

ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY IN A WORLD OF DOUBT

1 John 5:13

INTRODUCTION

My sermon title this morning is “**Absolute Certainty in a World of Doubt.**”

Consider these quotes:

Vincent Van Gogh said “*For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me want to dream.*”

Benjamin Franklin said “*in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.*”

On the humorous side, I like what **Rudyard Kipling**, the English author of “The Jungle Book”, “The Man Who Would Be King”, and “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” said “*A woman’s guess is much more accurate than a man’s certainty.*”

Pliny the Elder, the 1st century Roman military commander, author, and philosopher said “*The only certainty is that nothing is certain.*”

In the blasphemous novel and now movie **The Shack**, the character **Sarayu**, who is supposed to be the Holy Spirit represented as an Asian woman with translucent skin, says to Mack “*contrary to what you might think, I have a great fondness for uncertainty*”

The 18th century French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher **Voltaire** said “*Doubt is not a pleasant mental state, but certainty is a ridiculous one.*”

James Burke is a British broadcaster, science historian, author, and television producer, who produced the television series “The Day the Universe Changed”, which is about the history of science and

technology. The Washington Post called him “one of the most intriguing minds in the western world.” He said this:

*“For centuries, it was known that **disease** came from miasma, a foul air emanating from marshes and putrescent materials and such creepy stuff...until 1864, when Louis Pasteur discovered germs.*

*For centuries **electricity** was a fluid...until 1820. It was a well-known fact that rotten apples spontaneously generated little worms and grubs found inside them...until 1767.*

*The **atom** was indivisible...until 1877. **Light** was particles until 1801, when it became waves; until 1905, when it became particles again; until 1924, when it became both.*

*And my all-time favorite, the one that really makes my point: **Space and time** were absolutes until 1886, when Ernst Mach introduced the insidious concept of relativity and set the stage for Einstein. In 1927, **Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle** took things further and really pulled out the rug. According to this principle, you can find out where a subatomic particle is or what speed it’s moving at, but not both. ... What Heisenberg meant was that at the fundamental level of things, there is no certainty.”*

Those are a few quotes that highlight the fact that we live in an uncertain world, a world of doubt and confusion. As believers, we turn to the Word of God. We turn to a verse I think I have quoted probably more often than any other verse in Holy Writ – in evangelism, in discipleship, in encouragement

READ 1 John 5:13 – “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Proposition: 3 Parts to this verse:

- I. The **Proposition**
- II. The **Purpose**
- III. The **People**

So That: In the 1st century, when John wrote this to his original audience, they were concerned about: reality, authority, validity, certainty. We have those same concerns in this 21st century.

So That: God wants to give assurance to believers troubled by a restless and disquieted faith. He wants to give certainty to those shadowed with doubt and disturbed by alarms.

The 1st Part of this verse, ...

I. The Proposition **1 John 5:13a**

Point – Proposition (True or False/Received or Rejected) Truth
– (those who received from vv. 9-10)

Proof – “**These things I have written to you**”

Switch from mostly 3rd person in vv.1-12 to 1st and 2nd person.

The **Conclusion** of the epistle

- vv. 11-12 – Summary statement
- v. 13 – Purpose statement
- vv. 14-21 – Epilogue, closing words

“**these things**” – tauta – common for **Paul** and **John**

Paul writes:

1 Tim 4:6 – “pointing out these things”

1 Tim 4:11 – “Prescribe and teach these things”

1 Tim 4:15 – “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them”

1 Tim 5:21 – “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these things without bias”

1 Tim 6:2 – “Teach and preach these things”

2 Tim 2:2 – “these things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also”

2 Tim 2:14 – “Remind them of these things”

Titus 2:15 – “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority”

In the vast majority of these verses, the Greek grammar used reflects that these are standing orders, to be continual practice
→ grammatically written in the present imperative

Body Life – For us, these things are part of our everyday communications

Proclamation, Exhortation, Confrontation

Fellowship → “**speak**” – normal pastoral, ministerial conversation

Discipleship → “**exhort**” – “call to one’s side” – comfort,

John → “**These things ... written**” – 1:4; 2:1, 26; 5:13

The message throughout the entire epistle, but with concentration of vv. 6-12, of the **witness** of God → the

Character, the **Reception**, and the **Judgment**

→ Judgment of Life and Judgment of Death

Illustration – A cup of coffee with sugar stirred into it, the entire cup is the sweetened coffee. And the bottom/end is the sweetest/best, most concentrated. That is a beautiful picture of what John refers to here (the whole epistle and 5:11-12).

“**to you**” – John makes it personal → **proposition personalized**

God’s promise in the written Word and Christ’s work as the Incarnate Word → The blood of Christ makes us safe; the Word of God makes us sure.

Rom 3:4 – “let God be found true, though every man be found a liar”

Praise, thanksgiving, joy, and encouragement ... But God doesn't want us to just sit around in our **holy huddle**.

Application – Beloved, in the midst of a generation screaming for answers, far too many Christians are **stuttering**.

The **2nd Part** of this verse, ...

II. The Purpose

1 John 5:13c

Our English bibles reverse the order of the last two phrases. The order in the original Greek of these three phrases would read this way translated into English → literally...

“These things I have written to you
in order that you may know that you have eternal life,
to those who are believing in the name of the Son of God.”

Point – We had the **Proposition Personalized** ... now we have the **Purpose Stated** → Certainty!

John 20:31 – “these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

→ John wrote his **Gospel** so that people would believe.

But he's not writing his **1st Epistle** so that you would believe; he's writing to you who already believe. And he's writing so that you will know you have eternal life.

John wants us to have a robust assurance of our salvation.

Assurance is important, but it is not automatic.

It is something we need to cultivate.

Proof – “**in order that you may know that you have eternal life.**”

“**know**” – this word appears 40 times in these 5 chapters

2:3, 4, 13, 14 – “know Him”

2:13 – “know the Father”

4:2 – “know the Spirit of God”

2:21 – “know the truth”

4:16 – “know ... the love which God has for us”

2:5 – “know that we are in Him”

2:29 – “know that He is righteous”

3:2 – “know that when He appears, we shall be like Him”

3:5 – “know that He appeared in order to take away sins and in Him there is no sin”

3:14 – “know that we have passed out of death into life”

4:13 – “know that we abide in Him and He in us”

5:13 – “know that you have eternal life”

5:15 – “know that He hears us in whatever we ask”

5:15 – “know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

5:19 – “know that we are of God”

Final summary:

5:20 – “know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.”

In his Lectures on Galatians, **Martin Luther** lamented the “damnable doctrine of doubt” of the Roman Catholic Church

“I am saying this in order to refute the damnable doctrine of the sophists and the monks, who taught and believed that no one can know for a certainty whether he is in a state of grace ... This wicked idea, on which the entire kingdom of the pope rests, is one that you young people should flee and regard with horror as a dangerous plague.”

Also, “Let us thank God, therefore, that we have been delivered from this monster of uncertainty and that now we can believe for a certainty that the Holy Spirit is crying and issuing that sigh too deep for words in our hearts. And this is our foundation: The Gospel commands us to look, not at our own good deeds or perfections but at God Himself as He promises, and at Christ Himself, the Mediator.”

“**eternal life**” – This is not as much about a **duration** of life as it is about a **quality** of life, not as much about a period as about a person

“**eternal life**” is a glorious gift and a present possession

John 5:24 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

John 17:3 – “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

“**eternal life**” is the kind of life we have now and will forever have → the life of God in us, holy and pure and righteous and good and content and satisfied and fulfilled.

“**eternal life**” is a life that lacks nothing, wants nothing, seeks nothing, misses nothing, desires nothing other than what it has.

Illustration – Puritan **Thomas Brooks** gave this beautiful and accurate illustration in 1654: “*Assurance is the believer’s ark where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, commotions and confusions.*”

Application – Then he applied it: “[*However*] most Christians live between fears and hopes, and hang, as it were, between heaven and hell. Sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them forever; [*then*] they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such a corruption, or by the prevalence of such or such a temptation ... They are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there”

The **3rd** Part of this verse, ...

III. The People 1 John 5:13b

Point – We had the **Proposition Personalized** and the **Purpose Stated** ... we now have the **People Defined**

Proof – “^b**who believe in the name of the Son of God**”

Literally “to those who are believing in the name of the Son of God.”

From the original Greek word ‘πιστεύω’ – same root word as faith

5:1, 5 – “... believes that Jesus is ...”

5:10 – “believe God” – not believe “in God” ...

“**in the name of the Son of God**” → This is not offering up a limp shallow prayer closing with a magic mantra, “in Jesus’ name.”

He was named **Jesus** because of what He would do. But His name, the name Jesus, is just the beginning of the meaning.

The “**name of**” Jesus means who He is, His character.

It means His authority. It means His Lordship.

It means being under all He commands.

Interesting how **John** uses this equation →

John 3:18 – “in the name of the only begotten Son of God”

John 12:13 – “in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel”

1 John 3:23 – “in the name of His Son Jesus Christ”

1 John 5:13 – “in the name of the Son of God”

→ “Jesus” and “Christ” only once out of four appearances

John 20:31 – “these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Beloved, genuine faith is not a compartment in our lives. It is the totality of our lives.

False assurance speaks of what I have done.

True assurance speaks of what Christ has done for me.

5:11-12 – Judgment of **Life** and Judgment of **Death**

Illustration – Friend, one of these days you are going to be standing in the **True Supreme Court**. It is a court of no appeal.

This court is different than any other court in history.

There is no jury. There is no case, and there is no debate.

→ There is a **Judge**, a **defendant**, and an **Advocate**, but only for those trusting in Christ.

Application – If you are without Christ and ask for: courage during a time of trouble or wisdom in a time of perplexity.

God says in His Bible that if you would just ask for Jesus, all these and more are contained within Him.

CONCLUSION

Does certainty matter?

Does certainty exist?

Why do we care?

Yesterday was Linda Hatchard's Celebration of Life service.

I had the privilege of baptizing Linda the same day that I baptized my firstborn son, Zachary. This was 39 days before my beloved Margie went home.

So, in light of Linda's Celebration of Life yesterday and the fact that exactly 4 weeks from today will be the two-year anniversary of Margie's homecoming, combined with the message of the passage we just read, today seems like an appropriate day to share some things that I have never previously shared from this pulpit.

A final picture on this side of heaven of God's good grace in my most beautiful wife as she was ushered into heaven.

...

“³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to *obtain* an inheritance *which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade* away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:3-9

Does certainty matter? Yes.

Does certainty exist? Yes.

Why do we care? Because eternity is at stake.