

# Hereby we do know that we love him (Quality good)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Writing this letter to those he dearly loved expresses in many ways a spiritual concern and a deep and fatherly love for these who were mostly younger than him in the faith.

One of the particular concerns that John expresses in this epistle is a concern that his children, that is his spiritual children, might be strengthened and established in their faith.

And it seems to me that one of the problems which he is often grappling with in this epistle is the problem of the lack of assurance. Lack of assurance.

And really that is the subject that I want to speak of this evening. The assurance of faith. And how in these verses and in other verses in this epistle, John faces this difficulty.

Now, as I said this morning, there are some believers who do not seem to be so troubled by this matter as others. There are some who seem to live their lives very largely in the blessing of assurance.

[ 1 : 21 ] If there are times when their faith is attacked and they waver in their faith, well then it seems to be but a passing and momentary experience.

But I'm sure it's true that very many of God's real children, God's true disciples, have a great deal of difficulty about this matter of assurance.

How do I know that I really know the Lord? How do I know that my love to the Lord is real spiritual love to the Lord?

How do I know that my faith in Jesus Christ is real saving faith in the Saviour? How do I know that my relationship with the Lord is a genuine living spiritual relationship with Him?

How do I know that I know that my love to the Lord is a genuine human being? Well, if questions like that have never troubled you, I don't want to raise problems unnecessarily in your own heart.

[ 2 : 22 ] Just be thankful tonight that He has blessed you with such a faith and with such a measure of grace that these things don't bother you at all. And go away on your way rejoicing that you're not troubled like this.

but do be sympathetic and very patient with those who have problems in this particular area. I believe that there are many who are kept from joining a church in that public way of open testimony and baptism for this very reason.

They are hindered because of a lack of assurance. Prayer this afternoon as we gathered around the Lord's table that you find in Luke chapter 14.

You remember that the Lord there was using a parable about a certain man making a great supper and inviting many to the supper. And there were those who made all sorts of excuses.

The first said, I bought a piece of ground and I must need to go and see it. I pray they have me excused. Another said, I bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them. I pray they have me excused.

[ 3 : 36 ] And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come. And how the Lord was righteously indignant when his servant came back.

He showed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. Now, very simply and briefly, there were excuses being made.

Excuses. But you know, when it comes to this matter of assurance, it's not so much an excuse as a reason. I say it's not so much an excuse as a reason.

[ 4 : 43 ] It's not saying, well, you know, I've got a piece of land or I've got five yoke of oxen or I'm married. And it's not that kind of excuse. An excuse which really is no excuse at all.

There is absolutely no foundation to these excuses. There was absolutely no reason why these men should have been preoccupied in that way. When this great man had made such a supper and they'd received such a pressing invitation to come.

All those other things could have been left on one side for the while that it would take them to go to the supper. I wondered this afternoon when I heard that verse expressed in prayer.

Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room. I wondered whether there was room in this supper. And I would take the Lord's supper to be one way in which we could understand this.

I wondered whether there were vacant places around the Lord's table. Not because people were making an excuse. Not because of these excuses that are no real excuses.

[ 5 : 54 ] But because there is a real hindrance. Because there is a real barrier in the way. A real problem that people are unable to get over. They cannot resolve this problem in their hearts.

Well, I do know that that has been a real difficulty with many. And I want this evening just to say a few things about this matter of assurance. In the hope that God may, by his Spirit, remove some of those hindrances.

So that, well, I might say again, this evening it is done as thou hast commanded. And yet there is room. And some of those difficulties have been taken out of the way.

Well, let me begin like this. First of all, to stress the importance of assurance of faith. You see, if we're not convinced about that, we shan't be really prayerful about it, shall we?

If we get the idea that it doesn't really matter, that we can stagger on through life with a faith which we can hardly recognize as faith, and which other people could hardly recognize as faith, and somehow or other it will be all right in the end, well then, there is something sadly wrong.

[ 7 : 10 ] And we shall never make any progress in the right way with that attitude. We must have it clear in our hearts then, first of all, that assurance is very important.

Now, I believe it's possible to have real faith without any measure, without any great measure of assurance at all. Don't misunderstand me.

I'm not saying that because you haven't got assurance, you haven't got faith. In fact, the very opposite is what I want to say this evening, that you may well lack assurance, but still have real God-given faith.

But I'll go a step further than that and say that it is very important for us all to recognize that assurance is a great blessing. First of all, it is a great blessing because the person, the believer, with assurance, will most clearly and openly honor the Lord.

Now, isn't that what happened this morning? Whilst there was uncertainty and confusion and complete lack of assurance, there was no obedience in that way of gospel command.

[ 8 : 22 ] There was a holding back and a hindrance. And so the Lord hadn't been honored in that open and public way in the lives of our dear brother and sister until this morning.

Now, they wouldn't mind me saying that, I'm sure. They would say just the same to you if you asked them. They know that it is when God has blessed them with that measure of real assurance that they can honor the Lord.

And, you know, the stronger our assurance, if it's real godly assurance, the stronger our assurance, then the more clearly will our lives honor the Lord.

The more plainly shall we speak to his glory. The more consistently shall we live to his honor. Indeed, assurance enables us to live and to testify and to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and to devote our lives to him with a spirit of real commitment and devotion.

I spoke about that recently. And, you know, it is when there is this assurance of faith that we can live like that. When we are blessed with the assurance of faith, why then we can rejoice in the Lord?

[ 9 : 40 ] We honor him when we show to others that there is a joy in our hearts, a joy in our salvation. And, finally, in this first part of what I want to say this evening, when our faith is strong and clear, we can die joyfully.

We can face death joyfully. We can face the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ joyfully. Verse 28 of this same chapter puts it like this, And now, little children, abide in him.

That's another way, really, of describing assurance. I'll show you that in a moment. Abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence.

Assurance, confidence. Very much the same thought there. That when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Assurance, then, is very important. Both in life, in our Christian testimony, in our times of distress, in our times of temptation, especially as we come toward the end of life, when we face death, or when we think of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 11 : 11 ] Now, that is the measure, really, of the importance of this blessing of assurance. Secondly, how do we come to this assurance?

Well, very simply, first of all, as we see the Lord Jesus Christ, and as we know him, and as we look alone to him, as he is the very centre of our spiritual thought and consideration, John was just such a man.

That is why John can write this epistle with such a weight of experience and confidence, because he had seen the Lord.

We have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, for the life was manifested, and we have seen it.

So, he says, we bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. faith in Jesus, faith in God's testimony regarding his son Jesus Christ, that faith which looks alone to Jesus.

[ 12 : 36 ] Why, friends, that is the beginning of real assurance. It is the continuation of real assurance. It is the blossoming of real assurance.

The clearer our faith is in Jesus, the clearer our sight is of Jesus, the more we know of him, the Lord and Saviour, the more we experience of his power, and of his grace, the more we understand of his character, and of his work.

Why then? The more secure is the ground beneath our feet, the more assured will our faith be. And that is the work of the Holy Spirit, isn't it?

To reveal Jesus Christ to us, to show us the Saviour through the Scriptures, to enable us so to trust in him as the Saviour revealed in the Word of God, the Son of God sent into this world.

Yes, it is the Spirit's work. And so, we have the work of the Holy Spirit within, and that is another way in which we come to a gracious assurance.

[ 13 : 45 ] Friends, pray much that you will see the Lord Jesus, and pray much that the Holy Spirit will be working in your heart. And then thirdly, I believe that the way of assurance is the way of walking in the light.

Verse 5 of chapter 1, This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

And walking in the light, of course, is walking in holiness. Walking in that way which is good and right. Living that life of true godliness.

Walking in fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Friends, that is the way of assurance. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

[ 15 : 00 ] Now if you had been able to go to a man like Enoch and say, how do you feel about the Lord? He would say, well I know the Lord because I walk with him. I know the Lord because he is beside me.

I know the Lord because I appeal to him in every time of need. I know the Lord is with me because he answers me when I pray to him. That would have been something like the testimony of a man like Enoch.

And there is the quiet assurance of knowledge. I know the Lord. He speaks with me. I speak with him. He walks with me. I walk with him.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light. You see, we can't walk in the light any other way. The only light there is is the light that comes from his face.

And if we're walking in the light, we cannot be but walking with him. Isn't that really what John is saying? If you're walking in the light, then it's God's light that you're walking in.

[ 16 : 03 ] If you understand the word in that sense that John is using it here in chapter 1. You couldn't walk without God and walk in the light. You can walk without God in the darkness but you can't walk without God in the light because God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

Why it's as simple as that? Walking in the light, then, is the way of walking in assurance. Someone else may be saying, well, it's not so much my lack of assurance although that is a problem.

My problem is the forgiveness of sin. If I could be sure that my sin was forgiven, why then, it would be so much easier for me. Well, of course, the two are linked, aren't they?

Lack of assurance is very often a lack of assurance about forgiveness. Well, John is very clear about that too. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

Well, you're not saying that, are you? You're not saying I've got no sin. Your problem is that you have got sin and you don't know whether it's been dealt with. So, you're not like that.

[ 17 : 20 ] You don't deceive yourself. So, says John, you're not like those who deceive themselves and have no truth in them. The truth is in you. Didn't you realise that? By your very sense of sin and need, the truth has come into you.

The truth has brought that to light and shown you where things are wrong. The truth has come into you. The light of God has shone into your heart. So, you're not saying that deceitful thing that John speaks of there.

No. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin. Now, how can I be sure that my sin is forgiven?

Well, John really puts it very simply, doesn't he? if we confess our sins, and that is to be taken in its fullest, deepest sense, genuinely, honestly, openly, before God, we confess our sins.

We're not confessing just one of them or two of them. We confess our sins. We confess the whole catalogue of our guilt so far as we can see it.

[ 18 : 33 ] We're absolutely honest before the Lord. Then, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He is. It's as plain and clear as it could be. He is faithful. You won't find him unfaithful. Why are you still saying, I don't know whether my sins have been forgiven.

Is it because you haven't confessed them? Is it because you haven't confessed them to him? Is it because you haven't seen his strong assurance that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins?

Or, to go back to what I said right at the beginning, is it because your eye has not yet focused exclusively upon Jesus? John goes on to say, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And he is the propitiation for our sin. He is the one who has made that sacrifice for sin. He is the one who has dealt with our sins so that God is no longer indignant with us as sinners.

[ 19 : 53 ] He is the one who has made that peacemaking sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins. Is it then that you are still troubled about your sin and the forgiveness of your sin because you haven't, as it were, looked exclusively upon the Saviour as the propitiation for our sin and lest you should feel shut out for some other reason, John says, and not for ours only.

Not John and a few others only. Not John and the Jewish believers only. No, not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

That line from one of the hymns comes to my mind, and if free grace, why not for me? Haven't you ever, as it were, argued with your own heart in this biblical way?

I have confessed my sin. I have confessed my sins to Jesus. I am looking alone to him as the propitiation for sin.

I am trusting alone in his work on Calvary. Why then, says John, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[ 21 : 22 ] here we come to a very difficult point, and I don't want to go around in circles, but, you know, it is rather like a circle.

Some people say, well, you see, I lack assurance, and so I daren't obey the Lord's command, and so, John tells us, that will aggravate the situation.

Or to put it in a more positive way, if we keep his commandments, that is one of the ways in which we shall be established in our assurance.

It's like I said this morning, demonstrating our love is one of the ways in which our love will be strengthened and deepened. You can see the problem with complete lack of assurance, can't you?

I don't know whether I love the Lord, so, well, I mean, how can I demonstrate my love to the Lord if I don't know whether I really love the Lord? And yet, John says, in demonstrating our love to the Lord, our love will be strengthened.

[ 22 : 31 ] How can we resolve this? Well, I can't. I can't resolve that problem for you, but I know who can.

I know that the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God, can resolve that problem for you, so that you'll no longer go around in that miserable little circle and getting nowhere.

Let's look at these verses again. Hereby, we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. Do you want to know Him?

I mean, more than knowing about Him. There's hardly, well, surely no one here this evening who doesn't know about Him. But do you want to know Him?

This is that personal, intimate knowledge of Him. Do you want to know Him? Well then, says John, hereby, we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

[ 23 : 44 ] Someone says, yes, I know about Him. I want to know Him. I want to know that I know Him. In other words, I want to be sure that I know Him.

I want to know that I know Him. I want to know that I have this real spiritual knowledge that it's not just something that I've accumulated over the years, a sort of traditional know-how about these things.

Not that at all. I want to know that I know Him in the sense that John speaks of it here. Well then, the Holy Spirit says to us through John, keep His commandments.

Keep His commandments. Do you want to know Him as your Lord, your Master, the One who commands you, your leader?

Well then, keep His commandments. Submit yourself to Him. Submit your life to Him. Submit all your ways to Him. Seek to do His will in all of your life.

[ 24 : 47 ] That's the way. I mean, how did the children of Israel know that Moses was their leader? Well, by following Him, of course. How did they know that Moses was their leader as they went through the Red Sea?

Well, by walking through the Red Sea, of course. With the walls of water on the right hand and on the left hand. A wonderful miracle. They followed Moses. They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

How do we know then? That we know the Lord as our Lord or by living in the way in which our Lord commands. By showing that He is our Lord, by living to Him and obeying Him as our Lord.

Hereby, we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. assurance. Thirdly, this evening, let me speak briefly about threats to assurance because sometimes people lack assurance for obvious reasons.

They may not be obvious to them but they are obvious if you read the Scriptures. You see, at the heart of this matter of assurance is the work of the Holy Spirit.

[ 26 : 09 ] And if in your life you are grieving the Spirit, then it will certainly affect your assurance. You see, if you grieve the Spirit, the Spirit won't be working within you in the way that He used to.

The Spirit will not leave you finally. I'm not saying that. But the Spirit's work will not be seen in your life and felt in your heart like it used to be if you grieve the Spirit.

I spoke about that not so long ago. Some of you remember it. Now, friend, if there is sin in your life which you're clinging to, which you're determined to have hold of, which you refuse to let go of, that will grieve the Spirit.

And a grieved Spirit will certainly result in you having a lack of assurance. Let me put it another way. The kind of assurance that some people have is an absolute deception.

An absolute deception because they're living in sin. And people who say, I know the Lord, I know the Lord loves me, I know I'm safe for eternity, when they're living openly and blatantly in sin are liars, John says.

[ 27 : 31 ] Liars. They deceive themselves and they, well, they deceive some people. They don't deceive everybody. Now, you see, that is the very positive way in which John puts it.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Now, if that man says, I know him, he's giving expression to assurance, isn't he?

He is saying, I know. A statement which is assured, I know him. But John says he doesn't. He doesn't.

He's a liar. Why? Because he doesn't keep his commandments. Now, you see, if you're being stumbled by your felt lack of assurance, and that is being used by you as a reason for not keeping his commandments, do remember the other side of the matter.

Do remember the other side of the matter. If a man says, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

[ 28 : 48 ] Friends, the way of assurance is the way in which we are genuinely, honestly willing to cast away from us every wrong thing, every evil thing.

You say, well, we can't live in a sinless way, can we? I wasn't saying that. I'm sadly convinced that we shall be bothered and troubled by sin right through to the end, more or less.

But what I am saying, friends, is that when you are willing to say in the very presence of the Lord, I hate my sin and I want to be rid of it and I cling to no sin in my life and I want every sin to be dealt with and I want to live a holy life and walk in this way of righteousness, well then, you're not a liar.

You're not a liar before God. You're being honest before the Lord. And for those people, the way of safety is the way of his commandments.

The way of his commandments. So often, friends, I feel that sin creeps into our lives very quickly because, if I put it like this, you'll understand it, I hope, there are so many empty spaces in our lives.

[ 30 : 14 ] When we're going round in circles in our lack of assurance and confusion of heart, there are many empty spaces in our lives. Many opportunities for Satan to come in and inject all sorts of other things into our lives.

But, friends, when we are honestly keeping his commandments, he is filling all these empty spaces in our lives. He is filling our time.

He is using our talents. He is using our strength. We don't have so many of these empty spaces into which the enemy can come.

Whoso keepeth his word in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. So then, every sin is a threat to our assurance.

And the sin of disobedience is perhaps the worst of all. The sin of disobedience. The sin of not walking in his commandments.

[ 31 : 23 ] The sin of not walking in the light as he is in the light. Secondly, these threats to assurance. The neglect of times of fellowship.

The neglect of times of fellowship. That is, personal, private prayer and meditation. public gathering together around the word of God.

What we call the means of grace, the preaching of the word, times of prayer, the neglect of those opportunities for fellowship have a devastating effect upon your assurance.

Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the so refreshing view of Jesus in his word? Where is it?

It's not there. It's become misty, distant, beclouded. Why? Because there's been a neglect of the very word which once blessed you.

[ 32 : 28 ] There's been a neglect of the very means which once God used to bless you. Neglecting times of fellowship. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

And of course that is connected with the fellowship of the church, isn't it? Very much so. And if you're disobeying his commandment in regard to baptism, then inevitably in our church life you're disobeying his commandment in regard to the Lord's table.

No question about that. For the one follows upon the other, I believe, most clearly and most biblically. Ah, friend, the neglect of the one leads to the neglect of the other.

False doctrine leads to a direct threat to our assurance. You see, for instance, if you will go and listen to people preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ and they tell you that he is not the kind of saviour that the Bible declares him to be, and you begin to believe that it's not a matter just of Jesus saving you, but you saving yourself to a certain extent and him saving you to the rest of it, why then?

Inevitably, that's going to affect your sense of assurance, isn't it? you're always going to be uncertain then because you'll never know whether you've done enough to satisfy God.

[ 34 : 12 ] That's why no Roman Catholic is ever really sure of his salvation, because he never knows whether he's done enough, never. That is if he really follows the teaching of his church.

That is why dear Martin Luther was in such spiritual agony. he couldn't be sure because he could never see that Jesus Christ had done everything, and when he saw that Jesus Christ had done everything, and it was just a matter of his heart resting upon all that Jesus had done, well then he was set free.

Yes, false doctrine is a direct attack upon your assurance. If people say that you can't be saved unless you have full assurance, that is false doctrine.

That is false doctrine. That is why I tried to be careful at the beginning about what I was saying over assurance.

You can have real God-given faith without enjoying this strong, confident assurance. So, if people tell you that you must have strong, confident assurance in order to be saved, then that's false doctrine.

[ 35 : 39 ] You must have assurance in order to be happy, but you can have faith without assurance and be truly and eternally safe. faith. I hope and pray that you will have not only that God-given faith, but the precious blessing of assurance as well, that you might not only believe, but know joy and peace in believing.

False doctrine about assurance itself is an attack upon assurance. assurance. You see, if people are telling you that the only way to know assurance is to be laughing and dancing and singing all day long, then I believe that that is a direct attack upon real assurance.

I believe that it is possible for a person to have the deepest and most precious assurance when his face is bathed with tears.

I believe it is possible to have the most deep and abiding assurance of salvation without any of these external evidences which some people make so much of these days.

We have an old saying, don't we? Still waters run deep. The babbling stream is not very deep, is it?



[ 37 : 12 ] There the water is running over the rocks and crevices and bouncing and bubbling, burbling as it goes down. But you look at the great river. Hardly a ripple on its surface but it runs smoothly and quietly and deeply.

Now, many people are blessed with an assurance like that. It runs smoothly and deeply. Not superficially.

friends, there are false views of assurance that can be a direct threat to our real assurance.

There's another false view of assurance. Some people say, ah, you must live in the absolute certainty that Jesus died for you. Now, friends, that is a very precious expression of our faith and of our assurance.

It is certainly something to which we should all be aiming and something for which we should all be praying. But, friends, you can be safe.

[ 38 : 21 ] You can be safe in Jesus Christ without having that absolute certainty in your heart. Now, I don't say that in any way to distract you from seeking for it.

But I'm saying that you can be safe without having that assurance in your heart. What do I mean? I mean simply this, that you can be looking to Jesus who died for sinners.

You can be looking alone, uniquely, to Jesus who died for sinners. And that is saving faith, God-given faith.

You can be looking alone to him with a trust in your heart that he will forgive your sins and still fall short of being able to say, I know he died for me.

I believe the one will lead on to the other. The one will lead on to the other. Friends, false views of assurance can be a great stumbling block because, you see, these false views of assurance simply drive people back in on themselves.

[ 39 : 41 ] And what they can't find in themselves seems to minister to their misery. What the word of God says is this, be looking unto Jesus, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the author of faith who gives faith like a grain of mustard seed and then causes it to grow until it blossoms out into that strong confidence.

I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. Yes, friend, real faith will grow like a grain of mustard seed.

It will grow until it becomes a strong and a large plant. Oh, may God bless us then with that faith that looks alone to Jesus and then it will be a faith that grows and strengthens and a faith that will affect our lives far, far more extensively.

Indeed, a faith in which we shall be able to say we know that we know him. Amen.