

## 1 JOHN 5:19

### CONFIDENCE IN A CONFUSED WORLD

“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”<sup>1</sup>

**T**he New York Stock Exchange hits a new high every week, sometimes even breaking previous trading records several times in a week. Investor exuberance is making some potential traders nervous; they wonder when the bubble will burst. Our local economy depends upon growth in sales of several commodities. Because of the cyclic nature of marketing those commodities, we witness companies frenetically hiring people to work in the various resource sectors, and then we see those same companies downsizing precipitously. As you are only too aware, this cyclic hiring and downsizing results in extreme uncertainty as people overextend themselves to buy a new house, furnishings, a new truck and new toys—all purchased on credit. Then, all these things are repossessed when these same people are laid off. It is hard to gauge the value of your house as assessments skyrocket and then plummet depending upon what the resource sectors are doing in the previous year. We are exhausted trying to keep up; we need a stable piece of ground on which we can stand.

This same corybantic attitude invades the churches as parishioners are pushed from one theological fad to the next, sometimes changing position several times in a year. Pastors seem especially susceptible to chasing the ruminations of the latest church growth expert. We are always assured that the latest thing that worked in Atlanta will work in Dawson Creek! Really? Where can a Christian go to catch her or his breath? We need a rock on which to stand. I thank God that we have a rock on which to plant our feet.

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

[PSALM 18:2]

I can depend upon the Living God. With the Psalmist Christians can exult,

“I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the LORD.”

[PSALM 40:1-3]

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?** “We know that ... the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Whenever we speak of the world in the context of the Faith, we are not speaking of the physical orb we know as earth, we are speaking of the world system, the means by which mankind conducts itself. Speaking of “the world” focuses attention on the system of life, the system of conduct and governance that guides daily life. John has just stated that we who are twice-born know intuitively that the world system lies in the power of the evil one.

We know this because Jesus said this was the case. Listen as Jesus speaks of His death. “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” [JOHN 12:31, 32]. Jesus said that “the ruler of this world” would be cast out as result of His sacrifice. It should be obvious that He was referring to the evil one.

Again, Jesus was speaking with His disciples as He prepared them for His exodus. He said, “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” [JOHN 14:30, 31a]. Again, the Master referred to the evil one as “the ruler of this world.”

Soon after Jesus spoke these words, He was recorded as saying to His disciples, “Now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” [JOHN 16:5-11]. Note that Jesus again referred to the evil one as “the ruler of this world.”

It seems likely that Paul is referring to the evil one, and in particular to Jesus’ reference to him as “the ruler of this world” when he writes, “You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” [COLOSSIANS 2:13-15].

It is important to realise that Jesus’ use of the term “the ruler of this world” was not mere hyperbole. You need but recall part of the recorded exchange when Satan tempted Jesus following the baptism of the Master. Here is the relevant portion as recorded by Doctor Luke. “The devil took [Jesus] up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours’” [LUKE 4:5-7].

What is telling is that when Satan offered to give to Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world,” the Master did not respond by calling Satan a liar; rather, Jesus responded by pointing to what is written in the Word. “Jesus answered him, ‘It is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God,  
and him only shall you serve.””

[LUKE 4:8]

Jesus tacitly acknowledged that the evil one has a valid claim on this fallen world. Otherwise, why would it be necessary to create a new heaven and a new earth [see REVELATION 21:1]?

When Paul opens his missive to the churches of Galatia, he invokes a blessing, writing, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” [GALATIANS 1:3, 4]. Christ the Lord sacrifice Himself in order to deliver His people from the oppression of this present evil age.

We live in a world that reimagines truth as something fluid. Oprah Winfrey speaks of “your truth,” and the world is mesmerised by what they imagine is her depth of insight. Of course, all such talk of truth as fluid is foolish. Water still freezes at zero Celsius and boils at one hundred Celsius at sea level. The Laws of Thermodynamics still prevail regardless of what anyone thinks, and the Law of Biogenesis is unaffected by people’s imaginations. We still purchase a plane ticket expecting that the pilot and co-pilot hold to the truth that directions are true—north is still north, and south is still south. We consult a surgeon in the expectation that she will not remove our thymus because we are experiencing gastric torsion. We expect that the neurologist will not amputate our great toe because we are having migraines. We would hope that surveyors do not lay out property boundaries based on how they feel that particular day, but that they measure by fixed standards. Yet, in so many areas of life we imagine that truth is flexible, twisting and turning to fit our feelings at some given time; the world would love to enter into dialogue with the Christian, as if we are amenable to changing our understanding of truth.

***God’s truth asserts that He created a man and a woman.*** God’s ideal for marriage is one man married to one woman in a lifelong union. The Pharisees, endeavouring to trap Jesus with what they thought was a difficult question, asked “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause” [MATTHEW 19:3]?

Jesus’ response astounded them because He established the divine standard for marriage. “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” [MATTHEW 19:4-6]. For Christians, this is the final word!

As could be expected, His answer was unsatisfactory in their eyes, so they challenged him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away” [MATTHEW 19:7]?

At this point, Jesus schooled these scholars in biblical theology when He averred, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery” [MATTHEW 19:8, 9].

***God’s truth asserts that sex with anyone other than one’s spouse is sinful,*** and that includes sex with other members of your own sex. We are warned, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous” [HEBREWS 13:4]. Each person is responsible for himself or for herself!

God sets a high standard for marriage; only an evil and adulterous generation would attempt to circumvent the divine ideal. Nevertheless, the standard is unchanged. Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”

[**MATTHEW 5:27-32**].

No one who would honour God must ever imagine a Christian can ignore what Paul has written in **1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 10**. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

I do have good news on this front, however. The Apostle concluded that warning with this assertion of divine grace: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” [**1 CORINTHIANS 6:11**].

*God’s truth instructs us to gain control over our tongue.* We are taught, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” [**COLOSSIANS 4:6**]. Though we live in a world that esteems ribald and risqué language, and though such speech has invaded even the sacred precincts of the assemblies of the righteous, neither sarcasm nor salacious speech can honour the Living God.

Though sarcasm is elevated to an art form in contemporary culture, such attitudes and speech must never be acceptable among the people of God. We are taught, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” [**EPHESIANS 4:29-32**].

Christians are taught to maintain integrity in their speech. Remember the divine warning, “Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” [**EPHESIANS 5:2-6**].

*God’s truth is that we Christians are to be a loquacious people;* we are to speak often of Christ’s salvation. Jesus’ final command to those who are His disciples was that they were to disciple others. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [**MATTHEW 28:19, 20**].

The primary means of discipling is still telling others of what God has done. If we fail to speak, we condemn those about us to a continued walk in darkness. Paul had just quoted Joel, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [**ROMANS 10:13**]. Then he wrote, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” [**ROMANS 10:14, 15**]! God expects His people to speak of Him, of the salvation which He has given, of the freedom they have found in Christ Jesus the Lord. We are to be divine instruments of grace telling others of the salvation offered in Christ Jesus.

**1 JOHN 5:19**  
**CONFIDENCE IN A CONFUSED WORLD**

I have always been motivated by the words of the Psalmist as he encourages believers to speak of God's goodness.

“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
whom he has redeemed from trouble  
and gathered in from the lands,  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.”

[PSALM 107:2, 3]

There is no dichotomy between speech and life—both are necessary. We must speak while living holy, godly lives. We must both “talk the talk” and “walk the walk.” The issue is a both/and situation. Our lives must be attractive to outsiders. In all that we do, we are taught to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” [see **TITUS 2:10**].

Jesus taught those who would be disciples, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” [**MATTHEW 5:16**]. It is obvious that He was instructing those who would follow Him to live holy, righteous lives. Permit me to be pointed on this issue. There is not a hint in Jesus' words that we are to start a fight over a cross in a public place, respond with choler because a nativity tableau is not permitted or take an atheist group to court in order to compel them to stop arguing against public prayer at a high school football game. Many people become positively dyspeptic, apparently suffering acute heartburn when they read news items reporting how atheist groups throw judicial conniptions over religious symbols. Now, professed Christians are stooping to act in like manner toward these same atheist groups.

It is not a bad thing to erect billboards proclaiming our faith, but we have is no mandate to do so. What is obvious is that we Christians are to so live that it is impossible to argue that we are unrighteous. Peter makes this evident when he writes, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” [**1 PETER 2:12**].

The Apostle to the Gentiles had it right when he admonished Philemon, “I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ” [**PHILEMON 6**].

We live in a fallen world; and those in the world act as they do because the world lies in the power of the devil. Lost people act like ... well, lost people! When we Christians cannot be distinguished from those living in the world, where is our claimed transformation? Paul instructs us in Christian witness, “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” [**2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-6**].

How did Jesus act when He was attacked? We see Jesus' response in Mark's Gospel. Entering a synagogue on one occasion, Jesus encountered a man with a withered hand. We read that the civic and religious leaders “watched Jesus to see whether He would heal [that man] on the Sabbath” [**MARK 3:2**]. They had no compassion for the man who was suffering; they were focused on accusing the Master.

Listen to Jesus' response. "[Jesus] said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come here.' And he said to [the leaders standing there], 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." Then, we are told that Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man stretched it out, and his hand was restored. At this, "the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him" [MARK 3:3-6].

The Gospel says that Jesus was *angry and grieved*. We should ask why He exhibited these emotions. Jesus was angered because there was no compassion in the hearts of these civic leaders! He was grieved because their hearts were hard. Just so, we live in a world characterised by faux compassion for individuals who are mentally confused, people who imagine that the laws of biology somehow do not apply to them. We live in a world of faux compassion in which women are counselled to rid themselves of God's gift because they might feel guilty at having ignored moral laws in the past. How can compounding sin make one feel better about their previously flawed choice? We live in a world in which governments seek to compel parents to surrender their children to indoctrination so that those who govern need not feel guilty at the consequences of their choices. Rather than jettisoning righteousness, Christians need to be angered at the faux compassion even as we are grieved at the hardness of hearts by those who wish to be our leaders. Christians must do what is right regardless of how guilty those held in thrall by this dying world may feel. We seek mankind's welfare; people feeling good about themselves is not our primary concern. *Godless people worry about feelings; Christians live in the light of eternity, and thus, we are concerned for the eternal welfare of those who are dying.*

Show compassion and be guided by restraint, because at one time each of us was indoctrinated and imbued with these same errant teachings. Christians do well to remember, "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" [EPHESIANS 2:1-3].

Here is a vital truth that will enable us to understand why the world acts irrationally as it does. In order to reign, the wicked one must destroy all that God has given. God brought order out of chaos. We read, "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" [1 CORINTHIANS 14:33a]. Because this is true, "All things should be done decently and in order" [1 CORINTHIANS 14:40].

We who follow the Saviour know that "[Christ Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" [COLOSSIANS 1:15-17]. We know that "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" [HEBREWS 11:3].

The world may lie in the power of the evil one, but we are in Christ. Since we are in Christ, we are certain that our "redemption ... is in Christ Jesus" [see ROMANS 3:24]. We know that we are "alive to God in Christ Jesus" [see ROMANS 6:11]. We know that we have "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" [see ROMANS 6:23]. We know that we are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" [see 1 CORINTHIANS 1:2]. We know that God, "in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession" [see 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14]. Therefore, we are "blessed ... in Christ with every spiritual blessing" [see EPHESIANS 1:3].

**CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF CONFUSION** — “We know that we are from God.” One translation grapples with what the first readers would have understood. These translators render this verse, “We know that we are of God’s family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one.”<sup>2</sup> I do appreciate this particular effort, especially the initial statement, “We know that we are of God’s family.” Christians know they have a vital, vibrant relationship with the Living God. We do not enter into a “hope so” relationship with God; we enter into a “know so” relationship with Him. This is the reason we call God “Our Father.”

I am well aware that many professed Christians struggle with confidence toward God. “How could I do the things I do, if I’m a Christian?” they wonder. Doubt creeps in and they question, “How could God love me? I can’t believe that God would forgive me after all I’ve done!” Our fertile imaginations construct multiple reasons for why we are unacceptable to God. Let’s clear the air on this issue—God does not accept anyone on the basis of meritorious actions. What we do, even what we may have done or failed to do, has never been the determinate for acceptance by God. Attempting to make God like us is demonstration of self-righteousness.

Listen to the Word of God and comfort your heart. On one occasion, religious leaders gathered around Jesus, attempting to trip Him up in what He was saying. Here is the account. “The [religious leaders] gathered around [Jesus] and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one’” [JOHN 10:24-30].

Scope in on Jesus’ testimony beginning in the **TWENTY-SEVENTH VERSE**: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” [JOHN 10:27-29]. I believe it will encourage believers in their Faith and perhaps draw outsiders to consider the Saviour if we deconstruct Jesus’ teaching in this instance.

It is essential for Christians to note that *His sheep hear Him*. Because those whom He calls “His sheep” hear Him, He knows them, and they follow Him. In short, Christ’s sheep are obedient to the Master’s voice. What He says, they do. Where He sends, they go.

Some people self-identify as Christian because at one time they were recipients of some church ritual. Undergoing a church ritual is meaningless if faith does not lie behind the ritual. A ritual no more makes you a Christian than living in a garage can make you a Mercedes Benz.

Other individuals self-identify as Christian because a parent or some other family member was a Christian. It is an axiom of the Faith that God has no step-children. You are either twice-born, or you are not.

Still other individuals claim to be Christian because they genuinely believe they are “good people.” Of course, they are mistaken since there is no one who is good. Perhaps you will remember that Jesus cautioned, “No one is good except God alone” [LUKE 18:19b]. These people almost always provide their own definition of what they mean by “good.” The essential truth is that Christ’s sheep hear His voice—they listen to what He says, and they obey His instructions. Those who have no love for His Word are hard-pressed to define the standard by which they orient their lives.

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<sup>2</sup> **The New English Bible** (Oxford University Press; Cambridge University Press, New York, 1970)

We are taught in the Word, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” [EPHESIANS 5:25b]. If one has no love for the Bride of Christ, it is impossible for that individual to love the Saviour! In this context, Peter commands us, “Love the brotherhood” [1 PETER 2:17]. It is impossible to love the brothers if you detest associating with them.

Christ’s sheep are conscious of their sinful condition. However, they know that He cleanses them and keeps them from straying beyond recovery. John writes to followers of the Christ, “Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” [1 JOHN 2:4-6]. This promise is echoed by John’s statement provided later, “Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us” [1 JOHN 3:24].

Then, Jesus says *He gives [His sheep] eternal life*—Jesus gives “eternal life.” The Christian does not have “probationary life.” My paternal grandfather was a preacher with a group that believed one could be saved and then fall away so that they would no longer be saved. My dad, holding to the same belief, was grieved during my younger days because my life was anything but godly. However, when I came to faith, my family was disturbed because I did not embrace some of their views. When my grandma heard that I had become a Baptist preacher, she said, “Oh, Mikey,” (if anyone other than my grandma calls me Mikey, there will be trouble) if your grandad knew that you were a Baptist, it would break his heart.” I responded to the expressed concern by saying, “Grandma, he would be so proud that I am saved and confident in Christ. I am fulfilling the hope he held for my life. He is among that ‘great cloud of witnesses’ who watch as we run the race. He is cheering me on, rejoicing in the grace of the Saviour.”

On one occasion, my dad was visiting Lynda and I as we were living in Texas; we were having a discussion concerning security in Christ. I cited the words Jesus spoke in JOHN 10:27-30, which elicited this response from my dad, “Son, if I believed that, I’d go out and take my fill of sin.” I replied to his statement as I do to this day, “Dad, that is the difference between you and me—I’ve had my fill of sin! Christ saved me and I have no desire to dishonour Him.”

Have we not heard the words of the Saviour? “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life” [JOHN 5:24]. Believing Christ secures eternal life. It is not our efforts, but our faith, that secures the gift of life in Christ the Lord. I have often appealed to the words Paul wrote while urging people to look to Christ for salvation. God promises in Scripture, “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” [ROMANS 6:23].

The security we have in Christ is guaranteed because *we are in the hands of the Father*. I love this promise because it forever quiets any turmoil that could arise in my heart. I know that there are good people who are fellow believers who teach a theory that is indefensible. They say that we must “hold on to the end,” lest we be lost. Those who teach that theology seem never to believe that they have ceased believing, nor are they particularly concerned that they may cease believing; they will point to someone they claim was once a Christian who ceased to be a Christian. These are hard cases; however, we need to listen to John’s cautionary warning concerning such people. “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us” [1 JOHN 2:18-19].



I've invested this time for the benefit of fellow Christians who may be plagued by doubt. The answer to your doubts is to ask in whom or in what have is your faith. If your faith is in your own efforts, you must never cease doing whatever it was that you did at first or you will have nothing to cling to. If your faith is in your church, you had better pray your church never changes, for if it does, that which you first hoped in no longer exists. There is no "new and improved" in the realm of the Faith. If your faith is in anyone other than Christ the Lord, you had better hope that the one in whom you are trusting is eternal. As for me, I hold to this truth, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" [GALATIANS 2:20].

We receive Christ as Master by faith. As the Word declares, "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" [EPHESIANS 2:8, 9]. Then, having received Him by faith, we do the things He commands by faith. That passage concludes, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" [EPHESIANS 2:10].

Nothing before, nothing behind;  
The steps of faith  
Fall on the seeming void, and find  
The rock beneath.<sup>3</sup>

**RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BELIEVERS** — Knowledge confers responsibility. The physician who knows that a filthy operatory invites infection of those who will be treated, and who yet brings children into that operatory to be examined has failed his duty to his patients. The surgeon who knows that surgery without sterile instruments will contaminate those on whom she operates, and who nevertheless persists in surgeries has failed her responsibilities to her patients. Just so, the Christian who knows these truths, and who fails to warn the lost has failed responsibility for those lost souls. Is that not the message delivered by Solomon?

"Rescue those who are being taken away to death;  
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.  
If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,'  
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?  
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,  
and will he not repay man according to his work?"

[PROVERBS 24:11, 12]

Knowing that "the world around us is under the power of the evil one,"<sup>4</sup> my interaction with the world will be changed. I will recognise that the world cannot judge the Faith. I will not be overly concerned by the actions of those in the world—they are acting as they must act because of the one whom they serve. I will be moved with compassion for those who are lost, warning them of the coming wrath and urging them to look to Christ. I will look to Christ for wisdom and strength, knowing that I am incapable of changing anything in my own strength.

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<sup>3</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, "My Soul and I"

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Phillips, **The New Testament in Modern English** (William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. Glasgow, 1960, 1970)

**1 JOHN 5:19**  
**CONFIDENCE IN A CONFUSED WORLD**

As Jude pens his concluding words in the brief missive bearing his name, he gives several commands that are appropriate in light of the knowledge that we are part of God's family and not part of this dying world. Jude writes, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh" [JUDE 20-23].

Knowing that the world around us is passing away, I will be concerned for fellow saints. Concerned that we must not become overly attached to this dying world, I will heed the admonition recorded in the Letter to Hebrew Christians that warns believers, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" [HEBREWS 10:24, 25].

Saints of God, it is high time that we awoke. God urges any who would follow the Master,

"Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.'

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" [EPHESIANS 5:14b-16].

Even as we call Christians to renewed commitment in these days as we draw near to the return of our Lord, we call on outsiders to receive the gift of life in Christ as Master over life. Amen.