

# Truth For Troubled Times (Coronavirus)

Contributed by Scott Bayles on Mar 17, 2020

**Scripture:** 1 John 5:13-20

**Denomination:** Christian Church

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**Summary:** In troubled and uncertain times, 1 John 5 provides us with 5 truths of which we can be certain: our promise, our prayers, our protector, our place, and our Prince!

Truth for Troubled Times

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Blooming Grove Christian Church: 3/14/2020

We are living in very uncertain times. Everywhere I turn—in print, on the news, or on social media—everyone is talking about this coronavirus. Fears are rising all around the world. People who have never felt anxious before are suddenly weighed down with worry and are not sure what to do next. Schools are closed, travel is banned events canceled, even churches with more than 250 people have to close their doors. People are stockpiling hand sanitizer and toilet paper. I understand the hand sanitizer, but toilet paper!? People do unpredictable things when they're motivated by fear and uncertainty.

In these uncertain times, the Bible assures us that there are some truths that we can know for certain. The early church was no stranger to plagues, epidemics, and mass hysteria. They experienced their fair share of uncertainty and even panic. So, in 1 John 5, the apostle John directs believers' attention to five things we can be certain about even in uncertain times—five truths that cannot be denied and will never change. Given the current climate of fear and uncertainty, I thought today would be a good day to focus on the things we can sure of.

If you have a Bible or an app on your phone, feel free to follow along in 1 John 5:13-20. First, John tells us we can be certain about our promise.

- OUR PROMISE

John begins by saying, "I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13 NLT).

As a believer in Jesus Christ, we can know that we have eternal life. God has gone on record in His Word as offering eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. This is God's promise, and we can count on God's promises. Listen to just a few of the verses in the Bible that assure us of eternal life: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36); "Truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life" (John 5:24); "Truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47); and "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Life is full of let downs and empty promises, but eternal life with Jesus won't be one of them! How do we know that Jesus knows what he's talking about? Because he's been there. Jesus has been to the grave. Numbered among the dead. Heart silent and lungs vacant. Body wrapped and grave sealed. But then the miraculous happened. And the Bible says, "Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3-4 MSG).

In times of confusion, in times of fear, in times of uncertainty, the first truth of which we can be certain is God's promise of eternal life. Next, John goes on to tell us that we can also be certain about our prayers.

- OUR PRAYERS

In the next verse John says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15 NIV).

The second truth of which we can be sure is that God hears and answers our prayers. Now more than ever, Christians ought to be responding not in panic, but in prayer. We have so much to pray about. We need to pray for the medical leaders. We need to pray for decision makers. We need to pray for governments around the world. We need to pray for the people who are already afflicted by this virus. We need to pray for those who are especially vulnerable—the elderly, those who are already sick, or have immune deficiencies. In uncertain times, it is so essential that Christians choose prayer over panic!

And when we pray, we can be certain that God is listening. We know that he hears us. Now, in my experience, I don't always get what I pray for. Do you? As far as I can tell, there are four different answers that God will give concerning our prayers.

If the request is wrong, God says, "No."

If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."

If you are wrong, God says, "Grow."

But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, "Go."

So how do we make sure that everything is right? Well, John answers that for us: "if we ask anything according to His will... we have the requests which we have asked from Him." Pray in line with God's will and you can pray with confidence!

Prayer is not about getting my will done in heaven, it's getting God's will done on earth. God always says yes when our requests are in line with His desires. To pray effectively, then, we need to determine God's will. And to do that, we need to open up our Bibles. Most of God's will is already laid out in the pages of Scripture. So, turn the commands of God's Word into requests. Make the prayers found in God's Word your own. Pray God's promises back to him. By using the Scripture as the basis for your prayer life, you'll be sure to pray in a way that honors God and then you can know that His answer will be yes!

So, we can be certain about our promise, we can be certain about our prayers, and, third, we can be certain about our protection.

- OUR PROTECTOR

The third reality that we can be certain about is our protection. John goes on to say, "We know that those who have been born from God don't go on sinning. Rather, the Son of God protects them, and the evil one can't harm them" (1 John 5:18 GWT).

Now, John isn't saying that Christians don't sin. In fact, in the first chapter he says that anyone who claims not to sin is liar. We fall short just like everybody else. You don't have to be a Christian long to figure that out. Rather, what he's saying is that as Christian we have a protector keeping us safe: "the Son of God protects them."

And, again, John's not suggesting that Jesus always protects us from physical harm, or illness, or financial ruin, or relational problems; rather, Jesus protects us from spiritual harm, from the "evil one."

The Bible tells us that we have an enemy, an adversary called Satan, the devil or the evil one. Throughout Scripture, the devil is portrayed as a deadly serpent, a ferocious lion, and even a multi-headed hydra. He first appears in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden where he repeatedly tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He convinced her to

break the one and only rule God gave by making the fruit look and sound so tempting. That's what Satan does. He uses every means at his disposal to lure believers into sin in hopes of sabotaging their salvation.

And the truth is, we sometimes fall for his schemes. We do sin. But John is assuring us that Jesus is bigger and strong than Satan. And he's got our backs. When we put our faith in Christ, he washed away all our sins—past, present, and future. We are safe from whatever Satan throws at us. No matter what temptations, or trails, or tests come our way—we can know for certain that Jesus has our back, that he's looking out for us, and he will protect us from Satan's spiritual assaults. Christ has set us free from sin and Satan. So, even though we still mess up fairly often, the ultimate victory is ours in Christ Jesus.

So, we can be certain about our promise, our prayers, our protector, and, fourth, we can be certain about our place.

- OUR PLACE

John says, "We know that we are children of God..." (1 John 5:19 NLT). You hold a precious position, a priceless place, in God's eternal family. Isn't that incredible? God wants a family, and He created you to be a part of it!

The entire Bible is the story of God building a family who will love Him, honor Him, and reign with Him forever. The Bible says, "Because of his love, God had already decided to make us his own children through Jesus Christ. That was what he wanted and what pleased him" (Ephesians 1:5 NCV).

When we place our faith in Jesus, God becomes our Father, we become His children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our spiritual family. Christians aren't just called to believe, we're also called to belong.

We are not meant to live lone-ranger lives; rather, we are created for communion and community. Being a part of God's family is all about togetherness—laughing together, crying together, and dreaming together. In fact, the Bible says that Christians are put together, joined together, built together, members together, heirs together, fitted together, held together, and will be caught up together. There's a lot of togetherness in God's family!

I think, especially at times like this, when you're supposed to isolate yourself and avoid social gathering, it's easy to feel lonely and cut off from others. But when you belong to God's family, you are never, ever alone.

Our families on earth are wonderful gifts from God, but they're temporary and fragile, often broken by divorce, distance, growing old, and inevitably, by death. On the other hand, our spiritual family—our relationships with other believers—will continue throughout eternity. "We know that we are children of God." That's something you can be sure of! Finally, John gives us the last truth of which we can be certain—our Prince of Peace.

- OUR PRINCE

John closes his letter with these words: "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we know the real God. We are in the one who is real, his Son Jesus Christ. This Jesus Christ is the real God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20 GWT).

The word translated true or real means "the original as opposed to a copy" and "the authentic as opposed to an imitation." (Wiersbe 531). Jesus is the true light, and true Bread, and true Vine, and Truth itself. He is the original; everything else is a copy. He is authentic; everything else is only an imitation.

In short, Jesus is the real thing! And that's all that really matters.

Pastor and author, Tony Campolo, recalled a deeply moving incident that happened during Jr. High week at a Christian camp. Even though this was a Christian camp, many of the campers were not and many who were did not act like it. They treated another one of the campers, a boy with spastic paralysis, with heartless ridicule. Whenever he would ask a question, the boys would deliberately answer in a halting, mimicking way. One night his cabin group chose him to lead the evening devotional before the entire camp. It was one more effort on their part to have some fun at his expense. Unabashedly, the boy stood up, and in his strained, slurred manner—each word coming with enormous effort—he said simply, "I know Jesus loves me, and I love Jesus!" That was all he said, but no one laughed—there was absolute silence, broken only by the sound of some of the boys beginning to cry. Something wonderful happened in the hearts of the campers that week, and it was all because of his simple testimony, "I know Jesus loves me, and I love Jesus."

Isaiah calls Jesus "the Prince of Peace," (Isaiah 9:6). When you know Jesus and you know that he loves you and you love him, you can experience peace that surpasses all understanding even in the midst of a global pandemic.

Conclusion:

We are living in uncertain times, but, in 1 John 5, the Bible gives us some truths that have stood the test of time and that we can know for certain: we can be certain about our promise, our prayers, our protector, our place, and our Prince.

So, when you feel overwhelmed or worried or anxious, remember these five certainties. Take refuge in them. You can know that you have eternal life. You can know that your prayers are heard by God. You can know that you've been vaccinated against sin and Satan. You can know that you are a child of God. And you can know Jesus Christ—Son of God and Savior of your soul.

Invitation:

For those of you who don't know Jesus yet, I would love to introduce you. He stands ready to receive you, to forgive you of your sins, welcome you into his family and give you the gift of eternal life. If you are ready to come to Jesus, then please let myself or one of shepherds know by pulling us aside after church, calling us at home or just come forward now, while we stand and sing.