

Introduction: Pg. ____ Greeting... Connect Card?

Option 1: Holidays - FOOD! This is bad for me...

Option 2: Personal testimony... fan the flame? What does a flame need? Energy: Lacking energy...
Rest. Good diet. What fuels our body?

What fuels confidence? Love.

FCF: We all need greater confidence... greater energy to our confidence.

“The Confidence of Love”
1 John 3:18-24

The Point: Our confidence before God arises from a life of love.

Excurses on Assurance in 1 John

- Assurance is one of John’s goals. He wants them to be “persuaded” of their position before God. It’s one of his primary purposes for writing. Sometimes the authors of the Bible just tell us straight up why they have penned their book. John does us a favor on FOUR different occasions to say he is writing that they experience JOY (1:4), fullness of life through purity (2:1), Protection from false teachers (2:26), and Confidence through assurance of their salvation. **1 John 5:13 says, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”**
- He wants them to be confident! He seeks to bring this confidence by laying out a number of tests by which they can see their spiritual vitality (in other words, to see that God has truly made them alive!)
- To foster this confidence and assurance, John provides a number of what we could call, tests of assurance.
 - The Doctrinal Test: What do you believe about Jesus?
 - The Moral Test: Are you living like Jesus?
 - The Social Test: Are you loving others like Jesus?
- The purpose of test.
 - Purpose of a Test, not to expose deficiencies but reveal progress
 - Funny story... Grader.. (Severely underpaid) In seminary... Tanner, the Hammer”) Heisler told me to come strong and then threw me under the bus.
 - ??They are like alarms... (Reddy’s dogs barking)??
 - If we are consistently off in these areas and lacking growth, we should have concern.
- The text here is the test of love.

Read 3:18-24

I. Love leads to confidence before God [that we belong to God] (18-21).

- The confidence (which can be translated “boldness”) we have before God arises (persuaded?)
- Our responsibility to love arises from the reality of God’s love (16-18)
 - The Radiant Love of God: Christmas
 - “God is light.” (1:5) & “God is love.” (4:16)

1 John 3:18-24 A Confident Love

- Christmas is all about remembering and celebrating and (yes, even) being transformed by the love that came down in the form of the baby born in Bethlehem, named Jesus. He came, as we saw two weeks ago, to take away our sin (3:5) that separates us from God and destroy the work of the devil (3:8)
- And while it shocks us that God would even think of us, much less love us with a radiant love, we should not be shocked because...
 - **“The very nature of the triune God is to be effusive, ebullient, and bountiful; the Father rejoices to have another beside him, and he finds his very self in pouring out his love. Creation [and redemption and mission] is about the spreading, the diffusion, the outward explosion of that love.”**
 - Effusive = “lacking restraint”
 - Ebullient = “overflowing with fervor, enthusiasm, excitement.”
 - Bountiful = “abundant”
 - Explosion = “a sudden and spectacular bursting forth”
 - Displayed on the cross. Voluntary & Sacrificial
- That radiant love moves us to radiate his Love
 - Let this our pursuit this Christmas season. We live in a culture that says: “Receive more! That’s not enough. Spend more on yourself. More gifts, more possessions, more! But we know a God who’s very nature is to give! He’s saying: “It’s not bad to receive, but you’ll never be more like me when you give and give more, when pour out MORE love to others, when you sacrifice of your own resources to meet needs around you.
 - Look back at *verse 17*.
 - If we keep our eyes open, if we stay woke (c’mon), we will see needs around us. We all have needs. If you turned to the person next to you and answered this one question: “How are you doing these days, really doing these days?” I’m sure you’d have some wonderful things to share, but if you got below the surface (and put away the mask - you know what I’m saying), you would also share some needs in your life, which means we’d all have opportunity to meet those needs as God leads us.
 - Anything less is to “close our heart” against that person and fail to pour out the effusive love of God we have received in Jesus.
 - Anything less is to talk a good game but not back it up with our actions.
 - That’s why John affectionately encourages them with his words in verse 18: “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth.”
 - That is not to say we can meet every need we see, but it is to say we should be consistently meeting needs around us. If you feel me say, “I feel you.”
 - Who is God calling you to extend his love to today?
 - Tomorrow, will you keep your eyes open? I dare you to pray: “God, show me a need I can meet this week.” You keep praying that prayer and I have no doubt God will show you with the quickness.

- Now, here's the beauty of it...
- As we love, it gives us confidence that we belong to God (19-21)
 - Why do we need this confidence?
 - Because our hearts condemn us (20)
 - When we sin, we feel worthy of condemnation.
 - You're no good. Look at how you failed God, A-GAIN.
 - This is what often keeps us from moving forward, from prayer, from worship, from being used by God. [Don't listen to the lies.]
 - Contrasted with the role of the Spirit to convict us. John 16 - convicts in regards to sin, righteousness, and judgment. And he leads us into truth, and part of that truth is "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)
 - How can we have this confidence?
 - We are reassured because... (our hearts are at rest before God) God is greater than our hearts (that condemn us) (he has the last word). In other words, his forgiveness, his grace is greater than our sin. Even when we blow it for the 100th time! Anyone exceeded a hundred? A thousand? More than you can count. "He gives more grace (James 4:6)
 - All the more staggering when we remember (as the end of v. 20): he knows everything.
- Do you have the gift of this assurance, knowing you can stand before God with confidence? Because of Jesus?
- That's what the gift of Christmas is all about: GOSPEL

T: Not only will love lead us to confidence before God...

II. Love leads us to offer confident prayer to God (22a).

- Boldness in prayer, unafraid
 - Keep asking those two questions: What do you want from me? What do you want for me?
 - Prayer is the key that unlocks the same answer to both questions: MORE
 - I hope you are experiencing that at deeper levels. If not, stick around. God is building a culture of prayer around here.
- Whatever we ask we receive from him (22)
 - Wow. That sounds unbelievable. Do you believe that? I mean after all, you've prayed plenty of times and not gotten what you want.
 - What do we pray for? WHATEVER... but the "whatever" assumes a biblically instructed heart
 - Lord's Prayer (How could we do better than this pattern? If we were to choose one... there are many prayers - 100s of prayers in the Bible, by the way, but this is the place to start)
 - **More of God - "Our Father"**
 - **More Glory - "hallowed be your name"**

- **More Renewal** - “**your kingdom come**, your will be done on earth (in Boston) as it is in heaven”
- **More Provision** - “**give us this day our daily bread**”
- **More Transformation** - “**forgive us our sins**, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. **And lead us not into temptation.**”
- “Your will be done” (not my will, but yours be done)
- No, it’s “your will be done” EVERY TIME we ask. God you have more information, you have the unlimited perspective, you love me more than I can begin to understand, so whether you answer my prayer with a yes, no, or wait, I can trust you know best..
- It takes faith to believe and practice this truth. In fact, all true prayer are acts of faith.
- Some of you may think, “I don’t have enough faith.” Let me ask you this: Is your faith in YOUR prayer? OR Is your faith IN Christ in prayer? HUGE DIFFERENCE. Our faith is never in our faith? I wouldn’t have confidence.
- We want to see nothing less than a “sweeping work of God” on display across our Boston, New England, our country, and our world.
 - “Prayer moves God down on the scene.” - Tozer
 - Prayer precedes revival’s arrival.
 - Revival is a widespread work of God changing a large number of people in a given season... extraordinary activity in the ordinary means God has given us. It’s old things experienced in new ways.
 - Because the essence of prayer is seeking MORE of GOD!! MORE. It’s relationship. It’s intimacy.
 - I love how someone described **revival** as “**A people saturated with God.**” (Brain Edwards)-
 - Not TV, Not Social Media, Not politics, Not gifts, Not Boston Sports, Not anything else BUT GOD.
 - God, make us a people who hunger for you.
 - Start with me... Get enough people saying that, living that. Look. OUT.
 - Get a prayer partner. Move past awkward. Join a prayer circle.
 - C’mon - we have to be a praying people.
- Do you have a hunger for prayer? One of our Groups changed their plans so they could come to prayer last night. That’s what I’m talking about. We all make time for what we want to make time for.
- Do you pray with confidence? We’re praying that 10 people step into the life of Christ by the end of the year. And as one of our kids told their mother who is praying about this: “Mommy, why not 20?” C’mon
- Now, don’t miss the connection between obedience and prayer (22).
 - John Stott says, “Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer” (p. 152).
 - It’s not a transaction. (Lease...)
 - If I obey, he’ll do what I want.

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- How is that obedience? If obedience is love, and your motive is selfish, how is that loving, how is that obedience?
- God probably more frequently answers the prayers of people in step with him because he knows he can trust them with his glory.

T: The keeping of God's commands not only gives confidence in prayer, but it is part of how love... (RW)

III. Love leads us to confident living for God (22b-24)

- We are instructed to “keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” (22)
 - Start commands: Get busy and Act
 - Love
 - Be Kind
 - Encourage others
- Stop Commands: Cease and Desist
 - Do not steal.
 - Beat down selfishness.
 - Avoid sexual immorality (speak to the #metoo movement - heinousness of sexual harassment - should we be surprised when sex becomes increasingly selfish - accessibility of porn, etc)
 - Now, as we do that, we please God. God looks down and he is pleased. (Just like a father or mother, or an instructor or teacher loves it when they see progress in those they are helping.)
 - There are SO MANY commands, but there is one here, and it probably catches you by surprise!
- Believe. (The Obedience of Faith). 98 times in the gospel of John; 1st time here, 8 more times coming, especially in chapter 5.
 - Believe in the name of his Son, emphasizing his unique relationship with the Father (The Trinity is right here in these few verses, by the way)
 - Jesus - “salvation is of the Lord”
 - Christ - Messiah - the Deliverer.
 - GOSPEL...
 - Joy to the world, let earth receive her King, he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.
 - The world is plagued by the curse of sin and death. We were cursed. Jesus took our curse.
 - Don't you want this gift? How could you refuse it?
 - Baptisms: That's what these friends are saying today — in Jesus I have found salvation. He's done everything I could ever need.

The command to believe is the foundation of all other commands, including the command that goes with it, the command to love.

- This is crucial... The obedience of faith fuels all other obedience!

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- Martin Luther said all our sin is rooted in the fact that we fail to believe the gospel deeply enough.
 - God is great – so we don't have to be in control.
 - God is glorious – so we don't have to fear others.
 - God is good – so we don't have to look elsewhere.
 - God is gracious – so we don't have to prove ourselves. (Tim Chester)

If I believe Jesus is enough, I can be satisfied in him instead of looking to lesser pursuits that will not ultimately satisfy.

- If I believe God really loves me, I don't have to find it elsewhere...
- All of our failures are faith failures... and
- All of our victories are faith victories.

Walk by faith to live a life of love

- As we do, John says we abide in him AND he abides in us by the Spirit he has given us.
 - Our confidence is not based on our performance, or our conjured up goodness.
 - Our confidence is based God working in us.
 - **Romans 8:16 — “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”**
 - Romans 5:5 — “and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

T: Are you receiving that love? Are you living in that love? Are you sharing that love?

Conclusion:

Transition into Response.. Dan and the team are going to come out and lead us in a new Christmas song... (lyrics)

This Christmas season... I want your confidence BEFORE GOD to be fueled with great intensity. And I want you to reflect Jesus by seeing that confidence fueled by one act of love after another act of love.

This Christmas season, let's pray...

- God, help me meet physical needs around me.
- God, help me meet spiritual needs around me.

We have 21 days... what if these 21 days weren't about you? What if you spent them for the sake of others....