

December 27, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Blessed Assurance

1 John 4:13-21

We have blessed assurance because, ...

1. We have the Spirit (verse 13).
2. We have the Testimony (verse 14).
3. We have our Confession (verse 15).
4. We have Love (verse 16).
5. We have Confidence (verse 17).
6. We have No Fear (verse 18).
7. We have Love (verse 19).
8. We have a Test (verse 20).
9. We have the Commandment (verse 21).

"Fanny" Crosby was born on March 24, 1820, in the village of Brewster, about 50 miles (80 km) north of New York City. At six weeks old, she caught a cold and developed inflammation of the eyes. Mustard plaster was applied to her eyes to treat the discharges. Fanny Crosby thought that this procedure damaged her optic nerves and caused her blindness, though modern physicians doubt this claim and think that her blindness was most likely congenital. At any rate, she became blind as a young child.

But, the blindness didn't stop her. She did what she could do in love for her savior. She wrote poems, many of which became hymns. In fact, she wrote some 8,000 hymns in her lifetime, and has been called the "Queen of Gospel Song Writers."

I looked at our hymnal and discovered that 16 of her hymns have made it into our Bible. That's as many hymns as anyone else in our hymnal (tied with both the Gaithers and Charles Wesley). Her hymns would often be written when a visiting minister of the gospel would come and suggest some topic that they thought would be helpful. "Fanny, how about a song about redemption!" And soon afterwards, she writes "Redeemed," ...

"Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.
Redeemed through his infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am."

"Fanny, how about a song about God and his glory." And soon afterwards, she writes "To God Be the Glory," ...

"To God be the glory--great things he has done!
So loved He the world that he gave us His Son
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin.
And opened the life-gate that all may go in."

"Fanny, how about a song about staying close the cross." And soon afterwards, she writes "Near the Cross," ...

"Jesus, keep me near the cross--There a precious fountain.
Free to all, a healing stream, Flows from Calv'ry's mountain."

Well, on one occasion, a close friend of hers (and amateur musician) came and played a little melody for Fanny. And when he had finished playing, he asked her, "What does this tune say?" And she replied, "Why, that says: 'Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine.'" And thus came the famous hymn, ...

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood." [\[1\]](#)

This hymn is indeed the heartbeat of 1 John that we have been looking at in the last few months. The book of 1 John is all about assurance. The purpose statement of 1 John is found in chapter 5 and verse 13.

1 John 5:13

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.

Now, sadly, there are those who lack assurance of their salvation. For them, Fanny Crosby's hymn goes something like this:

Not much assurance, maybe He's mine,
Maybe I'll make it to heaven sometime.
Watching and waiting, wringing my hands,
Never quite sure of where I might stand.

The apostle John would never want us to sing this. He wrote his book so that we might know that we have eternal life. John wrote 1 John, so that we might be assured that we have eternal life. Nowhere in the epistle does the emphasis upon assurance come through as in our text this morning. We will continue today in 1 John. We have arrived this morning in chapter 4 and verse 13. We are going to look this morning through the end of the chapter. Let me read these verses for you now, ...

1 John 4:13-21

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

The title of my message this morning is "Blessed Assurance." And I simply want to walk through each of these verses and let them speak to our hearts regarding our salvation. I have one point for each verse. They are nothing fancy, but they are all reasons why we have "Blessed Assurance."

First of all, we have blessed assurance because, ...

1. We have the Spirit (verse 13).

1 John 4:13

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

John has already spoken at length about "abiding." Look back at chapter 2 and verse 24.

1 John 2:24

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

In other words, if you take the teaching of the gospel, that eternal life comes through faith in Jesus Christ. And that teaching abides in you, which means that you fully embrace it deep down to the bottom of your soul. It means that you are genuinely trusting in Christ alone to forgive your sins. Then, you will abide in the Son and in the Father.

And, here is the good news, he will abide in you. And verse 13 tells us how he will abide in us. He will abide in us through his Spirit.

1 John 4:13

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

It is through the Holy Spirit of God that we know (and experience) the presence of God. And so, you say, "How do I know if I have the Spirit?"

Well, like much of 1 John, I would encourage you to look at your life. What sort of life do you live? What sort of choices do you make? Are you living in submission to God? Or, are you living in love with the world?

Are you obeying the commandments of God? Or, are you pursuing your fleshly desires? Look at chapter 3 and verse 24, ...

1 John 3:24

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.

There is a direct link between obedience and abiding. The one who abides in God will obey his commandments. Did you notice how verse 24 ends?

1 John 3:24

... And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

This is exactly what verse 13 says in our text this morning.

1 John 4:13

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

You want, "Blessed Assurance?" Then know that you have the Spirit.

Secondly, we have blessed assurance because, ...

2. We have the Testimony (verse 14).

Look at verse 14, ...

1 John 4:14

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

This is what we celebrated two days ago. Christmas is celebrating the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from our sins. Matthew 1:21 says "She will bear as son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." And how do we know that this is true? Because we have the testimony of the apostles.

When John uses the first person plural, "we," in verse 14, he's talking about those who have "seen" Jesus. And those who have seen have given testimony about Jesus. John begins this epistle by speaking about his own experiences in hearing and seeing and touching Jesus. He says, ...

1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We have the testimony of the apostles. And they said that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Remember when Peter was preaching to crowds and was arrested by the Sanhedrin? He gave this testimony to them. He said, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).

Do you remember when the apostles got together in Jerusalem because some of the Jewish leaders were saying that "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved?" (Acts 15:1). Peter refuted them and said (on behalf of all of the apostles), "We believe that we [Jews] will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as [the Gentiles] will" (Acts 15:11).

Do you remember when the Philippian jailer cried out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And they said to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

Such is the testimony of the apostles. That Jesus Christ came into this world to save us from our sins. And their testimony is true and reliable. And We have the Testimony (verse 14). We have it in the Bible. We have had the immense privilege of listening to that testimony every week at Rock Valley Bible Church.

But, it's really not enough to have the testimony of the apostles; we must believe in their testimony. And that's what verse 15 speaks about.

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Here is yet another reason why we have "Blessed Assurance." Because, ...

3. We have our Confession (verse 15).

Your "Blessed Assurance," will come through your confession. Because, it is through your confession that you take the testimony of the apostles and embrace it as your own. Paul said it this way, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

That's what it means to "confesses that Jesus is the Son of God" (verse 15). It means that we believe him to be everything that he claimed to be. We believe that he is Lord. We believe that he died on the cross for our sins. We believe that God raised him from the dead. And if this is your confession, you will be saved.

Have you made that confession? Have you verbally expressed this? Christianity knows nothing of an inward, personal faith that never expresses itself. No, believing in Christ means that you will confess him verbally to others. Jesus said it his way: "For whoever is ashamed of

me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

If your faith is simply a private matter between you and God, then you cannot have this "Blessed Assurance," because you don't embrace the confession. And it's easy. You simply need to tell people that you believe in Jesus. At home, at work, wherever you are.

Let's move on. We have seen three reasons why we have "Blessed Assurance." We have the Spirit (verse 13). We have the Testimony (verse 14). We have our Confession (verse 15). And now, ...

4. We have Love (verse 16).

1 John 4:16

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about love. Jesus said that it was love that motivated him to come and bring salvation to us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

And this is what we believe about God. We believe that God has love toward us. We believe that God has his favor upon us. Not because of how good we are. Not because of something that we can do for him. But simply because his sovereign grace has chosen to love us, despite our wayward ways.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned--everyone--to his own way. And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). And it's all because of God's love for us. And he loves us because his essence is love. Look again at verse 16: "God is love, ..." We talked about this last week, because verse 8 says the same thing, "God is love. ..."

Now, when you think about "God is love," don't confuse it by thinking that "love is God." It doesn't work that way. Think about this tautology -- grass is green. But, that doesn't mean that green is grass. There's so much more to grass than its color. Grass is soft. Grass is ground cover. Grass is food for horses.

Likewise, God is love. But it doesn't mean that "love is God." And that's because there is so much more to God. God is light (1 John 1:5). God is spirit (John 4:24). God is holy (Psalm 99:5, 9). God is merciful and gracious (Psalm 103:8). God is judge (Psalm 50:6). God is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1).

Now, it's not that God is part love and part light and part spirit and part holy. It's that God is fully these things all at the same time. In fact, God's love shines most brightly against the backdrop of God's holiness. Because, his holiness demands punishment for our sin. But, his love brings salvation to us through Christ.

And we can have this "Blessed Assurance" because ...

4. We have Love (verse 16).

We have the love of God. But, we also have our love. Look at the end of verse 16, ...

1 John 4:16

... whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

This is where our assurance comes. It comes when we see God's love manifest in our lives. As we looked at last week (and even sang at the end of our service).

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

In other words, love in our life gives us assurance that we know God. If we don't love, then we don't know God. Similarly in verse 16. If we abide in love -- that is if love saturates our lives and we demonstrate this love not merely in words, but also in deeds (1 John 3:18) -- then we can be assured that "God abides in us." That's clearly the teaching of verse 16.

1 John 4:16

... whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

And we can have this "Blessed Assurance" because We have Love (verse 16). God's love and our love.

Let's move on. The fifth reason why we have "Blessed Assurance" is, ...

5. We have Confidence (verse 17).

Particularly, we have confidence for the day of judgment.

1 John 4:17

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.

In other words, when God's love does its perfect work in you, you can stand assured of your forgiveness before God.

The issue concerning "the day of judgment" will be "justice." Right? I mean, you stand before a judge and the issue on the table is your conduct. Did you do right? Did you do wrong? If you did right, you will be set free. If you did wrong, then you will be punished. And it is the judge's job to make sure that "the punishment fits the crime."

But, when we come to embrace the love of God, he is willing to forgive us our sins. That's what 1 John 1:9 says. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Then, we can stand before God with confidence because we stand before him as forgiven.

Then, John gives a strange reason for our confidence, ...

1 John 4:17

..., because as he is so also are we in this world.

This is clearly a difficult phrase to understand. And I'm not sure exactly what it means. But, I think that it has something to do with the incarnation. I think that it has something to do with Christmas. Because, the verse speaks about us "also" being in this world. And the only reason it can say, "also" about is if it was true of him as well.

And just as Jesus was in the world and conquered the world through abiding in God, so too can we overcome the temptations that come our way as we abide in God. So much so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment. And confidence for the day of judgment gives us assurance that we are indeed his child.

Now, there are many today with false confidence in standing before God. They don't think that they will face his judgment, because they don't think that God will judge anybody. But please know this: God will judge. God will judge you for every wrong you have ever done.

And the only escape is through the blood of Jesus. But, through the blood of Jesus, We have Confidence (verse 17).

Let's move on, ...

6. We have No Fear (verse 18).

This is related to our previous point. Verses 17 and 18 are both talking about the judging hand of God. Verse 17 says that we have "confidence" for the day of judgment. Verse 18 says that we have "no fear" of punishment that will come through the judging hand of God. Let's read verse 18, ...

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

When we abide in the love of God, we purge our souls from the fear of his judging hand. Now, there are many professing Christians who live in constant fear. They fear that God will punish them for every sin they commit. They fear that they will never quite please God enough. They fear that ultimate day. Will God ultimately forgive them or not? In short, they fear because they lack assurance. They don't know whether or not they stand forgiven in the grace of God.

And, according to verse 18, their trials come because they don't embrace the love of God. Because, ...

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

When you rest in the love of God, you have no need to fear. Because, you know that God's love will be with you to guide you and to guard you and to protect you and to keep you. And you can say with Paul, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). And when you embrace the love of God, love that will never leave us or forsake us, that will never be separated from us, then you will not fear the punishing hand of God.

Long ago, the LORD told the children of Israel, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). God hasn't changed. He has always been with his children,

strengthening them and upholding them. Such is the love of God. And such love will purge fear from our souls.

Reasons why we have "Blessed Assurance."

1. We have the Spirit (verse 13).
2. We have the Testimony (verse 14).
3. We have our Confession (verse 15).
4. We have Love (verse 16).
5. We have Confidence (verse 17).
6. We have No Fear (verse 18).

And, ...

7. We have Love (verse 19).

Verse 19, ...

1 John 4:19
We love because he first loved us.

Like verse 16, we see two loves in this verse. We see our love. We see God's love. The priority of the loves is important, because it is the essence of the gospel. It was God who initiated love in sending us his Son We talked about this last week, ...

1 John 4:10
In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

He loved us first. And we respond in love toward others.

1 John 4:19
We love because he first loved us.

And as a result of God's love toward us, we are free to love. We can love others with the same sort of love that God extends to us. And as we love, we can have assurance that we are his children.

We have blessed assurance because, ...

8. We have a Test (verse 20).

1 John 4:20
If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

We have seen this sort of thing many times before. Someone makes some sort of claim with their mouth, but may or may not back it up with their life. We are not to believe the profession of the mouth. Instead, we are to believe the actions of their lives.

1 John 1:6-10
If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 2:4
Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

1 John 2:9-11
Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

This is the core of John's letter. It's not what you say that give you assurance that you have eternal life. It's your actions that give you assurance that you have eternal life.

Again I say it. Too often people take what others say as gospel truth, even if their lives contradict what they say. Romans 10:9 is true. "If you

confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." But, if that is genuine and of the heart, it will manifest itself in obedience to God. It will manifest itself in love toward others.

And in verse 20, John points out how ridiculous it is for someone to make a claim that they love God, when they hate their brother.

1 John 4:20

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

It is far easier to love someone you can see and touch than it is to love God whom you cannot see and cannot touch. And if you don't love your brother you can see, then you cannot love God. It is simply not possible.

We can have this blessed assurance when we pass the test. Let's move on to our final point. We have blessed assurance because, ...

9. We have the Commandment (verse 21).

1 John 4:21

And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Here, again, we see the importance of love. To show yourself a lover of God, you must also love others. And if you do, you may have this "blessed assurance." In the words of Fanny Crosby, ...

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 27, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.