

Session 12 Take-Home: The Anchor Holds

What We Found

The study's oldest debt, paid: 1 John 5:13, "that you may **know** that you **have** eternal life," affirmed at face value. John's own letter defines the knowing, by observable, present-tense tests: keeping his commandments (2:3), loving the brethren (3:14), the gift of his Spirit (4:13); and "have" is present tense: you may know you are alive now, by the pulse, not by a certificate about the future. Three certainties, in descending order: God's promises: **absolute** ("hope does not disappoint us," Rom 5:5; the anchor "sure and steadfast... behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone," Heb 6:19-20); my present state: **really knowable**, by John's tests, commanded self-examination (2 Cor 13:5), and the timestamped fact of absolution; my own future free choices: **hoped and prayed for**, never presumed. (Trent's precision, absent special revelation: no *certitude of faith*, the kind that cannot err, either of one's present justification or of final perseverance; moral confidence and commanded hope stand untouched.) This is the honest ground every Christian actually walks on.

Hope's two opposite sins, in the Catechism's own definitions: **presumption**: relying on one's own capacities without help from on high, or on God's mercy hoping for forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit (CCC 2092, in substance); **despair**: ceasing to hope for one's personal salvation, for help attaining it, or for forgiveness: contrary to God's goodness, justice, and mercy (CCC 2091, in substance). And their faces are the two apostles we know: Peter at the table, hours before the courtyard: "Though they all fall away... **I will never fall away**" (Mt 26:33): presumption, before the fall, walking him into it; and Judas, whom tradition reads as despair's gravest warning, his final state left to God. Peter's whole biography, presumption, fall, tears, hope, charcoal fire, commission, is the doctrine walking.

Mark the line in permanent ink: **despair is an act of the will, not a feeling** (and suffering or illness can lessen culpability for it). The psalmist with tears for food still commands his own soul: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? **Hope in God**" (Ps 42:5); Lamentations chooses its memory in the ashes: "his mercies... are new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23). The person still praying through darkness is not despairing; they are hoping heroically. And Sirach's challenge stands across every generation: consider the ancients and see: who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame? (Sir 2:10, in substance). No one. Ever.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Letters (1890s)

In substance, and in her letters' repeated refrain: it is confidence, and nothing but confidence, that leads to Love. She wrote it while walking through a trial of faith in which heaven itself felt closed: the Doctors of hope earned their doctorates in the dark.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Claude de la Colombière

Act of Confidence in God (17th century)

In substance: My God, I hope in you for grace and for glory, for your mercies' sake, your promises, and your power; you never fail those who hope in you; and my confidence itself I place in your keeping. Hope anchored entirely outside the hoper: the only kind built to survive his bad days.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

Counsels handed down (20th century)

"Pray, hope, and don't worry." The means, the virtue, and the verdict on anxiety's usefulness, in five words, from a saint who battled darkness most of us cannot imagine.

Live It This Week

Talk back to your soul. Once a day, Psalm 42:5 in the first person: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? Hope in God." Especially on the day you least feel it.

Run John's tests, gently. One evening: commandments, love of the brethren, the Spirit's fruit. Answer whatever you find with gratitude or the confessional, never the closed verdict.

Memorize the five words. "Pray, hope, and don't worry." Deploy on contact with anxiety.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Romans 5:5 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: read Psalm 84, the pilgrim psalm: "my soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD." Two sessions remain, and the road is about to reach the door.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1817, 1821, 2091-2092