

## **Assurance For Life!**

Any **Methodists** in the church this morning?

Any **Wesleyans**???

What do these two have in common? Why **John Wesley** of course!

Most of you will no doubt have heard of **John Wesley!**

In fact I'm betting that some of you will know more about John Wesley than I do. Having been raised in a fairly Charismatic Baptist Church that didn't give much emphasis to **Protestant Christian History** meant that I didn't really know much about John Wesley until I went to Carey Baptist College.

So for those who are not so familiar let me enlighten you a little:

- John Wesley lived in the **1700s** and was a member of the **Church of England**.
- Though he would have defiantly professed to be a member of the Church of England for his entire life, he is credited **for the founding of the Methodist Movement** which eventually became a Protestant denomination known as **Methodism**.
- He became a very well known and respected **preacher**, comparable to the likes of **George Whitefield**.
- He has a strong emphasis on **holiness**, as one of his life goals was to 'spread holiness throughout the land.'

So why am I **preaching** about John Wesley?

Why am I **preaching** about a **Preacher**?

Because early in his life John Wesley wrestled with an **important question**:

A question of **FAITH**.

A question of **ASSURANCE** of faith.

In other words: “**How could he know that he was truly saved?**”

**Can** we know?

Are we even **supposed** to know if we are saved?

Or do we just hold onto a blind hope that we are?

I have been having some very interesting discussions with some Atheist and Agnostic friends on a **Facebook Blog**, many of whom do not believe there is any ‘evidence’ whatsoever that Jesus and the Bible are what we claim them to be.

This is obviously why they call themselves **Atheists & Agnostics**. Some of these friends have been raised in Christian families, but have turned away from the faith.

One in particular said that he would very much like to believe that Jesus is who he says he is, so that way he can go to heaven.

He is holding onto **HOPE!**

But he certainly has **NO ASSURANCE OF FAITH!**

So much like **John Wesley**, who wrestled with the question of how he knew he was saved, how can **WE** know that Jesus is who he says he is; how can **WE** know **WE** are saved?

**HOW CAN WE HAVE ASSURANCE OF FAITH?**

**And assurance for LIFE?**

Let’s turn to this morning’s scripture from *1 John. Chapter 5, verse 6 to 12.*  
Page 1186:

***This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that***

***testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.***

### **Pray.**

Well, once again in typical fashion before we dive off into this piece of scripture let's do a short **recap** of our series up to this point. This is sermon **number 10** from *1 John*. In the other nine sermons, three dominant themes have emerged:

**Fellowship,  
Discernment and  
Love.**

In this text we have just read, John comes back to this idea of discernment, and once again points us back towards the life and person of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

So today, as we prepare to swim in the warm waters of this text, I want to look at two points:

**ASSURANCE IN JESUS**, verses 6 – 10 and

**LIFE IN JESUS**, verses 11 & 12.

So let's begin by trying to understand what is one of the harder pieces of scripture in the epistle of *1 John, chapter 5 verses 6 – 10*.

***This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.***

Well my immediate first question for John is:  
 “What is meant by ‘**water**’ and ‘**blood**’?”

Clearly this is something significant, as John saw fit to make a point that it was not only by ‘water’ that Jesus came, but by ‘blood’ also. And it is the ‘water,’ the ‘blood,’ and the ‘Spirit’ who testify.

### **This is confusing stuff no?**

There are a number of possible interpretations for the ‘water’ and the ‘blood’, but the two most plausible are these.

#### **1. The water and blood represent both the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist or Communion.**

It's easy to see why people might take this interpretation as these two sacraments are indeed significant, and a means of testifying to God's grace in our lives. However, there is one major issue with this stance:

These two sacraments, though they would have occurred in some form within the Johannine community, were certainly not well established sacraments when this letter was written. So it would not have been likely that John was referring to these.

So what is the **second option**?

#### **2. The water represents either Jesus' physical birth, baptism, or both; and the blood represents Jesus' death.**

Now this makes sense, and I'll tell you why by sharing a story:

*John was taking a bath. But not just any old bath at any old place, he was taking a bath at a public bathhouse. He was halfway through washing and cleaning himself when he heard another man enter the bathhouse. As soon as he laid eyes on this man, John's emotions immediately transformed from a state of tranquil peace, to zealous outrage!*

*"Darkness and light simply cannot dwell together!!" he yelled, and without a moments delay he stood up, dripping wet and only half clean, and ran out of the bathhouse completely naked. So great was his zeal!*

Who was this man that John, son of Zebedee, was rumoured, according to early Christian history, to have stormed away from?

## **CERINTHUS.**

### **And why?**

Cerinthus was an **early heretic** accredited for a belief that denied the deity of Jesus. In fact, it may have even been Cerinthus' heresy that John was writing to refute in this epistle.

Cerinthus taught that the Spirit of the 'heavenly Christ', descended upon Jesus the man from Nazareth only at his baptism and left him at his crucifixion. Essentially, that is that Jesus the man from Nazareth wasn't 100% God his entire life, **but that the 'Christ' part of Jesus left before Jesus died.**

### **Again the problem was INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGY!**

So with this context in mind it would make sense that John tells them that **Jesus Christ** (emphasis on his deity) **came by water and blood**. And not **by water only, but by water and blood** (emphasis on the blood).

So once again John is pointing to the life and death of Jesus Christ as a witness to the truth like he did in *Chapter 4*.

### **AND JOHN WAS A WITNESS TO THESE EVENTS!**

But John doesn't stop here. He reminds them that Jesus also left the **Holy Spirit** as a witness to the truth!

And the **HOLY SPIRIT** testifies to the truth about Jesus, that he is in fact the **CHRIST**!

John then strengthens his point even further by stating that if we can believe other people's testimonies, then how much more should we believe **GOD'S TESTIMONY because HE IS GOD?!**

And what did God testify?

God testified to Jesus' nature as His Son when Jesus got baptised: *Luke 3:22b* says: ***And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."***

So God testified to Jesus' divine nature, and if we can believe Maurice Warth when he testifies about his experience with Radio Rhema every morning, then we can certainly believe God.

However, John points to a different expression of God's testimony, not that of an audible voice, but a testimony in our hearts. *1 John 5, verse 10* says: ***Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.***

**And this is the first way we can have ASSURANCE IN JESUS,  
by a TESTIMONY IN OUR HEARTS.**

This was something that John Wesley didn't have until his '**Aldersgate experience**' in 1738. He writes in his journal:

*'In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had*

***taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'***

Is this an experience you have felt? Perhaps not like this but a similar '**knowing**' of God's true reality in your heart?

Has your heart been **strangely warmed**?

*Do you know **deep inside** that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God, and did in fact rise from the dead, overcoming the world?*

**It is only the Holy Spirit, who can give us this assurance, and he does it also with the water and the blood; with the water and blood experience of Christ Jesus revealed in the Gospels.**

If you don't have this assurance in your heart, then I would love to pray with you.

Come and see me after the service.

However, I know that many of you here do have a strong assurance of faith; an **assurance in Jesus**.

I have personally witnessed the **fruit** of this confident assurance as you have continued to worship and serve God through some of the troubles and pains you have experienced over this summer.

**I have been inspired by your faith!**

So what are we then to take from God's holy words this morning?

What does **assurance in Jesus** mean to us this morning?

I think we too can take hope in these words. In *verse 6* he says ***it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.***

**The SPIRIT IS THE TRUTH!**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL LEAD US INTO ALL TRUTH!**

We have visited this idea already, in fact we have made a New Year resolution to **REMAIN IN THE SPIRIT** who will lead us into the future God has in store for us.

So now I want to touch on an assurance we receive when we know the Spirit is leading us, a way of discerning God's will in our lives:

## **PEACE.**

When we are in the **truth**, we will have a **PEACE**.

Why?

Because the ***Spirit is the truth*** as John says, and one of the fruits of the Spirit is **peace**, as revealed in *Galatians chapter 5*.

However, there is another scripture that I want to touch on. It's a 'must learn' as a memory verse. *Philippians 4:6 & 7*:

***Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

This verse has been highly significant in my faith.

At one of the potentially most stressful, worrying and anxious times of Rachel's life and mine we knew the peace of God described in this verse. It was only two weeks before we were due to get married that the Air Force made me redundant. Not only were there financial stresses, but we had other things to think about as well. Would I be able to get a job? Would we have enough money to live? Would we find suitable accommodation? But hardest of all, how could we both do what we each felt God calling us to do? You see we both felt strongly that we were to study in 2010, Rachel in counselling and me at Carey, but how on earth would we survive? As impossible as it seemed we knew we had to be obedient. So we prayed about it and gave it all over to God. What did he give us in return?

## **PEACE.**

**PEACE** that transcends all understanding.

And God has proved so incredibly faithful to us throughout last year, and I know He will do the same this year.

Church, as we move forward and continue to seek God in the challenges that lie ahead, both in our personal lives and together as Christ's body, **His Holy Spirit will give us an ASSURANCE that we are in His will.**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL GIVE US PEACE!**

But what was the **condition** in *Philippians*?

*'...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'*

We must continue to **PRAY, GIVE THANKS** and **SEEK HIS WILL.**

**Friends, we can have ASSURANCE IN JESUS** as the Holy Spirit testifies to his truth in our hearts and gives us a **PEACE** about our future.

**ASSURANCE IN JESUS**, that was point one.

What was point two?

**LIFE IN JESUS.**

I just briefly want to touch on the final two verses of this morning's text; *verses 11 & 12:*

***And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.***

**He who has Jesus, has life!**

This is an **amazing** truth!

This is the **Gospel!**

This is the **Good News!**

As part of my study for this sermon, I did some research on the Greek word **'life'** used in this passage.

A word called **'Zōē.'**

There is much to be said.

You see the Israelites in the Old Testament didn't think of life as a natural or scientific phenomenon, but primarily as duration, the days of a man's life which are granted him by Yahweh, the Lord of life.

**Long life** was considered to be **special evidence** of divine blessing promised to the obedient.

In *Deuteronomy* life comes from keeping the word of Yahweh: *Chapter 32:46:*

***“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”***

The **words** of the **law**, were **life!**

And now a new **word** has come.

**JESUS is the WORD!**

He is called this in the beginning of *John's Gospel 1:1: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

**JESUS** is the **WORD**, and as the **WORDS** of the **LAW** gave life, so

**JESUS, THE WORD GIVES LIFE.**

**AND LIFE EVERLASTING!**

Jesus even tells us that he has come to give us life in *John 10:10:*

***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

So what does this 'life' look like?

Well here again, similar to last week when we looked at what it is to 'Overcome the world' as Jesus has overcome the world, there is both

**FUTURE** understanding of the life we receive in Jesus and a  
**PRESENT** understanding of the life we receive in Jesus.

Regarding the **Future**, we are promised **eternal life** when we die if we have faith in Jesus, the Son of God!

We will live **forever!**

We will dwell with our Maker!

We will have unrestrained access to the throne room of God!

We will always be in His glorious and magnificent presence!

There will be no **pain!**

There will be no **suffering!**

There will be no **sickness!**

Instead there will be **unfathomable joy!**

Instead there will be **immeasurable love!**

Instead there will be **incomprehensible peace!**

**WE WILL HAVE REST FOR OUR SOULS!**

**This, dear friends, is cause for CELEBRATION!**

**This is cause for JOY!**

But what about life here on this earth, before the day comes where we go to be with our Creator, or before he returns to this earth?

What about the **PRESENT?**

Well, the **present** includes many of these wonderful blessings,

**Joy, Love, Peace, healing from sickness, freedom from pain, deliverance from destruction.**

**Only NOT IN THEIR ENTIRETY.**

**Only PARTIALLY.**

Because, as we discussed last week,

Though the Kingdom of God **has come.**

At the same time it is **not quite here yet.**

However, **life in Jesus** in the **present** also brings **PURPOSE.**

It also brings **HOPE.**

It also brings **SECURITY.**

It also brings **DIRECTION, TRANSFORMATION and BELONGING!**

And again these things are cause for **Celebration!**

***He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:12***

**LIFE IN JESUS!**

This was point two!

**ASSURANCE IN JESUS** was point one.

**HE WHO HAS FAITH IN JESUS HAS**

**ASSURANCE**

**IN**

**LIFE!**

**Let me PRAY.**