



SERMON GUIDE

PROOF POSITIVE



Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Introduction

In the time it takes you to read this paragraph, your body will produce 17 million red blood cells. That's double the population of New York City. And that blood already knows you better than your brain does, traveling 60,000 miles through your body and touching every part of you except the cornea of your eye. Without blood, there is no life in your body. The same is true spiritually.

Years ago in seminary, a professor told me he was sick of what he called slaughterhouse religion and wanted the blood of Jesus taken out of our pulpits. But just as your body dies without blood, the body of Christ dies without His blood too. First John 1:7 says, “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” (ESV).

As you look at three things to remember about that blood, you will see there truly is nothing else that can do what it does.

Key Points

1. Remember the Unblemished Provider of the Blood

Whose blood are we talking about? Not ordinary blood. Acts 20:28 says Christ bought the church “with his own blood” (ESV), which means the blood shed on the cross was the blood of God Himself, and that is why Judas could say in Matthew 27:4, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (ESV). If Jesus had not been innocent, He could not have taken your guilt or mine, because He would have had to deal with His own. But the reason He could die for our sins is because He did not have to die for His, for He didn’t have any. On the cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34, ESV), yet He never once prayed, “Father, forgive Me.” Peter says we were redeemed “... with the precious blood of

Notes



Nothing but the Blood

Proof Positive | Week 41 | 1 John 1:7

off the entire mortgage. Just before He breathed His last, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30, ESV), three words in English translated from one word in Greek that literally means “paid in full.”

The highest holiday of the Jewish faith is Passover, a celebration of when God's death angel passed through Egypt and spared every household that had painted the blood of the lamb over its doorpost, and He promised, "... when I see the blood, I will pass over you..." (Exodus 12:13, ESV). If God had looked into one of those homes and seen baptismal certificates but no blood, or good works but no blood, death would still have come, because there was never any other way to be redeemed, forgiven, or accepted by God than through the blood.

There is no installment left for you to make, so stop trying to pay a debt already marked “paid in full.”

Key Takeaway

When you remember the blood of Jesus, you are remembering that it came from a Provider pure enough to pay your debt. You remember it holds power strong enough to cleanse you every single day and that it carries a promise big enough to cover all of your sin, not part of it. There truly is nothing else, and nothing more, that you need.

Notes

[illegible]

Nothing but the Blood

Proof Positive | Week 41 | 1 John 1:7

Reflection Questions

1. Is there anything in your life you've been trusting in instead of the blood of Jesus to make you right with God?

2. To what degree do you rest fully in the fact that only Jesus' blood covers your sin—yesterday, today, and tomorrow?

3. What is one thing from today, or this week, that you need to bring back under the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ?

Introduction

The Bible describes your life as a race, and the moment you give your life to Jesus Christ, you no longer run it for yourself; you run it for Him. First John 5 tells us that everyone born of God can overcome anything the world throws at them. As you look at three things you need to do to overcome, you will find exactly what it takes to finish well.

Key Points

1. Have Faith in the Son of God

Have you ever wondered what actually separates a believer from an unbeliever? John give us an answer: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him" (1 John 5:1, ESV). Just as you had to be born to enter this physical world, you must be born again to enter God's spiritual world; and if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you have already been born of Him. That new birth changes what you love.

Preacher Henry Drummond once used this as an example: If a piece of ordinary steel is attached to a magnet and left there, after a while the magnetism of the magnet passes into the steel so that it, too, becomes a magnet. When you believe in the Son of God, His love passes into you until you cannot help but love the children of God as your own family.

Notes

[illegible]

Finish Well

Proof Positive | Week 42 | 1 John 5:1-5

If you have been born of God, you already love His children, even the ones who get on your last nerve, because that is what family does.

Notes

2. Heed Faithfully the Word of God

Pastor Joel Beeke said it best, “The Christian cannot experience high levels of assurance while he participates in low levels of obedience.” If you want to know whether your love for God and for people is real, John tells you how: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments” (1 John 5:2, ESV). Obey God, and you’ll find you love His people. Love His people well, and you’ll find it’s because you’re obeying God. Obedience is the one proof that answers both questions. And the more you love God, the more you’ll want to obey Him. You shouldn’t obey because you feel guilty if you don’t. You shouldn’t obey God because it might work out better for you if you do, though it will. You ought to obey God because you love Him.

A young woman once wrote her ex-fiancé a letter six months after breaking up with him, saying she couldn’t sleep, couldn’t live without him, calling herself a fool for ever leaving him. She asked him to call her right away, then added a postscript at the bottom: “Congratulations on winning the lottery.” Her love was never really about him; it was about what she could get. A lot of us treat our obedience to God the very same way.

The only time His commands feel like a nuisance is when you want what you shouldn’t have, because what God wants for you is always better than what you want for yourself.

3. Hold Fast to the Truth of God

You can’t be an overcomer unless there is something to overcome. John says that the race we are in is also a battle. We go to war every day. The world is against us. The devil is against us. Our flesh is against us. God didn’t put us here to be victims.



Finish Well

Proof Positive | Week 42 | 1 John 5:1-5

Reflection Questions

1. Is there someone in your church family who is hard to love right now? What would it look like this week to love them because you both belong to God?

2. Where is your obedience to God motivated more by guilt or fear than by love for Him, and what is a command you could obey this week purely out of love?

3. What is one thing the world, your flesh, or the enemy is pressuring you to give up on right now, and what would it look like to hold fast to your faith in Jesus through it?

Dead Certain

Proof Positive | Week 43 | 1 John 5:6–13

Introduction

There's only one way to really enjoy a flight: when you're holding a boarding pass. You're not sweating, not fretting, not searching the passenger list to see if your name comes up for an open seat. But if you've ever flown standby, you know the alternative, wondering if you'll get a seat, not knowing until they shut that runway door.

So many Christians live that way. They're sure they're saved one moment and doubting it the next. I'll admit it, I have battled that same doubt myself. John wrote this letter so we would not have to. He says, "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" (1 John 5:13, ESV). John was obsessed with that word "know." He uses it 38 times in this short book.

When God saves you, He gives you a boarding pass. Your flight will not be delayed, your seat won't be denied, and your trip won't be deterred. He does not want you wandering in a desert of doubt. He wants you walking on the avenue of assurance. Jesus Christ died on the cross to give us not a hope-so, think-so, feel-so salvation, but a know-so salvation. Here are the three reasons you can be dead certain about your salvation.

Key Points

1. We Have the Testimony of the Spirit

What makes a witness trustworthy enough to build your whole life on? John uses a word here that means "witness," "record," or "testimony," and he repeats it 10 times in this passage: "And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5:6, ESV). In a court of law, a witness is useless unless his testimony is reliable, and there is no witness more reliable than God Himself.

Notes



Every day you already trust testimony you cannot personally verify. You get on an airplane without demanding to see the pilot's logbook; you simply trust the airline's word that he is qualified to fly. If you can trust the testimony of people you have never met, you can certainly trust the testimony of God, who cannot lie or be mistaken. Once you give your life to the Son, the Spirit comes to witness not just to you, but in you, and, as Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ..." (ESV).

You don't have to wonder if you are on the flight, because the Spirit living inside you is God's own testimony that your seat is secure.

2. We Have Trust in the Son

John makes eternal life so simple a child could understand it, yet grown adults miss it every day: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12, ESV). Eternal life is not a possession you work for or earn; it is a Person you trust in and surrender to, which is exactly what the phrase “believe in” means throughout this letter—to commit to, to give your life to.

Even public figures get this backward. When a reporter recently asked the president about his own eternal soul, he admitted he wasn't sure he was Heaven-bound, and when his son later defended his father's chances, he pointed only to his work ending wars, without a single mention of Jesus. If you trust baptism, church membership, good works, or charitable giving to get you to Heaven, John is clear that you do not yet have eternal life, because without the Son, you don't have life.

There is only one right answer to the question of what saves you, so make sure the Person you are trusting in is Jesus, and Jesus alone.

Notes

[illegible]

3. We Have the Truth of the Scriptures

How can you actually know you are saved instead of just hoping you are? John gives us the answer in the key verse of this entire letter: “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” (1 John 5:13, ESV). Notice the word is “know,” not “think,” “feel,” or “hope.”

One of the most important documents I own is my birth certificate, because it proves I am who I say I am, even if I one day forget or get confused or someone tries to deny it. God's Word works the same way for your soul, serving as your spiritual birth certificate and carrying the testimony of the Spirit who cannot lie. Charles Spurgeon once said that you can know you are alive even if you can't remember your birthday, meaning you don't have to know the exact day you were saved to know for certain that you are.

You do not have to keep checking the passenger list, because God's own Word has already stamped your ticket and confirmed your seat.

Key Takeaway

You can be dead certain of your salvation because the Spirit testifies within you, because your trust rests in the Son and not in yourself, and because God's own Word confirms it in writing.

Notes

[illegible]

Dead Certain

Proof Positive | Week 43 | 1 John 5:6–13

Reflection Questions

1. Can you point to a time, even without knowing the exact date, when you truly trusted Christ as your Savior, and if not, what is stopping you from doing that today?

2. Do you sense the Holy Spirit's assurance in your life, or have you been trying to muster up your own confidence instead?

3. Is there anything you're counting on to get you to Heaven besides Jesus, like being a good person or going to church?

Introduction

According to TIME Magazine, there are more than 64 million Google results for the question “What should I do?” We have entered what the article called a new golden age of advice, with apps, videos, and hotlines promising someone to talk to any time you need one. But there is one source of advice that is not just good, but perfect, and that is prayer.

After three years with Jesus, watching Him work miracles and hearing Him teach, the disciples never once asked Him to teach them to preach or to walk on water. They only requested one thing, “Lord, teach us to pray.” John gives us that same lesson here: “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14, ESV). As you study three reasons God’s will is the key to prayer, you will find the way to pray.

Key Points

1. God's Will Is Our Approach to Prayer

What does it actually take to walk into God's presence with confidence? John begins, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him..." (1 John 5:14, ESV). The word "confidence" literally means "freedom of speech." It was originally a political term for the freedom to speak your mind in a public assembly. John is saying that when you pray, you can pray with that same boldness, fully convinced that God will hear you. The phrase "toward him" means "in his presence," so the moment you pray, you are ushered directly into the presence of God. But notice who this promise is for: The "we" are true followers of Jesus, children who have been born into His family.

I have three sons, James, Jonathan, and Joshua, and they figured out a long time ago that no matter what I am doing, no matter where I am, no matter who I'm with, if they need me, they can always come to their dad.

Notes

[illegible]

The Only Way to Pray

Proof Positive | Week 44 | 1 John 5:14-15

If you are a child of God, you never have to make an appointment to talk to your Father, because His door is always open and He is always listening.

Notes

2. God's Will Guides Our Asking in Prayer

Why does John add the phrase “according to his will,” instead of just saying God hears every prayer? He writes, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14, ESV). To pray in the will of God, you have to seek His will, know His will, and be willing to do His will, because prayer was never meant to get God to do your will; it is meant to get from God what He wills.

An army chaplain during World War II wrote an article about this called “Some Pray and Die,” and one line from it has stayed with me for years. It’s that someone else answers, and you must be willing to take what He gives, because people must learn to want what they get. God’s will is like a guardrail that keeps you from going over a cliff, and while you can never be sure your own prayer lines up with His will, you can always be sure you are safe praying inside of it.

You are not ready to pray until you want what God wants for the answer, so stop asking Him to bless your plans and start asking Him to reveal His.

3. God's Will Guarantees an Answer to Prayer

How can you know for certain that God actually answers prayer? John closes with this promise: “And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (1 John 5:15, ESV). The word “hears” means more than just listening; it means acting on what is heard, so there is no such thing as an unanswered prayer, only prayers answered in different ways. Sometimes



The Only Way to Pray

Proof Positive | Week 44 | 1 John 5:14-15

Reflection Questions

1. Do you truly believe God's door is always open to you, or do you sometimes feel like you need to earn His attention before you pray?

2. Is there something you have been asking God for that might actually be more about what you want than what He wants for you?

3. Can you think of a prayer God answered with a "no" or a "not yet" that you can now see was actually for your good?

Introduction

You've heard the saying, "It's not what you know; it's who you know that counts." But that's not always true. When you're taking a final exam, nothing matters more than what you know. I read about a high school senior who had already repeated the 12th grade three times, so to help him graduate, his teachers gave him all the questions before the final exam, and he still got almost every one wrong.

As John closes his letter, he gives us what feels like a final exam of our own. Christianity begins with who you know, because you can know all about Jesus and the Bible and still not know Him personally. But it continues with what you know: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true...” (1 John 5:20, ESV). As you study four things you should know if you truly know Jesus, you will find you are ready to pass.

Key Points

1. We Should Know the Danger of Sin

Have you ever watched someone you know is a believer slowly drift from God? John addresses this directly: “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that” (1 John 5:16, ESV). All wrongdoing is sin, but John says there is a sin that leads not to physical death but to an eternal one, a soul that says a final no to Jesus.

I once shared the Gospel with a man who told me, “Preacher, thanks for coming. I’m going to hell,” and showed me the door. I lost my burden to pray for him that day, because he had already refused the only life that was offered him.

Notes

[illegible]

What Do You Know?

Proof Positive | Week 45 | 1 John 5:16-21

When you see a brother stumble, pray for him and pursue him, but know that the greatest danger of all is a heart that refuses Jesus permanently.

Notes

2. We Should Know the Defeat of Sinning

John moves from a warning to a promise: “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18, ESV). Every believer still sins, but the verb here is in the present tense, meaning continuous action. So if you have been born of God, you will sin occasionally, but you will not sin continually. God doesn’t just stop you from sinning; He changes what you actually want.

Two men were once talking, one a believer and one not, and the unbeliever bragged that he had an advantage because he could sin all he wanted. The believer said, “I sin all I want to as well. I just don’t want to anymore.” That’s the real difference, not that one sins and one doesn’t, but that one still wants to and one doesn’t. And that’s exactly why the rest of the verse matters; Satan can tempt you, but he can’t touch you, because Jesus is standing guard.

You’re in a battle with sin, but only Jesus can actually win that battle, so let Him stand guard instead of trying to win it on your own.

3. We Should Know the Domination of Satan

Have you noticed the world seems to get worse every single year? John explains why, “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19, ESV). It’s hard to believe how much things have changed in just the last few decades, but we shouldn’t be surprised, because the world isn’t really the one in charge. Satan is. Jesus called him “the ruler of this world” three times in John’s Gospel, which means no political party and no philosophy is actually running the show.



Key Takeaway

Know the danger of sin, and you will take it seriously.

Know the defeat of sinning, and you
will trust Jesus to guard you.

Know the domination of Satan, and you will not be surprised by this world.

Know the deliverance of the Savior, and you will guard your heart against anything that tries to take His place.

You don't have to study for this test by yourself.
When you know Jesus, you already know the answer.

Notes

[illegible]

What Do You Know?

Proof Positive | Week 45 | 1 John 5:16-21

Reflection Questions

1. Is there someone in your life who seems to be drifting from God right now? What would it look like this week to pray for them instead of talking about them?

2. Where do you find yourself still sinning out of habit? Are you trying to fight that on your own, or are you trusting Jesus to guard you?

3. How has this world's brokenness surprised or discouraged you lately? How does knowing Satan, not culture, is behind it change how you respond?
