

- **\*Read Hebrews 4:11-16\*** In this text, which begins with encouragement to the recipients of this letter to hold fast to their faith, the Hebrew Writer continues the encouragement by stressing to the readers that they can have confidence when they come before God's throne seeking those things that they are in need of. Confidence and certainty can be had by those who are in Christ Jesus.
- To say that we can have confidence and be assured of particular things is something that can be a foreign thought to some in this world. Skepticism is alive and real in our world in 2016, and really it has been around for quite some time. Socrates, a well known philosopher from many hundreds of years ago is famous for having said that the only thing that he knew was that he knew nothing at all. This is the type of approach that many in our modern day have taken towards many things, especially things that pertain to faith, religion, and a higher supernatural being. No better proof is there for this type of mindset than the rise in the number of agnostics in our American Society. According to the Pew Research Group, in 2007 2.4% of American adults identified as agnostic. When polled again in 2014, that percentage rose to 4%. While not a huge number, it is still nearly double what it was in 2004. Skepticism, the lack of knowing anything for certain is growing in our world.
- Sadly, this type of skeptical mindset has worked its way into the religious community. Some have taken the approach that we cannot know anything for certain when it comes to our religion or our faith in God, therefore we can't be dogmatic about anything. Even some of the Lord's churches have fallen into the trap of having this type of mindset. They lack confidence in anything and the result of this uncertainty is undoubtedly discouragement and a lack of faith. This type of mindset is bad news in the life of the Christian.
- Thankfully, we have the **letter of I John**. In just the first 4 verses, the Apostle John tries to instill confidence within the mind of the reader, and he continues to do so throughout the remainder of this letter. It should not surprise us that John would write such a letter because this is really the M.O. for the Apostle John for his writings. He wrote the Gospel of John to convince the reader that Jesus really was God. His 3 shorter letters focus on confidence and knowing God, and then the Book of Revelation was written to encourage suffering Christians to overcome the difficulties they were facing by knowing that Jesus is on His throne and that He will win in the end. This morning, I'd like for us to consider 4 things John teaches, through his writings, that Christians should be confident about. We ought to be confident Christians. Not cocky or arrogant Christians, but Christians who are confident in the things that we can know for certain through the writings of Scripture.

### **I. Confident In Jesus As God (I John 1:1-4)**

- A. Many would seek to throw doubt into the mind of the believer in God concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. This really isn't anything new....again, John wrote much concerning the validity of Jesus as God because there were already some in his day who question that Jesus was in fact from God. **(4:1-3)** Many seek to plant these types of doubts concerning Jesus, even today.
- B. John begins this letter by speaking to the validity of Jesus. He writes concerning those things that "they" (he and the other Apostles) had seen during their time with Jesus. **(1:1-4)** He desired for the readers and all others to believe in Jesus, and in doing so their (Apostle) joy would be made complete.
- C. We can absolutely have confidence that Jesus was a real man, that He did what the Bible claims, and that He truly is from God. Internal evidence in Scripture is the strong claims of the Apostles themselves **(John 1 & I Cor. 15)**.
- D. We can also look to external evidence concerning Jesus.
  - 1) Flavius Josephus, a 1st century historian, in his Antiquities mentions "Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure."
  - 2) Tacitus, a Roman historian, also mentions Jesus in the context of talking about Christians. "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populars, Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurator, Pontius Pilatus..."
  - 3) Others such as Pliny the Younger, The Talmud, and Lucian also mention Jesus, what He did, how He died, and the actions of His followers. The Bible is certainly not the only place where we can find Jesus mentioned. External evidence seeks to confirm the writings of Scripture.
- E. We must seek to be convinced that Jesus is exactly who the Bible claims. John makes it abundantly clear that we can have salvation if we believe in Jesus and seek to abide in Him. It is in doing these things that we can stand confidently at His glorious appearing. **(2:28,29)**

### **II. Confident In Our Salvation (I John 2:1-6)**

- A. Some within Christianity don't feel as if they can have any confidence in their salvation...whether they are saved or not. This is certainly a result of the Calvinistic influence that is so prevalent in our world, today. Again, this has led some Christians to live in doubt concerning whether or not they will be in heaven based upon the way they have lived their lives.
- B. John doesn't want this to be the case for those who are in Christ. Instead of living in doubt concerning their salvation, John seeks to inform the reader that they can certainly know when they are pleasing to Jesus. They could "know" Jesus if they were willing to keep His commandments. **(2:1-6)**.

- C. While the Calvinist will argue that only God has any influence on our salvation, John seems to indicate that we can have confidence in our salvation based upon how we are willing to live in this life. He says that we can have fellowship with God if we are willing to walk in the Light. **(1:5-10)** The one who loves his brother abides in the Light **(2:9,10)** If we seek to avoid sin and abide in Him then we will be children of God and abide in Him. **(3:1-10)**
- D. However, if we love the world...then we will not abide in the Father. **(2:15-17)** If we deny Jesus or if we are not convinced in Jesus then we will not have eternal life. **(2:22-25)**
- E. Our salvation is not some kind of grand mystery that can never be understood. Consideration of God's Word will lead us to being able to know whether or not we are walking the road that leads to heaven in this life. **(3:23,24)**

### III. Confident In Prayer (I John 5:14,15)

- A. Prayer is a vital lifeline in the walk of a Christian in this life, and I believe that one reason we might not always pray as we ought to is because we don't truly believe in the good that prayer does in our lives.
- B. In **I John 5:14,15**, the Apostle John begins to conclude this letter of confidence by saying that we ought to have the utmost confidence as we stand before God in prayer. We ought to be confident when we ask things of Him. However, the caveat of our confidence is that we must ask according to His will. That means that we must for those things that are good and righteous. This isn't an asking of a selfish or evil nature, but only things that are good for our faith and walk as a Christian.
- C. Lest we think that this isn't something that John really thinks is true...let's recognize that this is actually the 2nd time that he says something of this nature in this letter. **(3:21,22)**
- D. To bring in something that another inspired writer says on this subject, consider James's writing on asking of appropriate things from God. James says that we must ask without doubting. **(James 1:5-8)** Our confidence in our prayers is a show of our confidence in our God. We must have confidence that our God will give us those righteous things that we ask of from Him.
- E. A lack of confidence in prayer will accomplish absolutely nothing. Either we won't pray or we will offer up empty prayers that lack conviction that God will hear. A prayer that is according to God's will and full of confidence and conviction will always be heard by God. We can take that to the bank.

### IV. Confident In Our Ability To Overcome Trials (I John 5:1-5)

- A. It is a fact that we will face trials, difficulties, and temptations in this life. Often, our approach to these trials, difficulties, and temptations will determine whether or not we will overcome or be defeated by them. A person who goes into a trial, difficulty, or temptation with a defeated or weak mentality will always be overtaken by those things.
- B. Chapter 5 begins with John again affirming that whoever believes in Jesus is born of God, and we believe in Jesus by keeping His commandments. One of the greatest blessings of being born of God is the fact that John says that we will overcome the world. This world and its ruler will throw many things at us in an effort to destroy our faith and bring us into subjection of Satan. However, John says that we can and will overcome the world and that we ought to have confidence in that fact that we will do so. **(5:1-4)**
- C. This was really the entire reason that Jesus had John write the book of Revelation. These Christians were under immense persecution from the world around them. John wanted them to know that God was in control and that they would overcome. Those Christians reading that letter would have been filled with confidence because of those things that they were reading. They could approach the trials, difficulties, and temptations with confidence knowing that they could overcome with the help of God. Through the power of God they could be confident that they could overcome.
- D. John concludes this letter of **I John** by leaving the reader with confidence. **(5:18-21)** They reader would leave with confidence knowing that those who are born of God do not sin. When we are God's and we allow God to lead us then we will not sin and we will overcome the trials and temptations that the evil one will throw their way.
- E. We must remember the same thing. We must remember that we can and will overcome these things when we are born of God and God guides us in all that we do. Our confidence must be in Jesus and His power. He will lead us to overcome anything that comes our way. When we doubt...we will fail, but when we are confident in the one that leads us then we will overcome and defeat the evil one.

Too many of God's people are living this life in doubt and without confidence. Surely we recognize that John expects for disciples of Christ to live this life with confidence. We are not to be arrogant or cocky. To be cocky and arrogant is for us to think that it is impossible for us to fall because we are so great. On the other side, we are to have confidence in the God that we serve. We are confident that we won't fall because we serve and trust in the mighty God of heaven. This confidence will help us to live this life well. It will help us to overcome those things that Satan throws our way. May God help us to have confidence in the right things, and may our confidence lead us to glorify and serve God in all that we do so that we might realize our great reward when this life is over: eternal life.