

Confidence (Being Sure)



SABBATH—AUGUST 29

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 3:36; Acts 4:29; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 5:13–21; Revelation 12:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “There is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer. If we ask anything in keeping with what he wants, he hears us” (1 John 5:14, NlrV).

BEN FRANKLIN ONCE SAID THERE ARE ONLY TWO THINGS sure in this life: death and taxes. There is a third sure thing too: life is full of unpleasant surprises!

We do not know how safe our jobs are. Nothing promises us protection from sickness, terrorism, war, earthquakes, and storms. We have no promise when we go to bed we will wake up the next day.

Facing this, we do our best, trying to protect ourselves from these troubles the best we can. But in the end, our best efforts cannot always protect us.

But what about God and His promises to us? Are they not sure? How can we live without confidence¹ and assurance (being hopeful and certain) when it comes to God? Our relationship with God and living with Him forever is more important than anything else. What does John have to say to us about this important thing in our lives?

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What can we have confidence in? How do we not turn our confidence into presumption?² What confidence can we have that our prayers will be answered? What protection are we offered against Satan? How can we come to a knowledge of God?

1. confidence—being sure; having faith in God; having positive feelings about self.

2. presumption—believing God will protect you when you do something you know you should not do.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 30**HAVING CONFIDENCE
(1 John 5:13–21)**

First John 5:14 uses the word *confidence*. Confidence means being sure, bold, or being very honest (Acts 4:29, 31) and open (John 16:25, 29).

Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19 say Christians can come closer to the throne of God with confidence. Why? First, because Jesus shed His blood for them on the cross. And second, because Jesus has gone to heaven to serve there as High Priest for them.



We have the promise that Jesus serves in heaven as our High Priest.

The same word is used by John in 1 John 4:17, talking about “confidence” (NIV) or “boldness” (NKJV) in the day of judgment. Christians are not afraid of judgment. They depend on what Jesus has done for them. Their confidence is not in themselves or what they have done or could ever do. This confidence depends on Jesus fully.

Another way John explains this idea of confidence is by using often the wording “we know” at the end of 1 John. This wording is found throughout the letter only two times (1 John 3:2, 14, NIV) until the end. But then it shows up five times at the close of the letter. And it also focuses on the topic of confidence.

What do 1 John 5:13, 15, 18–20 say we can be confident (sure) about?

In 1 John 5:13, John says “you may know” (NIV) and talks about assurance (promise) of salvation. From 1 John 5:15 onward, John uses “we know.” In 1 John 5:15, he made it clear God hears our prayers. We can be confident. In 1 John 5:18, “we know” is followed by the promise of God’s protection. In 1 John 5:19, the same wording “we know” introduces the wonderful idea of belonging to God. And 1 John 5:20 points out that “we know” Jesus, so, through Jesus, we know God and are in Him. So Christians have confidence (are sure) about their relationship to God, their prayer life, and both their present life and future life.

How many times have you disappointed yourself in the last month, week, or even day? We would say, “Keep a record of those disappointments.” But that might prove to be too discouraging. How do these disappointments bring home the need to make sure your confidence rests in Jesus and not in yourself?

MONDAY—AUGUST 31**HAVING ETERNAL³ LIFE
(1 John 5:13)**

What does 1 John 5:13 say that we can be sure of?

Verse 13 gives an important reason why John wrote his letter. He wanted his readers to be sure about salvation.⁴ John's readers should know they already have eternal life. Everlasting life is as real as possible. John made almost the same statement at the end of his Gospel⁵ (John 20:30, 31).

First John 5:13 goes beyond the other verses in the New Testament that talk about everlasting life. They give a condition and hold a promise (for example, John 3:36). But 1 John 5:13 states children of God should know they have eternal life. It is not a choice, something that can be added to a Christian life or can be left out. God wants us to have assurance (promise) of salvation. Moses (Exodus 32:32), Peter (1 Peter 5:1), Paul (2 Timothy 4:7, 8), the Christians in Ephesus (Ephesians 2:8), and the believers in Colossae (Colossians 1:12–14) had this sure promise.

But, how, according to Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 9:27; and Revelation 3:11, can we be pro-



God wants us to know that He saves us.

tected from taking assurance and turning it into presumption?

Some people have taken this confidence of salvation and turned it into an “unconditional guarantee.” This is the idea of “once saved, always saved.” If this were true, what would stop us from forgetting all about God and living an unrighteous (not holy) life that would keep us from heaven (Galatians 5:21; Revelation 21:8)? After all, it is hard enough, even knowing that we can fall away from God, to keep ourselves pure. Imagine if we thought how we lived was not important!

The Bible teaches that there is assurance of salvation. But this assurance can be lost through our own choices. We need to hold on to the crown of life by surrendering (giving) ourselves daily to the Lord in faith. We must always watch and pray. This is because Satan is looking for whom he may destroy (1 Peter 5:8). And if that is not us, then who?

3. eternal—forever; without end.

4. salvation—God's plan for saving us from our sins.

5. Gospel—one of the first four books of the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

Think about your life (we know it is painful!). Are you struggling with assurance of salvation? If so, is it because of the things that you are doing? If so, then you must first ask for the forgiveness that is yours. Then you must claim the power to overcome that is promised you. What is holding you back but your own choices?



When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, He added to His prayer, “ ‘Your will be done.’ ” (Matthew 26:42, NKJV).

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 1

ACCORDING TO HIS WILL (PLAN)
(1 John 5:14–17)

What promise does 1 John 5:14, 15 give us? Most important, what should it mean to us?

We can pray to God about anything. We can tell Him we need money. We can tell Him we have problems with our kids and need His help. We can tell Him we are seriously sick and need healing. Do we know that He will send us a check, straighten out our kids, or heal us from a terrible disease? Maybe not! When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, He added to His prayer, “ ‘Your will be done.’ ” (Matthew 26:42, NKJV). And God did not save Him from the cross.

But, if we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, God does not put us on a waiting list. Instead, we can have confidence that, as we end our prayer, He will forgive us. Suppose I ask God to make me His child because I accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. He will answer such a prayer right away. Suppose the will (plan) of God

is shown in the Bible, and we show we have surrendered ourselves to His will. Then we know our prayer is answered. If we are not sure how God will lead us, we should add, “Your will be done” to our prayers. Then in confidence, we should trust that the Lord will do what is best.

First John 5:16, 17 is not easy to understand. Bible experts do not agree on what it means. (Some say it is the sin against the Holy Spirit.) But we do know all sin is unrighteousness (evil) and cannot be acceptable. What is the meaning of sins that John has mentioned (spoken of) in these verses? This is not easy to answer. Whatever John is saying, we can be sure he is not trying to soften the seriousness of sin.

We all have had prayers that have not been answered in any way, shape, or form. A loved one dies, even though prayer has been made for him or her. A job is lost, even

though prayer has been made for it. And so forth. In some cases, later on we can see how things really did turn out better when the prayer was not answered as we had wanted. In others, all we see is disappointment, heartache, and sorrow. How are we to deal with them? How are we to continue to live by faith and trust God when unanswered prayers leave us filled with sorrow, disappointment, and doubt?

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 2

CONFIDENT OF BEING PROTECTED (1 John 5:18, 19)

In 1 John 5:18, 19, John says two times that “we know.” Both verses begin with this wording. But John does not point to knowledge only.

What challenges do verses 18 and 19 hold?

In verse 18 (NKJV), the wording *born of God* is used two times. But, the first wording points to every true believer, while the second wording points to Jesus. In the Greek language there is a difference that may be important. Anyone *born of God* (the first wording) shows the verb form which may describe continuing action. The second wording shows one event which took place in the past only. The second wording describes Jesus’ being born in the form of a man. Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem. The first wording points to the experience of humans who are born-again (John

3:3, 5; 1 John 3:9). The use of the same word for Jesus may point to the fact that Jesus has come close to us, even became one of us. But Jesus also is different from us. He is the Son of God in a way that we never will be.



Jesus has come close to us, even became one of us.

What comfort does 1 John 5:18, 19 give?

Both verses speak of the *evil one* (Satan). The words are also used in 1 John 2:13, 14; 1 John 3:12. They describe Satan. And John calls him the devil (1 John 3:8, 10). According to Revelation 12:9, Satan is the old serpent, the devil. First John 5:18, 19 gives a short picture of the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan. This controversy is shown in the book of Revelation, especially in chapter 12. But the different groups involved are already described in 1 John.

In verses 18 and 19, John refers to the world as the battlefield of the evil one. On the other side of the war, the disciples (followers) of Jesus are found together with God the Father

and Jesus. These believers are protected by Him. Jesus keeps them and does not let Satan touch them. So, they are able to say No to sin and to refuse temptations.⁶

Verse 19 says we are of God (NKJV). We can be confident because we have a very close relationship with God. And we are separate from the world. As children of God, we can claim His promises.

How are you experiencing the great controversy (war) in your own life? How can you make these promises of victory (overcoming) and protection your own? What are you doing that might prevent those promises from becoming real for you now? At the same time, what hope can you get from the fact that Jesus has already won the war against Satan for us and offers us His victory?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 3

HAVING TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GODHEAD⁷ (1 John 5:20, 21)

Again John says that “we know.” We know Him who is true. The Son of God, Jesus, has come into this world and has shown us God the Father. This knowledge is not just head knowledge but knowledge that leads us to a close connection with God.

According to 1 John 5:20, who is the One who is true?

Throughout his first letter, John changes easily from the Father to Jesus. In some cases, the personal pronouns *He* and *Him* may even mean both Father and Son. This is no surprise, because he “who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23, RSV). First John 5:20 includes the word *true* three times. The first one clearly points to God the Father: Jesus has come to help us understand the Father.

The second one may point to Jesus: “We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ” (NKJV). The last part of this verse seems to explain the first: the Son of God is the One who is true. The word *true* is found in 1 John 2:8, describing Jesus. (Read also Revelation 3:7, 14.) But it also points to the Father (John 7:28).

The last example using the word *true* shows up in the sentence: “This is the true God and eternal life” (NKJV). This sentence may point to God the Father, to Jesus, or to Both. Bible thinkers disagree on this issue. Anyway, it makes perfect sense if it points to Jesus.

What does 1 John 5:21 say, and how could we use the principle (rule) for ourselves?

So far in the entire letter, John

6. temptations—things that can turn us away from God and that try to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

7. Godhead—the Father, His Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit make up the Godhead. Together they are one God; the Trinity.

has not spoken of idolatry (worshiping false gods). Instead, John has wrestled with false ideas of Jesus and their influence⁸ on those church members who had not left the church. Why would John at the end of his letter, as a final warning, bring up a topic not found before? Perhaps John thinks of the false views of Christ as idolatry. And idolatry is connected with the teachings of the antichrists about God and Jesus. Their understanding of the Godhead could be the same as worshiping false gods instead of the Father, who in Jesus gives eternal life and confidence to all true believers.

Write a paragraph explaining what you “know” about who God is. Then bring it to class on Sabbath. What are some things about God that you do not know? What are the things that you do not know but would like to know?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 4

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Asking to Give,” pages 147, 148, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “From Jezreel to Horeb,” page 157, in *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*.

“When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask. But He does not delay when we ask for free-

dom from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to help us live a holy life. Christ ‘gave Himself for our sins, that He might save us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.’ Galatians 1:4. And ‘there is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer. If we ask anything in keeping with what he wants, he hears us. If we know that God hears what we ask for, we know that we have it.’ 1 John 5:14, 15, Nlrv. ‘But God is faithful and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.’ 1 John 1:9, Nlrv.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 266.

“If the life of the sick can give God glory we pray that they may live; but, not as we will but as He will. Our faith can be just as strong, and more dependable, by surrendering the desire to the all-wise God. We do so without worry, in perfect confidence, and in trusting all to Him. We have the promise. We know that He hears us if we ask according to His will. Our prayers must not be a command. Instead, we must ask Him to do for other people the things we desire of Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 149.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① As a class, discuss what you wrote

8. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

at the end of Thursday's study. What can you learn from one another?

② Many have struggled with the question of assurance of salvation. What usually is the reason for this problem? How can you help those who are struggling with this question?

③ When we think about all the wonderful promises in the Bible for vic-

tory over sin, why do so many of us still fall into the same sins again and again?

④ How is the great controversy (war) being fought in our world today? How is it being fought in your own community, or even in your own home? What are you doing for Christ in the controversy? What can you as a person, or together with your church, do for Christ in His battle with Satan?