the instinct of a bird. And so on the other hand, there are souls that are illiterate and unrefined. But their whole being is alive with the spiritual sense. Christ is more real to them than any material thing. His presence is a fountain of perpetual joy. They live in a world of ever changing, ever fresh delight and their happy heart is a heaven below. God has given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true, and they are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then there comes with this the deep delightful assurance that the soul has found at last the true, the real, the eternal. Everything else has disappointed us. Everything else has failed us. Everything else has proved transitory or false. But this is true. This satisfies the heart. This meets every intuition and longing of our nature. This fills the fullness of our being, and the transported heart sinks into infinite rest and sings with holy gladness,

Here rest, my long divided heart,

Fixed on this blissful center, rest.

Somehow we know that this will never fail us, this will never change, this will never pass away. This will grow deeper, sweeter, stronger, through all time and all eternity. This is truth. This is God. This is everlasting rest. Oh, the satisfaction that it brings to the poor tempest tossed heart after it has been buffeted by the billows of skepticism, by the storms of doubt, by the assaults of Satan and sin, by the disappointments of life, by the sorrows, sickness, and heartbreaks of this vale of tears. It has got home at last and it understands the sublime strains of the ancient song that first echoed on the plains of Paran, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Beloved, have you found Him that is true? Have you come to know Him? Have you received the revelation of His face, of His presence, of His love? Have you entered into His rest?

Perhaps as you read these lines your heart is chilled with a sense of loneliness and disappointment. Perhaps the very joy these words describe only makes you the more conscious of your strangeness to it all. Perhaps the very happiness of the hearts around you only depresses you with a deeper discouragement because it is all a blank to you. Listen! He is waiting to make this vision real to your heart. He is ready to give you this revelation of Himself. You have tried to think it out. Your religion has been too much in your head, your hands, your feet, what you are pleased to call your practical nature. There is something else in the human soul that needs to be educated and fed. It is the heart. It is the spiritual sense. It is that which feels and knows and loves. It was made for God, and God alone can awaken it and satisfy it. Ask Him to do so. Fall at His feet in helplessness, and yet in confidence say to Him, Lord, I beseech You show me Your glory, and upon you will open the vision of God, and to you will come the joyful testimony:

You have bid me gaze upon You,

And Your beauty fills my soul,

For by Your transforming power,

You have made me whole.

Simply trusting You, Lord Jesus,

I behold You as You are,

And Your love so pure and changeless,

Satisfies my heart.

Ever lift Your face upon me,

As I live and work for You;

Resting 'neath Your smile, Lord Jesus,

Earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,

Sunshine of my Father's face,

Keep me ever trusting, resting,

Fill me with Your grace.

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