

1 John 5:1-13

INTRODUCTION: When my son Josiah was born he had a mark on his head.

➤ The doctor said it was where the angel kissed him.

It was a birthmark.

➤ JUST LIKE BABIES BEAR BIRTHMARKS WHICH BECOME MARKS OF IDENTIFICATION, EVEN SO THE BELIEVER BEARS SPIRITUAL BIRTH MARKS.

These are marks that identify us as being the children of God.

John points to these marks as a means of assurance.

CONTEXT: Here in 1 John 5 the Apostle John is wrapping up his letter to these believers.

➤ In doing so he reviews several themes he had already talked about in this book.

Chapter 5 is the summary of the letter he has written.

➤ As John moves towards the conclusion of this letter, he summarizes in this one paragraph all the tests that he has been giving about authentic Christianity.

He does this to summarize and to show that these tests are part of an interwoven fabric.

→ They all depend on the new birth as their foundation.

We may view them as vital signs of the new birth.

We can call them **"BIRTHMARKS OF THE BELIEVER."**

If a person has truly received new life from God, these BIRTHMARKS will be evident.

→ If there is no evidence of these BIRTHMARKS, a person needs to examine whether or not he truly has been born again.

→ But John's whole desire is that each one of us have this birthmarks and have absolute certainty and assurance that you are a child of God.

The whole thesis of the book is given in 5:13, notice this verse.

John wants every believer to have the blessing of assurance in their heart that they are God's child.

Hopefully if you have not been at peace you are now after studying 1 John.

That is his goal!

Do you feel safe in Christ?

Are you sure of your soul's salvation?

ILLUSTRATION: The great Civil War General Thomas Stonewall Jackson said, "My religious beliefs teach me to feel as safe in battle as in bed."

— John wants you to feel safe and secure in Christ. He wants you to have that assurance that Fanny Crosby wrote about and we sing about:

"Blessed Assurance Jesus in Mine . . ."

QUOTE: Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say some Christians are bent over like a question mark when they should be standing upright like an exclamation point.

— Some are doubting Christians when they ought to be shouting Christians.

~~Reasons People Lack Assurance:~~

So, in the conclusion of this letter John is going to repeat everything he has taught us.

— He is going to summarize the basic tests we have already studied and hammer home again the Biblical way to assurance of salvation.

What is the Biblical basis of assurance of salvation?

TRANSITIONAL SENTENCE: Notice three infallible proofs of assurance.

I. The External Evidence of the Saint. 5:1-5

A. Our Saving Faith.

Believeth – this is not talking about just an intellectual knowledge or a mental assent.

- The Greek word translated believe is referring to a wholehearted acceptance of everything that is implied in the claims of Christ.

EXPLANATION: Some have taught that in order to be saved all one has to do is make an intellectual acknowledgement of Christ.

Years ago, two men John Glas and Robert Sandeman taught that a person who said he believed that Jesus is Lord had saving faith.

They reduced faith to mere intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel.

- No requirement of repentance, no submission to the Lordship of Christ, and no experience of the power of saving truth.

— This teaching was condemned as heresy in the 18th century by the church but this “easy believism” is still around today.

ARGUMENT: True saving faith involves more than just a mental assent or intellectual agreement.

— Saving faith involves three elements.

It involves the mind (intellectual), the heart (emotional), the will (volitional).

EXPLANATION: Systematic theology usually recognizes three elements of faith:
knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*).

— Augustus H. Strong and Louis Berkhof both refer to *notitia* as the “intellectual element” of faith. *Assensus* is the “emotional element.” *Fiducia* is the “voluntary [volitional] element.”⁴

4 Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 837–38; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1939), 503–5.

In *Absolutely Free!* Zane Hodges claimed I had “seriously distort[ed]” Berkhof’s definition (AF 207). “ *Assensus* is not an ‘emotional element,’” Hodges protested. But those are, after all, Berkhof’s own words. Note that Strong, for one, held an identical view. Even Ryrie agrees (SGS 120). By “emotional element,” Strong and Berkhof meant that *assensus* goes beyond considering the object of faith in a detached and disinterested way. Berkhof wrote, “When one embraces Christ by faith, he has a deep conviction of the truth and reality of the object of faith, feels that it meets an important need in his life, and is conscious of an absorbing interest in it... It is exactly the distinguishing characteristic of the knowledge of saving faith” (Berkhof, 504–5).

John Calvin defined *assensus* as “more a matter of the heart than the head, of the affection than the intellect.” He equated assent with “pious affection”; see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3:2:8 (reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1966), 1:476.

Real faith therefore involves the whole person—mind, emotions, and will.

- The mind embraces *knowledge*, a recognition and understanding of the truth that Christ saves.
- The heart gives *assent*, or the settled confidence and affirmation that Christ's salvation is applicable to one's own soul.

The will responds with *trust*, the personal commitment to and appropriation of Christ as the only hope for eternal salvation.¹

ILLUSTRATION: In our study of James we saw 3 kinds of faith:

Dead faith – James 2:20 “faith without works is dead.” Involves the mind only.

Demonic faith – James 2:19 “the devils believe and tremble...” Involves the mind and the heart.

Dynamic Faith – James 2:22 – “by works was faith made perfect...” Involves mind, heart, and the will.”

ILLUSTRATION: Reading the article in doctor's waiting room on smoking.

The third time I read it I believe it mind, heart, and will! All of me

¹MacArthur, J. 2000. *The gospel according to the Apostles : The role of works in the life of faith*. Originally published: Faith works. Dallas : Word Pub., c1993. Word Pub.: Nashville, TN

B. Our Sweet Fellowship (vv.1-2)

- Another external evidence that John has mentioned is love for other believers.
- If you are saved you are going to love the fellowship of the saints.

ILLUSTRATION: Tradition has it that the Apostle John was allowed to leave Patmos and return to Ephesus at his pastorate.

Almost blind and deaf he would be carried into the meetings. He would repeated over and over, “Oh, the fellowship of the saints.”

Hebrews 10:25 “Admonishes us not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together.”

You will love the fellowship of the saints.

We see this again and again in 1 John.

ILLUSTRATION: Sometimes I hear people say, “I love Jesus, but I just don’t love the church.”

- But you can’t separate the two.
- What if you said to me, “I love you but I don’t love your bride. I would be insulted. How can you love me and not my bride. If you love me you will love my bride whom I love.”

The church is the bride of Christ. You insult Jesus when you say, “I love you Jesus but I don’t love your church.”

NOTICE: 1 John 2:9-10, 3:14, 4:7-8, 11, 20.

C. Our Simple Fruit (vv. 2b-3)

→ We will have a desire to keep His commandments.

Obedience will not be a drudgery, it will be a delight.

→ Grievous – is from the Greek word that means “heavy” or “oppressive.”

→ The idea is a heavy or oppressive burden.

To the child of God obeying the Word of God is not burdensome but exciting!

^{KJV} **Psalm 119:47** And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. ⁴⁸ My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

EXPLANATION: Remember 1 John 2:3-4 – If there is no desire to keep God’s Word then we are not saved!

Keep – a mariners term, to navigate according to the stars.

They didn’t always steer correctly but they aimed at it.

D. Our Spiritual Freedom (vv. 4-5)

Another external evidence is the victory the believer has over the world.

Overcome – twice we see this word. It is the Greek word nikao meaning “to conquer, to have victory, to have superiority, to defeat.”

- This is one of John’s favorite words he used it throughout the book of Revelation.

EXPLANATION: The Greeks believed that victory could only be achieved by the gods, not by men. Only gods were conquerors and unconquerable.

The Greek goddess of victory was named NIKE.

John used this word to speak of the believers victory.

- In a real sense we as believers can only achieve victory through our God, Jesus Christ.

John 16:33 – Jesus used this same word, “I have overcome the world.”

- Jesus was saying I have overcome Satan’s system.

Now that we are born again we also are overcomers. We are victorious through Christ.

World – kosmos, an arrangement.

It is an evil system of ideas and philosophies that are against God. It is headed up by Satan.

It is an invisible spiritual system of evil design to replace God with things.

IT IS THAT SYSTEM THAT MAN HAS BUILT IN WHICH HE IS TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF HAPPY WITHOUT GOD.

A true believer will overcome the lusts and temptations of the world.

Those who love the world reveal that they do not love God.

1 John 2:15-16

A true child of God will be free of the world's pull and lure, temptations and pollution.

You will experience victory over the world in ever increasing degrees.

There will be a decreasing pattern of sin in your life and the world will lose its attraction.

ILLUSTRATION: A Christian who sins will suffer. An ancient story illustrates this.

— A Roman officer wanted to persecute a Christian and really make him suffer.

— He called together his advisors and asked for their opinion.

Confiscate his goods – he claims he has treasure in heaven.

Solitary confinement – he has a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

— Kill him – he said to live is Christ and to die is gain.
Make him sin – if he is a real Christian he will suffer.

Not only:

I. The External Evidence of the Saint 5:1-4

- A. Our Saving Faith
- B. Our Sweet Fellowship
- C. Our Simple Fruit
- D. Our Spiritual Freedom

II. The Eternal Evidence of the Son 5:5-8

— One reason people lack assurance is because we don't have a strong theological foundation.

— John has hammered hard on the doctrine of Christ in this epistle and he does so once more before he is finished.

EXPLANATION: Remember that the Gnostics have attacked the deity of Christ. They have attacked the incarnation of Christ.

— They have basically called Jesus a liar by claiming he was not who he said he was.

— John calls forward three great witnesses that all testify that Jesus is indeed who He claimed to be!

ARGUMENT: If you were going to prove something in the court of law what would you need?

— You would need solid evidence based on testimony.

— You would need witnesses. John presents solid evidence to the deity of Christ.

ARGUMENT: Deut. 19:15, 17;6-7 teaches that a matter is established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

John gives us the witnesses.

Notice verses 5-6

EXPLANATION: Verse six has been interpreted several ways.

There is some controversy as to what he is talking about when he refers to “water and blood.”

1. Some say John is referring to the “blood and water” that flowed from Jesus side in John 19:35

PROBLEM: John 19:35 says that blood and water came from Jesus. 1 John 5:6 says that Jesus came by water and blood.

When you study these two passages neither throws light on the other.

2. Some say the water and blood refer to the two church ordinances: water (baptism) and blood (Lord’s Supper).

— Nothing in the text supports this view and to believe such an approach only confuses the matter more as to what John is trying to prove!

3. The correct view is that the water and blood refer to two major events in the life of Christ that give testimony to the fact that He is the Son of God.

v. 6 - also adds the Spirit.

v. 8 – names three things that all bear witness and give the same testimony.

They all agree about one thing!

What is John trying to prove? **Notice v. 1, 5, 6**

— THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

How does the water and blood do that?

EXPLANATION: John is using a literary device called **Synecdoche – (pronounced sin-NECK-dough-key)**

- This is where one part represents the whole.
- One word that mentions a part of a thing represents the whole thing.

ILLUSTRATION: Here are some familiar examples:

- I like your wheels.
- All hands of deck
- A hired hand (a worker) who desires to keep bread (food) on the table, a roof (shelter) over his head (family or whole body) and a shirt (clothing) on his back (whole body) saddles up every morning (leaves for work by riding a horse or car) and puts in long hours (a work day).

It is characteristic of John's writing to use this literary device often.

- He speaks of Jesus as the Lamb – represents that Christ was sinless, blameless, innocent, fulfilled all the law and would be the sacrifice for sin.
- So when John uses the words "water" and "blood" he is speaking of events in the life of Jesus that bear witness.

Water – refers to Jesus baptism the official beginning of His public ministry.

Blood – refers to the death of Christ the official end of His public ministry.

- At each event God miraculously intervened to give testimony that Jesus was the Son of God.

Matthew 3:17 – at the baptism was a voice from heaven which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 27 – when Jesus died there were remarkable miracles surrounding the cross.

- The sun was darkened at noon day, there was an earthquake. The temple veil was rent from top to bottom.

Matthew 27:51-54 ⁵¹ And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; ⁵² And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, ⁵³ And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. ⁵⁴ Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

- So there was irrefutable testimony at the beginning and ending of His public ministry that proved He was the Son of God.

In addition to that there was the witness of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit being poured out after the ascension bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God.

v. 8 – These three all witness to the one fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

Understanding and embracing the deity of Jesus Christ is an important factor in assurance.

There can be no true salvation or assurance without an understanding that Jesus is the Son of God.

Not only:

I. The External Evidence of the Saint 5:1-4

- A. Our Saving Faith
- B. Our Sweet Fellowship
- C. Our Simple Fruit
- D. Our Spiritual Freedom

II. The Eternal Evidence of the Son 5:5-8

But also:

III. The Internal Evidence of the Spirit. 5:9-13

There is also the inward witness of the Spirit that we are saved!

Notice 1 John 4:13-14 – We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

→ One of the reasons I know I'm a Christian is that I know it for a fact in my heart.

The Bible teaches that there is an internal, subjective testimony of the Holy Spirit.

A. His Reliable Witness (vv.9-10)

In this matter of assurance the Holy Spirit is a key witness.

ILLUSTRATION: In a court of law sometimes a case will hinge on the testimony of one, that person is called a key witness.

The Holy Spirit is the key witness in this matter of your assurance.

EXPLANATION: John's argument is this: The same Holy Spirit who bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God, also bears witness in us that we are children of God.

Notice v. 10 – “He that believeth on the Son of God hath this witness in himself. . .”

You have the same Holy Spirit in you who bears witness of Jesus, He now bears witness to you that you are God's child.

v. 9 – John says we ought to receive His testimony and witness.

EXPLANATION: This is another point in John's argument: if we receive the fallible witness of man should we not receive the infallible witness of God.

We receive the witness of man all the time. We believe whatever men tell us!

ILLUSTRATION: Doctor writes prescription.

- I can't read it or understand it. How does the pharmacist? I take the medicine and exercise faith in them.
- I receive their witness.

ILLUSTRATION: I hate to fly. The airlines tell us it is safe and we get on the plane we don't ask questions.

ILLUSTRATION: Every time you buy a canned good you receive the witness of the label. How do you know what is in the can?

ILLUSTRATION: We believe what we read in the paper and what we hear on the news.

- Every day we receive the witness of men. Should we not also receive the witness of God.

This witness inside of us bears witness with our spirit.

1. Expressed in Romans 8:15-16

"Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

When we believe in Christ, God bears witness within us by His Spirit that we are true children of God.

That is something an unbeliever will never experience.

2. Expressed in Galatians 4:6

This verse says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

- The Spirit gives us confidence that we are children of God, and we respond by calling Him "Abba," which means "Pappa," or "Daddy."
- The Spirit witnesses not only externally in history, but also internally when you believe.

Some might say, "I see the external evidence, but I'm not too sure about this internal witness."

If you believe and take the step of faith, the witness will be confirmed in your heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Receive or Reject

EXPLANATION: There are only two possible responses to the testimony of God either we receive it or reject it.

If we reject the Spirit's witness of Jesus Christ we are calling God a liar that is the worst possible sin!

ILLUSTRATION: One man wrote

If a man refuses to accept the witness of God regarding Christ in Scripture and the evidence of what He has done through the Holy Spirit, he is standing defiantly before God and calling Him a liar.

Continued unbelief is not just a misfortune to be pitied, but a sin to be hated. It is the one thing for which man will never be forgiven because it contradicts the Word of the true God and calls Him a liar.

There is no place for being patronizing or sympathetic with people who reject God's clear testimony. They are not to be treated as poor misguided souls, but as blatant blasphemers.

A man is a fool who waves his frail fist in the face of Almighty God and calls Him a liar.

— That is exactly what happens when someone denies that Christ is God incarnate. Judgement is the fate of those who reject the clear and true testimony of God, for God is not a liar (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19).

A. His Reliable Witness

B. His Recorded Word. V. 11-12

“This is the record...”

— One of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us in this matter of assurance is to remind us of the testimony of Scripture.

— There are times when your heart will condemn you remember?
Notice 1 John 3:20

We must base our assurance on the Word of God.

— When our heart who is the judge in the courtroom of our soul begins to condemn us, the Spirit reminds our heart of the record!

— Our assurance is not proven by feeling but by the Spirit's witness and the recorded Word.

Our assurance is based on an official record!

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose I am in a courtroom and the judge says Mr. Harmon are you married? Yes! Can you prove it.

— Yes, I was in church and I saw Carolyn come down the aisle and I was happy and my heart got all “twitter-patted.”

— The Judge says your emotions are not evidence in this court.

➤ I say here is the married license, it is notarized here is the record.

This judge says I accept this.

v. 11 – My heart is the judge and the Holy Spirit brings the official testimony the official document of God's Word to my heart.

CONCLUSION: Notice verse 13

Thomas Brooks wrote a book on assurance called "Heaven on Earth" that's what assurance is do you have it?

ILLUSTRATION: The very first test given to a newborn in the delivery room is called the Apgar score.

➤ The test was designed to quickly evaluate a newborn's physical condition after delivery and to determine any immediate need for extra medical or emergency care.

➤ It measures things like muscle tone, heart rate, reflexes, skin color, and breathing rate.

➤ I remember waiting to hear the doctor give me the score of the Apgar test for each of our children when they were born.

The vital signs of birth are essential!

A true child of God will have a spiritual Apgar score.

John gives us these basic test to examine if you are a child of God.

I. The External Evidence of the Saint 5:1-4

- A. Our Saving Faith
- B. Our Sweet Fellowship
- C. Our Simple Fruit
- D. Our Spiritual Freedom

II. The Eternal Evidence of the Son 5:5-8

III. The Internal Evidence of the Spirit. 5:9-13

- A. His Reliable Witness
- B. His Recorded Word

If you claim to be born again, you may want to check your spiritual Apgar score.

If the vital signs of new life in Christ are not there, you need to get down on your knees and plead with God to cause you “to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” ([1 Pet. 1:3](#)).