

Studies in 1 John 03 Australia Conference

by William W. Campbell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian assurance and the boldness believers can have in their relationship with God through prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 58:25

Scripture: 1 John 5:13

Topics: "Christian Assurance", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of Christian assurance, using passages from 1 John. He explains that Christian assurance is obtained through three means: the objective and historic facts of the Gospel, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the confirmation of a changed life. The preacher emphasizes that Christian assurance is manifested in attitudes of boldness and confidence. Throughout the sermon, the word 'boldness' is used to describe the assurance that believers have in their relationship with God. The sermon highlights the importance of Christian assurance and encourages believers to have confidence in their faith.

Transcript

We thank thee for the promise of our Lord's return. Impress upon us something of the solemnity and wonder, as well as the joy of this prospect. And we pray that we may be sought out, doing thy will, walking in the light in fellowship with thee, seeking to take our lives as Christians seriously, seeking day by day the power and help of thy Holy Spirit, and the strength that comes through feeding upon thy Word, that we may be manifesting the qualities, the true qualities of the life of the child of God, the life that has been demarcated to us by the new birth, that we may bring glory to thy name.

We thank thee, our Lord, for thy holy Word, and for its comforts and its assurances. We thank thee also for its challenge and its direction, and we pray that we may accept this gladly from thee, and seek to adore for the doctrine of our God and Savior in all things, for the glory of his name. Amen.

So many of you turned out on this stormy evening to wait upon the ministry of God's Word, and for the way in which these meetings have been supported in spite of the difficult weather and the prevailing sickness, I am grateful indeed, and we trust that this night may be a time of blessing for us all as we turn to the Holy Scriptures. We have a number of readings from 1 John. First of all, in chapter 5, our subject tonight is the subject of Christian assurance.

1 John 5, and we read at verse 13 to 15, The things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the patience which we have asked of him.

Now, in chapter 3, and it's verse 18 through to 24, the end of the chapter, 1 John 3, 18. My little children, let us not lock in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are from the truth, and shall assure our heart before him whereinsoever our heart condemn us, because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

The Lord is if our heart condemneth not, we have boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his Son. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandments. And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he gave us. Now, in chapter 2, 1 John 2, 28. And now, my little children, abide in him, that if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

And finally, in chapter 4, verse 17. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this. Now, quite a cursory reading of John's first epistle would bring us the knowledge that this letter is brimful of Christian assurance.

The writer addresses his message to those with whom he shares certain glorious certainties. They are a people who know, and this is written across the whole of the epistle. We know that the Son of God is coming.

Now, John 5, 1 John 5, 20, which is very much more than merely affirming that we believe in the historic birth of Jesus of Nazareth. We know that the Son of God is coming. Now, we know that we are of God, 1 John 5, 19.

We know that we are in him that is true, 1 John 5, 20. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, 1 John 3, 16. Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he gave us, 1 John 3, 24.

Hereby know we that we know him if we keep his commandments, 1 John 2, 3. From these scriptures, we may gather this Christian assurance is brought to us through the objective and historic facts of the Christian message, and also, secondly, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and thirdly, by the confirmation in human experience, the come of a change in conduct in the hearts of those in whom God has worked. So, there are three lines by which God brings to us his assurance, the objective and historic facts of the gospel, the gift of his Holy Spirit, and the ethical confirmation in a changed life. It is along these three lines that God brings to the believing heart Christian assurance.

We enter positively into these distinct areas of Christian knowledge and experience in this way. We notice that the Christian assurance manifests itself in certain attitudes, attitudes of boldness or confidence, and you will notice that in our forereadings, the word boldness occurs in each passage. In the author, I impression, on such an occasion, the word confidence is used, and only on one occasion boldness, but it's the same word.

Now, it is an interesting word, and it's around it usually in these four passages that our study tonight revolves by the scriptures in classical Greek writing. This word boldness, in Greek counterpart, is used for the outspoken and fearless declaration of personal opinion which was especially the cherished privilege of Athenian freemen. It's much in the same way as we believe in freedom of speech, and in our own land it is both defended and assailed in these days in which we live, but it's one of the basic freedoms in which we delight, freedom of speech, and that's part of its significance in these passages where it occurs in one genre.

In the New Testament, it means confidence which expresses itself in word or act, freedom of thought or speech. Perhaps it would help if we thought of some of the occurrences of this word outside the passages that we are thinking of tonight. For instance, in John 11:14, then says Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

Previously, our Lord had said, our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but the disciples weren't ready for this new way in which death was to be viewed as a result of the Christian message, and so the Lord had to say to them plainly, openly, he had to tell them with perfect frankness and candor what had happened. Lazarus is dead. Again, in the gospel by John, our Lord said, these things have I spoken to you in Proverbs, the time cometh that I shall speak no more unto you in Proverbs, but shall tell you plainly of the Father.

Plainly is this word that we are considering tonight. Not only did our Lord use it, but we find in the Acts of the Apostles that Peter uses this word. On the day of Pentecost, he said, brethren, I may speak unto you freely of the patriarch David.

He was about to expound to them the meaning of the sixteenth psalm, and to show that this psalm did not refer to David, but David was writing of someone else whose body was not left, whose soul was not left. He said, I may speak unto you freely of our father David. He says, his settler is Peter with us today.

We may go and visit him. Visit. Very obviously, the psalm didn't refer to him.

Here is a very challenging use of the word. Our Lord said, or at least stated in the gospel, no man speaks openly of him for fear of the Jews. No man speaks boldly for him.

No man spoke with frankness and candor of him for fear of the Jews. I wonder what fear keeps us from speaking openly and boldly and confidently for him. And then, in strong contrast to that, our Lord's own words, I spoke openly in the world.

I spoke boldly, with confidence. Our Lord was the faithful and true witness. These, then, are some of the passages where this word occurs and gives to us some idea of its significance.

Many of these scriptures, however, that we have spoken of, speak of his boldness toward men. But the four passages that we are considering tonight from 1 John speak of boldness toward God, Christian assurance and confidence toward God, and the passages forwarded to Jews. Boldness toward God now, boldness toward God in the hereafter.

We'll consider, then, first of all, the passage in 1 John 5, verses 13 to 15. As John draws near to the core of his letter, he takes a further reason for writing this letter and sending it forth. Verse 13 says, These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.

This was a certainty that they were to have here and now. They weren't to wait for it. This was something that we have in this life.

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life. The gospel by John was sent to unbelievers, and John declares the reason why he wrote his gospel. These things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in his name.

The epistle of John is written to believers, and it is written that those who have eternal life may know that they have it. So, the gospel is written that you might believe and have the epistle that you might have and know. So, God has no desire that his people should be in any doubt as to their glorious heritage, but that they should have Christian confidence concerning the things which God has given to them in Christ, that ye may have and know phonetic eternal life.

That is, the quality of life that was manifested in the Lord Jesus. We have boldness for God, says verse 15, and this boldness, this confidence, this Christian assurance that God has given to us is manifested in our prayer life. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

Walking in the light and in fellowship with God, we shall have a prayer life that is marked by perfect candor. That is to say, coming into the presence of God, we won't wear a mask. We shall throw off every form of cap, and we shall behave perfectly naturally in the presence of God.

Realizing that God does not look on the outward, but God looks on the heart, and if we cultivate this perfect candor with God in our prayer life, that is having boldness toward God. In the Old Testament, Greek version, which is called the Septuagint, in Job 27, verse 10, we have our boldness bouquet, which will help us to understand the meaning here in 1 John 5. Job, thinking of the ungodly man, said, will he delight himself in the Almighty, and call upon God at all times? Now, the word delight there is a word, boldness. It's the thought of joyous confidence.

Will the ungodly man come into the presence of God and delight himself in the Almighty? The answer, of course, is no, he won't. The only person who will do this is the one from whose heart all fear, that is, fear in the sense of dread, has been removed, and whose heart has been filled with the love of God, and bringing to him joy of certainty concerning salvation, he comes into the presence of God, and he calls upon God at all times. Unbelievers have strange ideas about prayers, and about the purpose of prayer, and unfortunately, it is not limited to unbelievers.

Many of God's children have not got beyond the idea that praying is merely asking God for things that we want, a sort of idea of how we get God to do what we want, but that, of course, is not the purpose of prayer. Prayer, on the contrary, is not a means whereby we get God to do what we want. Prayer is the way that God has elected to have his will done on earth to us, and so the whole business of praying is to pray within the will of God.

This is the boldness which we have taught him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us, and if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the positions which we have asked of him, to rise from our knees with the certain knowledge that we have already the things that we have asked, instead of being the norm of Christian experience, has become the exception. This would seem to indicate that our problem in prayer is to live within the will of God, that we may pray within the will of God. To pray within the will of God means that at that time when we are praying, we are, to the best of our knowledge, committed to the will of God, and when we pray, we pray not for the things that we could

do ourselves, nor for the things that we are unable to play our part in accomplishing, and both of these I'm afraid we are guilty of.

Asking God to do what we can do. God has no time for fools. If we want to play in that foolish way, let us play with men, but not with God.

I remember reading a story of an elderly man who had prayed in a visionary prayer meeting with great fervency, and if we, according to this story, had known no more other than what we had heard publicly, we would have considered that this man was committing, in every area of his life, to the war, and to the missionary cause. But, in the story, his nephew, who happened to be staying with him at the time, was heard to observe, my uncle could have answered most of his own prayers tonight if he would only get out his checkbook. It is folly to ask God for things that we ourselves can do, and similarly, to ask God for that in which we are not prepared to cooperate with him is equally folly.

We are praying for someone's conversion, but the last thing we would do would be to speak to them about their soul. We must not play the fool with God. When we are praying, at the time when we are praying, we must be committed to God's will, and if we are, then we can rise from our knees with the search that we have been heard, and to be heard is to be answered.

Our Lord said in John 15 verse 7, if he abideth me, and my words abideth you, ask what he will, and it shall be done unto you. There is a Jewish saying, do his will as if it were thine, that he may do thine as if it were his. Do his will as if it were thine, that he may do thine as if it were his, and if we abide in him and his words abide in us, there can be no doubt that that experience will form our character so that our actions will be within the law of God.

We'll be men and women who are committed to the Lord, committed to his will, committed to do and to respond to him in the fulfilling of his purpose in this world, but there is no use coming to pray if we are holding back, if we know perfectly well in our hearts that we've no intention of cooperating with God. Our prayers are merely trying to get God to do our will on earth. Our need is to pray so that we may be brought into line with God's will, that he may effect his purpose through us, and Christian assurance manifests itself in this attitude in prayer that we have openness, we have delight in God because we are committed to the Lord.

We are walking in fellowship with him, we are walking in, we are obeying and loving and believing, and God's response to that committal is to give to us the certainty that our prayers are heard and answered. As Whittier sang, all that I feel of pity thou hast known before I was. My best is all thy own, from thy great heart of goodness, mine that draws ways and prayers.

But thou, Lord, wilt do in thine own time by ways I cannot see, all that I feel when I am near thee. And there is no doubt at all, it is when we are conscious of being near the Lord in experience that we are going to pray within his will, and rise from our knees with the glad consciousness that we have been heard, and that we already have the things that we have asked of him. Possessing them in glad anticipation, we now consider the passage in chapter three, verses 18 through 24.

Now, this passage indicates the sad possibility of Christian men and women losing their wholeness, and being condemned by their own conscience. The psalmist wrote, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, but verily God hath heard me. Now, this is an interesting passage that the Revised Luke 8 helps tremendously to elucidate, and I want us to think of it in this way.

Conscience is before a tribunal, and on this tribunal there are three members. The first member of the tribunal is our heart. Verse 20.

Our heart condemns, that's the first member of the tribunal. That is, there is the general banner of our lives, not the isolated incidents, but the things which go to show where our real life is found. Let us get in verse 18.

My little children, let us not lie, but indeed admit the truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. That's the second member of the tribunal is God.

God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Now, the first member of the tribunal condemns us. He is occupied with the apparent failures of which we are all too conscious.

The occasions when we know, the occasions that we deplore when we have failed the Lord, when we have either failed in our witness or failed in our living, and these incidents are the matter that the heart fixes on, and the heart is condemned, and the heart gives its vote against conscience. But the second member of the tribunal comes to our rescue, and brings the assurance that we are of the truth. That is, if verse 18 has been a reality in our lives, that we have loved not in words, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth.

If we can think of the general trend of our lives in terms that indicate that the love of God has not only been experienced in our salvation, but we, in response to that, have not only loved God, but that we have loved ourselves in, that we can see a life lived to please God, the second member of the tribunal assures our hearts in God's presence. And what about the third member of the tribunal? God knows better than our hearts. He knows everything.

Oh, you say, He knows our failures better than we do. Yes, He does. He knows our failures better than we do, but He also knows better than we do the true significance of our whole life, and He gives His verdict in favor of conscience.

The isolated incident when we act the out-of-character to our true life cannot render non-void the declared witness of the life of a man. And the result, of course, is shown in verse 21. The love is, if our heart condemns us not, we have boldness for God.

We are able to enter His presence at suplicants with the assurance that whatsoever we are, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight, which is what a restatement of the verse with which the passage begins. My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed, and in truth. In other words, it is faith which workers by love.

To keep His commandments of believing and loving is the evidence of abiding. For, in the final analysis, there is no other way in which the life of Christ can be manifested through us. Union with Christ is not alone our abiding in Him, but also His abiding in us, and says the closing verse of that passage, the conservation of this is in the spirit which He gave us.

The gifts of God's Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, the proof of our union with Christ. These, then, are the two passages where we have Christian assurance manifested in a present attitude to God in prayer, and our next two passages have to do with boldness of confidence in toward God in the hereafter. 1 John 2 28.

This has to do with His coming, our Lord's return. Now, my little children, abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him. That is coming.

In the Greek version of the Old Testament, in Leviticus 26 verse 13, we read, I brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be there wandering, and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright. Now, that's our word. Made you go upright, made you go boldly.

Now, this is what God wants to do for us. He has broken the bars of our bondage, broken the bondage of sin in our lives, and His purpose is that we should walk upright. Now, verse 28 of chapter 2 closes the first section of John's first epistle, and in that section, as we have seen, the subject of walking in the light is tested by obedience, that is by practical obedience, by love, by loving God and loving our brethren, and thirdly by believing, by believing the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, that is summed up in verse 28, and now my little children abide in Him. Obeying, loving, and believing is abiding. People often wonder, how do I abide in Christ? They're quite mystified as to what do I do to abide in Christ? This is what we do.

We obey, we love, we believe. These are the three ways in which we may abide, and the life that is made up of obeying, and loving, and believing is a life that abides. Abide in Christ, and Christ in us.

And if that be true of us, says John, if he shall be manifested, and again the square of the authorized is changed to if in the divine, not because it casts any doubt on the fact, but it emphasizes the things that are contingent on the fact. If he shall be manifested, the life that is lived in walking in the light, manifested in obedience, and loving, and believing, if he shall be, may we see, in perfect boldness and confidence in the present. We mentioned last night that, as there are two manifestations of our Lord, two appearances, his first and his second appearance, so there are two manifestations or appearances of the Christian.

And so, in 1 John 3, 10, we've read, in this the children of God are manifest. They are manifest in the kind of life that manifestation down here, and our second manifestation will be coincident with this second manifestation. When he shall be manifested, we shall be manifested with him, and the kind of life that we have lived down here will determine how we shall act when we see him then.

If we know nothing about a life of perfect tandem down here, in our fellowship with our Lord, we won't have the openness, and delight, and you can be sure of that. We must cultivate the life that abides in Christ, the life of obeying, and loving, and believing. We must take our Christian life seriously, and when we behave not with camouflage, when we throw off the cloak, and be ourselves in the presence of God, if we do that down here, then we shall stand with confidence and boldness in his presence when he comes.

For there is an alternative to it. Our text speaks of two possibilities. Otherwise, there is no thrust in the word there.

It will be either boldness, open and unaffected tandem, because we have so walked before him in the world uprightly, or shrinking from him as I gently think surprised because our Christianity was a sham. These are the alternatives, and it's a very salutary warning indeed. So often, the judgment seat of Christ is treated as though it were a glorified Christ day, and we all stand and walk up to get our rewards.

That is not my conception of it. When our Lord comes, it will be a day of manifestation, and the things that are known are the things that are going to be manifested. And if we have walked with candor with our Lord down here, if we have never tried to camouflage to be what we are not, then when we stand in his

presence, we shall have boldness, we shall have confidence, we shall be upright then, because we have been upright now.

We shall not shrink from his presence as I guiltily think surprised, because the coward's life has been torn off in the day of manifestation. Oh, the need for reality, the crying, urgent need for reality, because that is the only thing that will stand the test of the light of God's holy presence. And finally, the passage in 1 John 4, verse 17, Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world.

There can be no more sobering thought for any one of us than the anticipation of the day of judgment. Romans 8, verse 1, does not preclude judgment for the child of God, it precludes condemnation. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but it does not preclude judgment.

There will be judgment for every one of us, the believer at the judgment seat of Christ, and the unbeliever at the great judgment. There will be judgment, and there can be no more sobering thought for any one of us that one day we are going to stand in the presence of our Maker, our Creator, in the day of judgment. How can mortal man stand with assurance, and be bold in the presence of his Maker? Is this not sheer prudence? Indeed not! This boldness does not arise from anything that we are, or anything that we have done.

We know, and have believed the love which God has in our case. Verse 16, the destiny not only of the fact, but also of the manner of his love, and this flows from the character of God, for God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God. Far from it being presumption to be bold, it would be casting doubt on God's love to be otherwise.

In this very thing, says John, love is perfected, which does not signify love to a relative degree, but that it has fulfilled its real mission, producing in our hearts confidence against the day of judgment. This, then, is the facet of God's love, and love is brought to its perfection, brought to its true end, accomplished its true mission. There is no fear in love.

Fear is not casted out of fear, because fear has punishment, and he that feareth is not made perfect in love, but if love has had a true mission in our lives, then it will produce this confidence against the day of judgment. Robert Law put it this way, love will be on the judgment throne. Love will be on the judgment seat, rather.

Love will be before the judgment seat, and love cannot be condemned and disowned of love. Sin and judgment produce fear in the awakened soul, and the future is dark, and the prospect of righteous judgment for our sin, but when we hear and believe the gospel, God's perfect love casts without fear, and brings in its place confidence. Love, however, truly perfecting, does not in its own right furnish confidence against the day of judgment.

It does so because, as he is, so are we in this world, because it is proof that we are one with God. Love, realizing its full measure in our lives, producing confidence in us, in our hearts against the day of judgment, is also the proof that we are one, spiritually one, with our Lord Jesus Christ. As he is, so are we in this world.

Boldness has nothing of pride or arrogance in it, nothing that can be termed cocksure. It is confident, humble reliance upon Christ and his changeless love. Bold shall I stand in that great day, for who ought to

my charge away, since through Christ's blood of bold I am, from sin's tremendous curses and shame.

Amen. Now, closing message number 417. Blessed assurance is Jesus' mind over the foreplace of glory and pride, ear of salvation, virtue of God, law of his spirit, wash in his blood.

417. Unto him that ordereth his conversational acts will I show the salvation of God, for this opportunity to gather together round thy word, to listen to its message, and to exalt thee in our praise. We thank thee, O God, and we seek now thy blessed mercy, that our spiritual prophecy in all these things may bring back to all the glory of thy great and holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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