



Confident and Sure Faith

A SUMMER SERIES ON THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

Psalm 1 1 John 2:3-14 John 15:1-17

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What kind of words describe your faith? What adjectives would you use when you think about your Christian faith in life?

Do you think of your faith with words like timid, weak, shaky; or are you thinking of words like confident, sure, and consistent?

The Apostle John writes to his congregations in order that they would think of themselves with *confident faith, sure conviction, and a deep understanding*. That way of thinking is what the Holy Spirit works in you through the Word of God. We heard this from 1 John today¹:

12 I am writing to you, **dear children**,
because **your sins have been forgiven on account of His Name**.

13 I am writing to you, **fathers**,
because **you know Him who is from the beginning**.

I am writing to you, **young men**,
because **you have overcome the evil one**.

I write to you, **dear children**,
because **you know the Father**.

14 I write to you, **fathers**,
because **you know Him who is from the beginning**.

I write to you, **young men**,
because **you are strong**,
and the **Word of God lives in you**,
and **you have overcome the evil one**.

¹ There are several different opinions on why John alternates between “dear children, fathers, and young men.” Perhaps the most prudent understanding is that it's just a literary device that John is using to indicate the entire congregation. There is no hint of any special meaning; especially in light that women and girls are not specifically mentioned other than perhaps in the term “children”. The significance of this passage are the gifts given to the congregation through faith in Christ – not the alternating references to different groups of people. Those gifts of salvation are the theme of this sermon.

In this passage, John highlights three gifts that God has given to you so that you can be *confident in faith, sure in conviction, and deep in understanding*. All three gifts are significant for us.

The first is the forgiveness of sins. *I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His Name*. What's fascinating about this is *the verb tense* John uses: the word forgiven is a *perfect tense*; which means that your sins **have been forgiven and they remain forgiven forever! You have "perfect tense forgiveness" though faith in the Lord Jesus Christ²!**

You live in a *state of forgiveness*; as far as God is concerned you are *continually forgiven* of your sins **AT ALL TIMES**. Christ died for your sins on the cross; and in Holy Baptism that forgiveness came to you; *perfect tense forgiveness*! You have been forgiven and *you remain forgiven* through faith in Jesus Christ. *Perfect tense forgiveness* gives you *confident, sure, and consistent faith*! You don't have to worry whether your sins are forgiven or not; you don't live with guilt, shame, or a feeling of separation and distance from God. Your sins *have been* forgiven and they *remain* forgiven! God's *perfect tense forgiveness* for you means that you live in a state, a status, of forgiveness! *Perfect tense forgiveness* gives you *confident, sure, and consistent faith*!

In addition, a second gift that John mentions is that you **know God**.

I write to you, Children, because you know the Father. ...

I write to you, Fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. 1 John 2:13-14

By this we know that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. 1 John 2:3

The emphasis on *knowing God* draws our attention to His Word. God has given you Holy Scriptures so that we can know Him and His love and His ways.

⇒ We **know** God as our Father in Heaven who is kind and compassionate to us. He is the One who watches over you and provides for you. In faith, you really are His child, and He has lavished His Fatherly love upon you.

² Earlier in the book, in 1 John 1:7, John wrote, "If we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." in this passage, the word cleanses is *present tense*, meaning that the cleansing from sin is continual: "always, every day, without ceasing" Jesus cleanses you from your sin. Here it is *perfect tense*, meaning that you are forgiven, and you remain that state of forgiveness!

- ⇒ We **know** God as our Savior, Who gave His life on a cross so that we can have *perfect tense forgiveness*! God the Savior is Jesus Christ, and He rose from the dead on the Third Day; He has done the entire work of salvation for you and on your behalf!
- ⇒ We **know** God the Holy Spirit; who lives within us and sanctifies us. The Holy Spirit is your daily companion who strengthens you in faith through the Word and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit teaches you and empowers you to embrace and hold fast to God's Word and He enables you to keep His commandments.

When you **know God**, the Father, His Son Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, you have **confident, sure, and consistent faith**. This **knowing God** is a gift of salvation that God gives to you; it is a hunger and a thirst for Holy Scriptures; it is a passion for doctrine; and a zeal for the teachings of Christ. It's a desire for the promises of God. **Knowing God** creates a fire within you to be passionately engaged in the Kingdom of God; to eagerly practice righteousness; and to intentionally love, care, and help your neighbor. The only way that you **know God** is through Holy Scripture. Knowing God is a lifelong pursuit as you continually read, study, learn, meditate, and inwardly digest God's Holy Word³.

John teaches us that **confident, sure, and consistent faith** comes from *present tense forgiveness* and **knowing God** and His Word. One other gift that he highlights is that *the evil one* has no power in your life.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Evil One. 1 John 2:14

Of course, *the evil one* is Satan: the devil and his depraved demons. Overcoming *the evil one* is a gift that comes from Christ, the One who crushed Satan's head when He died on the cross⁴. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil and his work.

³ Do you remember the "Collect for the Word"? It's a liturgical prayer that goes like this: "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen." (The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 14)

⁴ This is a reference to the **protoevangelium** --> the "first Gospel" promise in the Bible. It was given to Adam and Eve after their fall into sin. It is recorded in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." It teaches that a singular male offspring of Eve will crush Satan's head. Jesus fulfills this promise when He defeated the devil and "crushed his head" by His death on the cross. At the cross, Satan "strikes" a blow on Christ, but that same event is his own defeat (see 1 John 3:18 Hebrews 2:14). Christ's victory over Satan is given to believers; Satan has no real power over God's people, all he can do is lie and deceive. This is one of the gifts that John is highlighting in 1 John 2:13-14..

That victory has been given to you through faith; it is a gift of salvation. It means that *the evil one, the devil, Satan, and all of his depraved demons*, have no power over you. Satan is like a mosquito that buzzes around you; but he can't even bite you. The only thing Satan can do is lie to you and try to deceive you. That **lying** and that **deception** is what we call **temptation**. That's it. That is all he can do. That is the only way he can interact with you: **by lying to you and trying to deceive you**.

Don't believe the Hollywood movies: Satan cannot **possess** you, he cannot **haunt** your house, he cannot **control** you, he cannot **speak** to you, and he cannot **appear** to you. The only way that the devil and his demons interact with you is **by lying to you and trying to deceive you**. *The battlefield is in your mind.*

In Christ, you have been given the victory over Satan and his depraved demons.

- ⇒ when the devil tries to accuse you of sin, you know that in Christ you have *perfect tense forgiveness* and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- ⇒ when the depraved demons try to tempt you and lure you into immorality, rebellion, and disobedience, you **know God** through Christ and His Holy Spirit lives within you.
- ⇒ when Satan lies to you, in Christ you overcome him because you know the truth of God's Holy Word and you trust His promises!

In Christ, you have been given the victory over Satan and his depraved demons. When you know, believe and understand this, you have a **confident, sure, and consistent** Christian faith and life.

THAT'S GOD WILL FOR YOU;

that's what John is writing about in this section of First John.

The gifts of salvation, specifically *Perfect tense forgiveness* in the Lord Jesus Christ, **knowing God** through His Word, and overcoming the devil and his demons, allows you to have a **confident, sure, and consistent** Christian faith and life.

Amen!

God the Father, in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit we ask for confident, sure, and consistent faith. Help us to trust your perfect tense forgiveness; deepen our knowledge of You and Your Word; and empower us to overcome the evil one as we live as Your people.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

1 John 2:3-14

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. 14 I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

John 15:1-17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.