

Reading: 1 John 5:1-21

Theme: Two Testimonies and Having Eternal Life.

Over the years, if you had listened to conversations I have had in the car, it might have confirmed I was crazy! In one conversation the question was repeatedly asked “*Are you married?*” Every time I answer was “*Yes, I am married*”. Then I had to introduce my wife “*This is my wife Thespia*” and then I had to introduce my husband “*This is my husband Yiorgo*”. Questions and answers from the MP3 Greek course I was doing! (*I’m not that crazy!*) Yes, I am married and my wife is... Mrs James! I’m certain about it.

John wrote so we can have certainty about having eternal life (v13). Do we **know** we have eternal life? These verses show us how we can know, be assured and certain of this. This makes it important to follow and understand what John is saying. We saw John gave 5 certainties in v6-21 and last week we began to look at **1st: Jesus is God (v6-10)** and saw in v6-8 the **threefold witness** that undergirds such certainty - **the shift in emphasis** - Jesus is the Christ, the One sent by and from God; we saw **the significance of the terms ‘water & blood’** and that Christ came by these - in other words they confirm the person and work of Christ; then we saw **the superb witnesses** and noted how the Spirit, water and blood agree. Still under the 1st heading of being certain Jesus is the Son of God, let’s move on from the threefold witness and note **Reasons for accepting the threefold witness v9-10.**

Imagine you arrived at church this evening and those on the door were looking excited, even stunned because they saw a group of wallabies (*officially a "court", "mob", or "troupe" of wallabies*) hopping down Beckett Road. Would you believe them? Then others came in, even a policeman, or Rangers from Yorkshire Wildlife Park and they ask “*Did you see a group of wallabies hopping down the road?*” You’d probably say something like it

was a shame you missed it and accept what was said by so many witnesses of the event - for you knew them to be trustworthy and reliable.

John is going to develop his argument for accepting the witness given to the Son of God - because it is not only the witness, testimony of a mortal man, but of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. God's testimony is more trustworthy and is more important than about wallabies on the loose in this part of Doncaster - for it is God's testimony about His Son.

A. The Divine and External Testimony. (v9)

God has given testimony and the force and tense of that word 'given' means that He has given testimony once and it remains the same about His Son. This threefold witness, testimony of Spirit, water and blood form, constitute a single Divine testimony to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and it is given by God. This underlines it is a matter of which we can be most certain.

The Father testified of His Son in history - in real time and space in Palestine, the voice of God the Father said "*This is my beloved Son...*" He did this on 2 occasions - the 1st was at Jesus' baptism, the other was on His transfiguration. The sufferings of Christ are also divinely approved and witnessed to by His resurrection from the dead - by which He is declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4). Even His sufferings were for God's glory and God owned that in John 12:27-28. God has overseen the recording of these truths, so that people through the ages can have the record and testimony of God to read and learn from who the Lord Jesus is. Here is the Divine and external testimony concerning Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ, the One who came to be the Saviour of all who believe in Him.

John preached this real historical divine Jesus Christ so that people could believe, have eternal life and know it too. Unbelief is not insignificant for it is an affront to God's dignity and person as it calls God a liar. It says *"God all you have said is false, not worth believing or listening to. I'd rather believe the TV broadcasts, the newspapers, my friends, my family and even 'experts' on TV as they all tell the truth, but You God are a liar!"* They may not actually say those words, but it is the sentiments behind their unbelief as they will find reason after reason not to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the sin that will ultimately damn such ones to hell forever. Some may deliberately be rejecting the witness of God and feel that it doesn't really matter, yet it does! Some may just be neglecting, not bothering to believe on the Saviour, but both attitudes are serious, both are sin. Both groups are under God's wrath and condemnation even as they go about their lives, possibly even listening to God's word in a church or on the internet.

I wonder if we have listened to and seen the divine and external evidence and believed on the Son of God as our own Saviour. If not, then we could be calling God a liar by our indifference or stubborn unbelief. Yet the Christian life is more than a mere academic acceptance of historical type truths. Yes, it will involve recognising that God's word is completely true, especially concerning the Son of God, but we are to realise it is more than that and we have to believe in His name (v13), in the Son of God (v10) and we can find:

B. The Divine and Internal Testimony. (v10)

The testimony of God occurs on these 2 levels - the external testimony in His word and here God the Spirit drives home to our

hearts and minds that this is true and there has also to be an internalising of the truth of who Jesus is to us as individuals. We may have read the Bible 1000 times, sat under thousands of sermons (*even felt like one sermon was 1000 sermons*) and yet we would not necessarily have believed on the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour, nor have the eternal life He gives. We may very well be able to answer questions and even answer them correctly about the Bible and Jesus, but knowledge does not necessarily equal saving faith and belief. Many Jews saw and heard Jesus in His lifetime, may have seen Him die, even heard He had risen from the dead and yet they did not believe in Him.

Many in churches were like that at one time, I know I was. I was brought up to go to chapel, tried to live a good life, even started reading my Bible regularly and then I began to realise who Jesus **really** is; I understood who I was before God and that I needed the Lord Jesus as my Saviour. I asked Him in prayer to save me, make me as child, forgive my sins and give me eternal life. There were no angelic trumpets audibly sounded, no fanfares, no flashing lights, but I took Jesus at His word that He would not cast out any who went to Him for salvation. At 1st I did not feel different, I still had many questions and couldn't understand the Bible too well. Sermons at chapel were not always interesting. Yet gradually I became aware, was assured that I was a believer, that I really was God's child, really forgiven and had eternal life.

What was happening? The Holy Spirit was giving testimony to my life that I was God's child. It was not emotional feelings, having a high, but a quiet, gentle growing assurance and awareness that "*Blessed assurance Jesus is mine*". It was the Divine and internal witness of God the Spirit in my heart, my life and it is still there, greater and lesser at times, but there. This is part of the work of the Holy Spirit when we have believed in, into the Son of God.

This believing is a continual belief, an ongoing belief and trust in Jesus as our Saviour. This work of the Holy Spirit is for all Christians and it is a personal applying of the reality of Jesus' person, work, death, resurrection and Ascension to our lives. Yes, it begins with the new birth, conversion, faith in Christ and it continues to grow as an inner conviction that the things we read of in the Bible are true and are for us as individuals. This is not a strange mystical or emotional feeling and experience, but is the certainty of knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and He is our Saviour.

Have you ever been sent a hamper of food - either from this country from abroad? It arrives all boxed up, all individually wrapped and everything looks so yummy. Then you taste the produce and it tastes even better! The Bible says in Psalm 34:8 "*Taste and see that the Lord is good*". We may know people who are looking and questioning. They may like what they see about Christianity and the Lord Jesus, but we are to encourage them to taste and see that the Lord is good and how good He really is. The evidence is before us - the Bible, people's testimony of their lives being changed, and the Lord says to them, to you even, that they are to taste and see how good He is. We are to realise we have to believe in the Son of God personally and God will show us what is right and good by the divine and internal witness in our lives.

The Holy Spirit witnesses with our Spirit that we are the children of God and He causes us to cry out "*Abba Father*" (Romans 8:15-16). There needs to be a believing in the Divine and **external** testimony and this is confirmed and deepened by a Divine and **internal** testimony and witness of the Holy Spirit.

This leads us to **the consequences of accepting the threefold testimony** which is also the 2nd certainty: **Believers Have Eternal Life** (v11-13)

Those who believe - continuously believe, have faith in, trusted the Lord Jesus have eternal life. John argues this in v11-12. John says the testimony, witness is “*God has given us eternal life; and this life is in His Son.*” It is so important that we realise we can know we have eternal life, for our eternal future hangs on the matter of our belief in the name i.e. the work and person of Jesus Christ. We have either that life now or we are spiritually dead. If we do not have eternal life now, then at this moment we are under God’s wrath and condemnation. Our own eternal destiny is at stake here at this time.

Verses 11-12 show us the consequences of believing or not believing God’s truth and testimony. Our life for all eternity is dependent on our believing the testimony of God given in His word and having that internal testimony is driven home in our lives. It is not complicated, but it is simple and clear - if we do not accept God’s testimony and do not believe, then we do not have the Son as our Saviour and we do not, in any way, shape or form, have eternal life or a true hope of eternal life. We are not to delude ourselves about that. It is certain and guaranteed – no belief in the Son of God, then no eternal life.

Yet the certainty John emphasises and I want us to note and underline, is that if we have seen our need of the Saviour, called on Him to save us, believed in, on the name of the Son of God, then we have eternal life. Not that we are on our way to having or earning eternal life, but we have had His eternal life now given to us to possess as a gift from God. This life is in His Son - it is only found and received in the Son of God - Jesus Christ. There is no

point looking at what we can do, or trying to do better, being good and nice enough. There is no point even in saying “*I am too bad*” for no one is good enough anyway! No, this gift of eternal life is to be found in the Son of God Jesus Christ. It is given as a gift and given freely to all who ask for it by trusting the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. The night I became a Christian the preacher touched upon **Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-9** and stressed the fact that we do not need to buy or earn this, but it is given freely as a gift for us to receive.

If we are seeking eternal life, we not to look to go elsewhere for it. Many of us here have believed in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, so we can pause a while in adoring wonder and consider that the moment we believed, we were given eternal life. It is not so much a life that begins when we die and then we live forever, but it is a glorious life that is ours the moment we believed and it will go on forever and it is to be delighted in and enjoyed now.

Eternal life is part and parcel of our new birth, our regeneration. Jesus gives us eternal life and we can never perish, no one can snatch us away from Him. He is the resurrection and life and He gives us life abundant. He has been given authority to give eternal life to all God has given Him (John 17:2-3). This eternal life is only in the Son of God and if we have believed in Him as our own Saviour through the testimony of God – then the threefold witness, external and internal divine works, all say this is certain and all believers have eternal life. God says so, He never lies and always keeps His word!

God wants us to know and be certain of this. This is one of the reasons He had John write His gospel “*these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*” (20:31) and also in this letter **5:13**. God will never break His word and we can be sure “so

that you may know that you have eternal life.” - We will look at this in more detail next time.

We are to take heart and be encouraged, for as weak, as low, as useless as we may feel at times as believers, we can thank God our salvation does not rest depend on our feelings in any way, but on the unchanging promises of God that all who believe in the Lord Jesus have eternal life.

That is why we need to question if we have eternal life. For if we have believed in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour then we can be certain we have eternal life. Possibly someone here or listening online may not know if they have believed, but they may want to, then if you are here, speak to me or someone you know afterwards and talk some more on this matter.

Perhaps we want to believe, but don't know how to express it - I suggest you mean the words we sing in our closing hymn *“Just as I am without one plea”* (see below for words). For us who are Christians, use these same words as a chance to rededicate our lives to Christ afresh as the one we love and who has saved us. I pray all who believe will have the sweet and the gracious comfort of the joyful assurance that we really do have eternal life.

JUST as I am, without one plea
but that Thy blood was shed for me,
and that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

3 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

4 Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind:
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

5 Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

6 Just as I am – Thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down –
now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

7 Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871