

## BACK TO BASICS

### 20. A TRINITY OF CERTAINTY

One of the reasons why John wrote this letter was to provide assurance. He wrote his gospel “*that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*”

( Jn 20:31 ) But he wrote his epistle that we might know that we have eternal life. Do you see what he says in ( 5:13 ) ? The word “*know*,” should be circled in your Bible. It’s the key word in 1 John for it’s used over thirty times. Some say, “*well you can’t really know you are going to heaven when you die.*” Yet John says, “*you can.*” I don’t know about you, but one of the most aggravating things for me is to come to the end of a book, or to see the final scene in a film and find yourself left hanging, not knowing how it all ended, you’re just left wondering. Well, John does not do that rather he ends his book on a positive note. Indeed he ends his books using his favourite word “*know*.” In ( 5:18 ) he says “*we know*,” in ( 5:19 ) he says “*we know*,” in ( 5:20 ) he says, “*we know*.” My .... John is the apostle of assurance, contrary to the atheist who says, “*I know there is no God.*” John says, “*I know there is a God.*” Contrary to the agnostic who says, “*I cannot know if there is a God.*” John says, “*I can know and do know that there is a God. I know who He is and wonder of wonders I know that that same God loves me.*”

Now this is the language of assurance, of certainty, of affirmation. While we ought always to remain humble about ourselves, we ought always to remain confident about our Christian affirmations .... what the Lord has revealed about our faith. Now of course, it’s impossible for anybody to know everything. We live in today in age of specialization, when more and more people are narrowing their fields of knowledge to less and less things. Someone has said that a specialist “*is a person who knows more and more about less and less until finally he knows all there is to know about nothing.*” That seems to be the world in which we live. We live in a world of uncertainty and in an age that despises absolutes. I heard a story about a youth leader who was dodging some searching questions from his young people and he gave the general answer to them all, “*Well, we’ll never know the answer to those things, until perhaps we get to heaven.*” One girl was heard to say in the audience, “*I guess you get the facts in school, but here at church you just get opinions.*” My .... is that not frightening ?

You see, what we need today is the authoritative preaching of the affirmations of God’s Word. In his book “*The Bondage of the Will*,” Martin Luther says, “*Nothing is more familiar or characteristic among Christians than assertion. Take away assertions and you take away Christianity.*” But bless God for John’s first letter, an epistle of certainty for his age and ours, which are ages of uncertainty. You see, God wants us to know certain things. Over and over again we have seen John use the word “*know*.” And so, as if to summarise, he concludes this letter with three tremendous certainties, a trinity of certainty. Here are three magnificent truths that we

can know beyond a shadow of doubt. Notice, that John speaks about,

## (1) THE CHRISTIANS POWER

Look at ( 5:18 ) if you will ! John is just speaking about the power available to the child of God, power to give victory over sin. Notice that this power gives us,

### (a) *PURITY:*

“ *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not,*” ( 5:18 ) Now John is not implying that a Christian can be absolutely perfect. The verb sin is in the present tense and the present tense denotes continuous action. So John is saying that no Christian will continuously, habitually sin. ***He is not dealing here with Christian perfection, he is dealing here with Christian purity.*** He is not referring to occasional sin, but habitual sin. In other words, the Christian may occasionally stumble in sin, but he will not stay in sin. A true born again, child of God will not live in constant, continuous, consistent sin. John has told us the same thing in ( 3:9 ) Do you recall what he says ?

“ *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin for his seed remaineth in him.*” He says practically the same thing here. “ *We know that whosoever .... sinneth not.*” The one who will not consistently sin is the one who is “ *born of God.*” Why ? Because he has the nature of Father. Generally, a son is going to act like his father. He is going to emulate and imitate his father. Like father, like son. Do you realise that as a son of God, you have a new name and a new nature ? You are a son of God, you are a Christian. You have a new nature. The seed, the very life of God abides in you. Now the old nature loves sin, but the new nature loathes sin. So if you are living continuously in sin and still calling yourself a Christian, you ought to give up the name because you do not have the nature. Alexander the Great was riding up and down on his horse in the heat of the battle. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye he saw a soldier who began to retreat and desert. He galloped after him and caught up with him and said, “ *Soldier, were you retreating ?*” The soldier hung his head and said, “ *yes, Sir.*” The great General asked “ *what is your name ?*” The soldier replied, “ *My name is Alexander Sir.*” The General looked him straight in the eye and said, “ *soldier, you either change your direction or change your name.*” My .... for you to call yourself a Christian and yet continuously live in open rebellious sin is to bring reproach to His very name and to reject the nature that is supposedly within you ! The believer will not continuously sin because of his ***disposition***, but the Christian cannot continuously sin because of the ***Father's discipline***.

Who is responsible for the conduct of a child ? The child's father. My .... our heavenly Father is responsible for our conduct as his child. Now other parents may let their children get away with murder but God will not allow his children get away with sin. Many farmers around our country now have electrified fences. Do you know what happens when a cow brushes that fence ? It gets a severe jolt and learns a valuable lesson. You see, when you begin to brush up against sin, God will jolt you, the Lord will whip you, He will chastise you, in fact, He may even take you out of this world altogether. ( 5:16 ) Now do you see what John is saying ? He is saying that

a Christian may sin occasionally but a true Christian will not sin continually. Is your lifestyle one of constant sin ? Do you take the name of Christian, but do not reflect the nature of a Christian ? My .... are you really saved at all ?

**(b) SECURITY:**

Now here John switches subjects from the saved to the Saviour. When he speaks here of “ *the begotten of God,* ” I believe he is speaking here of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour keeps the saved. The word “ *keepeth,* ” literally means “ *to guard,* ” and it refers to a garrison of soldiers that would guard a fort. The word “ *himself,* ” can be translated “ *him.* ” So we could translate it like this, “ *He, the Lord Jesus, that is begotten of God keepeth him, the child of God.* ” You and I are no more able to keep ourselves than we are able to save ourselves. Everything we have comes from the Lord. We are saved by his grace and we are kept by his power. Do you recall how Peter puts it ? “ *who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* ” ( 1 Pet 1:5 ) The Lord Jesus speaking of his own sheep says, “ *And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* ” ( Jn 10:28 ) God is on guard outside of our heart to protect us from Satan and this guard is never changed. Twenty fours a day, seven days a week, the Lord stands as a sentinell ready to keep us, ready to defend us, ready to protect us.

A dear old Christian of some eighty five years in Glasgow was pottering about in his garden one day when a Christian friend of his passed by, and called to him over the garden fence. “ *Hello there, how are you keeping ?* ” Looking up from his hoeing the radiant old man replied,

“ *Oh, thank you, thank you, and thank the Lord, I’m not just keeping, I’m kept.* ” My .... we Christians are not just keeping we are kept, and our Almighty Guardian will never let us down, and never let us go, and never give us up.

**The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
He will not, He will not desert to its foes  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour so shake  
He’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”**

**(c) AUTHORITY:**

“ *And that wicked one toucheth him not,* ” ( 5:18 ) the word “ *toucheth,* ” is an interesting word. It means, “ *to lay hold of,* ” or “ *to grasp and hold onto.* ” It is the same word that the Risen Lord used after His resurrection to Mary when she evidently grabbed hold of Him to restrain Him and He said, “ *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.* ” ( Jn 20:17 ) “ *Mary, stop clinging to me.* ” Is that not what the Devil wants to do with us ? He wants to fasten himself upon us like a limpet and gain an influence over us. My .... the Devil can tempt you but he cannot touch you. He literally cannot lay a hand on you. Because you belong to the Lord, Satan must operate within God’s sovereignty and cannot function beyond what the Lord allows. Do you recall Job ? Do you remember that Satan could not touch Job unless he had the permission of the Lord ? Sure, the Lord gave him permission, but Satan could only go as far as the Lord allowed him to go, thus far and no further. Isn’t it

good to know that the Devil cannot touch us without God's permission ? My .... are you going through what you perceive to be an attack of the Devil ? Perhaps you're saying, "*how can I overcome ? What's the secret ?*" John has already told us in ( Ch 2 ) when he said, "*And the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one.*" ( 2:14 ) Is this not what Christ did ? Do you recall that on three occasions the Devil came to Him, tempting Him ? Each time the Devil made his attack, the Lord Jesus dipped into his heart, where the Word of God was abiding and said, "*It is written, it is written, it is written.*" ( Matt 4:4, 7.10 ) Is this why you are a defeated Christian ? The Word of God is no longer abiding in you ! Perhaps you feel that you don't always have a hold of the Saviour ? Well, John is saying that no matter how often we feel we have no hold of Him, He has hold of us. What a glorious certainty.

## (2) THE CHRISTIANS POSITION

First, we see the certainty of our position "*and we know that we are of God,*" and then we see a contrast, "*and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*" My .... do you see here,

### (a) A CONTROLLED WORLD:

"*The whole world lieth in wickedness,*" or rather "*in the wicked one.*" The whole world lies in the domain, lies in the power of the wicked one the Devil. And such a one is this world's prince ( Jn 12:31 ) and this world's god.

( 2 Cor 4:4 ) Do you ever sit down and watch the news and say to yourself, "***what is wrong with this world ?***" Well, here's the answer, it would pay all the newscasters, commentators and columnists to read this verse, "*the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*" That's why there is so much bad news, this world's system is the devil's playground, and that's why believers ought not to be dabbling in it. That's why Paul says "*do not be conformed to this world,*" "*don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould.*" My .... the world wants us all to have the same standards its standards, to accept the same beliefs its beliefs, to do the same things its things, to visit the same places its places. Sad to say many believers gave in to the world, the flesh and the devil and lose their power, joy and testimony. Do you recall

Samson ? Falling asleep on the knees of seductive Delilah. And because of his sin and compromise, Samson lost his strength, he lost his sight, he lost his service.

"*The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one,*" does that discourage you ? It encourages me for it confirms to me that the only hope for this world is the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are some people who think that the problem of this world is poverty. That if we could make sure that everyone had a turkey in the oven and clothes on their back that the problems of this world would be solved. If everyone in this world had food in his stomach and money in his pocket the whole world would still lie in the power of the evil one. Then there are those who believe that ignorance is the problem, so what we need to do is educate people. But if everyone in this world had a PH.D the whole world would still lie in the power of the evil one. You see, this world has basically only three problems and Christ is the answer to all. There is *the problem of sin*, stealing, killing, raping. Then there is *the*

*problem of self*, everybody wants their rights, and then there is *the problem of Satan* because he is behind it all. Now Christ is the answer to all three problems. Christ died on the cross to cancel sin, Christ comes into our hearts to crucify self, and Christ is coming again to conquer Satan. My .... do you recognise that this is a controlled world shackled by the chains of sin, self and Satan ? But into this controlled world the apostle John brings,

### **(b) A COMFORTING WORD:**

*“And we know that we are of God,”* ( 5:19 ) We are in the family, in the fellowship with all that means, as revealed in this letter, with a forgiven past, and a fearless present and a fine prospect. We “ *know*,” this, whatever other people may say, whatever we may sometimes feel, whatever opposition we may encounter. My .... things are not going to get better, things are going to get worse.

We are not heading for world betterment, we are heading for world breakdown. But come what may we belong to God. Paul says, “ *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether we live therefore or die we are the Lords.* ” ( Rom 14:8 ).

My .... the whole world may lie in the power of the evil one but we lie in the hands of God. Too many of us are like the little who grew up in an orphanage never knowing his parents. One day as a young man he was sitting outside on a bench looking so sad and forlorn. One of his counsellors came up to him and said, “ *Johnny, what’s the matter ?* ” He said “ *I do not know who I belong to. I do not know where I came from.* ” My .... we are of God, we came from God, we belong to God and someday we are going to God. “ *We know*,” (1) (2)

### **(3) THE CHRISTIAN’S PERCEPTION**

He says “ *We know ....*,” ( 5:20 ) You see, members of the fellowship by reason of their new birth have come to a new understanding of things. Notice the Christian has,

#### **(a) A TRUE PERCEPTION OF THE SON:**

*“And we know that the Son of God is come,”* about that there can be no doubt. John could summon the herald angel to bear witness. He could summon Elizabeth and Zacharias, Mary and Joseph, the wise men from the east and the shepherds. He could summon aged Anna and old Simeon, as well as John the Baptist and all the disciples. He could appeal to the Father and the Spirit and he gives witness himself, “ *the Son of God is come.* ” ***The second person of the Godhead contracted to the span of a virgin’s womb.*** What a feat. God who had been manifest in burning suns and blazing stars has now been manifest in flesh. Let ten thousand false teachers arise to deny it, the truth remains, “ *the Son of God is come.* ” Wasn’t this one of the reasons why John wrote this letter ? He wrote this epistle to protect believers from those who would lead them astray. ( 2:26 ) He was counteracting a heresy known as Gnosticism. The Gnostics believed that all matter was evil. This means the body was evil, the flesh was evil, anything material or physical was evil. *Therefore they denied the humanity of Christ.* They were going around saying that Jesus Christ was not human

at all, He just appeared to be human. He was a phantom. Others said that Jesus was a human being and that the divine Christ came upon at His baptism and departed at His crucifixion. But John comes in with an explosive statement that lays flat the whole of this heresy and strikes at the heart of Gnosticism, “ *we know that the Son of God is come.* ”

My .... doctrine matters ? A true perception of the person of Christ is fundamental. Do you see here that John sets forth ***the Humanity of Christ:*** “ *the Son of God is come.* ”

Do you see here that John sets forth ***the Deity of Christ:***

“ *this is the true God and eternal life.* ” Do you see that your faith and mine is rooted in what God has done in history ? We are followers of the historical Christ and we are worshippers of the ascended, exalted and glorified Lord. (a)

### ***(b) A TRUE PERCEPTION OF SALVATION:***

Why did the Son of God come ? “ *That we might know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.* ” ( 5:20 ) It is generally considered an asset to know the great ones of this world. But the apostles were not impressed with that. The all-important One to know is “ *him that is true,* ” the Lord Jesus Christ. My .... do you want to know God ? Do you want to know the God who is real ? Well, Jesus Christ is the true God. You meet God in Jesus Christ, and the only way to God is Jesus Christ. Not many roads lead to God. Not many avenues lead to salvation. The Saviour Himself said, “ *I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* ” ( Jn 14:6 ) I heard about a particular violinist who was holding his finger on note and just sawing away on that one string. Afterwards a man came up to him and said, “ *why don't you run your fingers up and down the violin the way the other fellows do ?* ” He said, “ *because they are looking for the right note and I have found it.* ” My .... are you looking for the Lord ? Well, I have found Him and his name is Jesus and he is the true God and eternal life. And a Christian is someone (a) )

### ***(c) A TRUE PERCEPTION OF SEPERATION:***

Now you may be wondering what in the world does this last statement of this letter have to do with what John has just talked about. Well, do you recall that I said that this letter is just like a spiralling staircase ? Time and again John revisits the same themes, and enlightens us to some new truth about it. But think of this, we have claimed all the way to the top of the staircase, and what do we find ? ***It's the throne room of deity. Who is there ? It is Jesus Christ as God, and John tells us that anything that is short of Jesus Christ revealed as God is idolatry.*** My ... are you guilty of theological idolatry ? Have you a substandard view of Christ ? The people of Ephesus to whom John was probably writing were surrounded by literal idolatry. Of course an idol is any substitute for God. It may be anything that comes between my soul and God. Your house, your car, your children, your home, your job, your clothes, anything that comes between you and God. Are you guilty of idolatry ? Is it time for you to pray,

***(g) The dearest idol I have known  
Whate'er that idol be***

*Help me to tear it from Thy throne  
And worship only Thee."*

**A Trinity of Certainty !** “ *We know. We know. We know.*”

Is this not John's desire ? To bring us to a place of assurance. John says, “ *We know that we have passed from death unto life,*” ( 3:14 ) Job says, “ *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*” ( Job 19:25 ) Paul says, “ *I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*” ( 2 Tim 1:12 ) Christian certainties, that ought to gave us assurance because they're all in the Rock Jesus Christ.

John the beloved disciple wrote this epistle. John the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast. My .... that's what he wants you to do, to lean on Christ in complete confidence and certainty, that He is everything we need.

This world “ *lieth in the lap of the wicked one,*” but we can say “ *safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on his gentle breast,*” hallelujah what a Saviour !