



FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES • WHAT WE CAN KNOW- 1 JOHN 5:13-21 • 8/30/2020

MAIN POINT

To discuss five certainties we can know as believers and children of God.

INTRODUCTION

One of the early church heresies that John and the Apostles all dealt with was an early form of what became known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a combination of a lot of different ancient teachings which would eventually also include Christianity. For instance, it would combine Jewish and Christian beliefs with ancient Greek philosophy. The name Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *ginosko* or *gnosis* which means to know or to understand. John combats this false teaching all throughout his letter. John uses some form of the Greek word for know 27 times in this letter.

What does it mean to know God?

How is it possible that we can know God?

Knowledge of God isn't locked away in a vault somewhere only to be obtained by those who gained the spiritual secrets to this grand mystery. Knowledge of God is revealed to us in the person of Christ and in the pages of His holy Word.

UNDERSTANDING

There are 5 certainties we can know from this passage.

1. We Can Know We Have Eternal Life (v.13)

Read 1 John 5:13

How would you describe the nature of eternal life to someone?

Why is it important that God gives us assurance of eternal life?

John wants them to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that in Christ they have eternal life. This is something we can know. John uses two Greek words for “know” in this passage. The one used in verse 13 is eido. This word is also translated in other places as “to see”. We can examine and inspect and perceive this truth with the eyes of our hearts. We can hold it and know it and cherish this truth. We can trust that there is certainty in the promises of God. When He says that all those who repent and come to Christ will have eternal life, He means it. God can promise that because He is powerful enough to bring it to fruition. The promise of eternal life and the promise of being in Heaven with God go hand in hand. And Heaven is Heaven because God is there. . Randy Alcorn says in his book *Heaven* that “God’s glory will be the air we breathe, and we’ll always breathe deeper to gain more of it. In the new universe, we’ll never be able to travel far enough to leave God’s presence. If we could, we’d never want to. However great the wonders of Heaven, God Himself is Heaven’s greatest prize.”

What about eternal life in Heaven are you most looking forward to?

2. We Can Know That God Answers Prayer (v.14-17).

Read 1 John 5:14-17

According to verse 14, how should we ask things of God?

What does it mean to ask according to His will?

How can you know God's will?

According to v.16-17, how should we pray for those in sin?

The next truth that John wants believers to know is that God delights in hearing and answering the prayers of His children. John says in verses 14-15 that if we ask anything according to God’s will that we can know that He hears us, and we can know that we can have what we ask Him for. Now, we know that it isn’t true that we get everything we ask God for because we don’t ask according to His will.

So what does it mean to ask according to God’s will? Paul, I believe, answers this question in Romans 12:1-2 .

Read Romans 12:1-2

What is discernment?

According to this passage, how can we discern the will of God?

Paul makes three very important points about God's will in this passage. First, God's will is good. It is pleasing and joyful. Secondly, God's will is pleasing. Some translations use the word acceptable here. So God's will is good for us and it should be acceptable and pleasing to us. Lastly, Paul says that God's will is perfect. His will is complete and lacking nothing. Paul is saying that in order to understand God's will, and thus to pray according to it, we must offer ourselves daily to God. We submit ourselves to Him. We dig deep into His revealed word. As His Spirit works in us to expose sin and bring a deeper understanding of who God is, we begin to more fully and clearly understand His will. As we submit to Him, he breaks all the things in us that still cling to and conform to this world. He transforms our hearts and minds to bring them into alignment with His will. This affects our prayer life. The more we understand God, and the more we understand His will, the more we will ask for things that align with His will.

John then gives an example of this kind of confident prayer life in verses 16 and 17. Really the example of prayer you see in these two verses is what is called intercession. Praying to God on behalf of someone else. John is wanting to imagine a fellow believer who is dealing with sin. It is important that this sin is not one that "leads to death" as John puts it. In other words, it isn't an unforgivable sin. Even believers struggle with sin, and John is saying we should intercede for them according to the will of God. It is good and right to pray that God would restore and lead to repentance a brother or sister caught in sin.

What is a "sin that leads to death"?

How can we make intercession more a priority in our prayer life?

3. We Can Know We Can Overcome Sin (v.18).

Read 1 John 5:18

What does John mean when he says those born of God "do not sin"?

How does God help us overcome sin and protect us according to this verse?

Ongoing and unrepentant sin is not the pattern of life for a believer. God in His infinite mercy and grace has broken the power of sin in our lives. Sin is no longer our habit or pattern. Holiness is. We may not be able to be perfect in this life, but we can be pure.

In this life a believer still struggles with sin, but we do not fight it alone. John says that those born of God are kept by God. God's power is working in us assisting us in our fight against sin. God will keep those who are born of Him.

Not only have we overcome the power of sin, but John says we have overcome the power of Satan as well. This doesn't mean that Satan does not affect us at all or that he doesn't still have power to tempt believers. What I think John is speaking of here is that for those in Christ Satan can no longer lay hold of them to do them harm. Satan is not all powerful. His work is limited by the sovereignty of God. He can't do anything without God's permission.

4. We Can Know We Belong to God (v.19)

Read 1 John 5:19

What does it mean to be of God, to belong to Him?

This is the fourth certainty for the believer. We belong to God. Think deeply on that sentence for a minute. This truth is really the foundation for all of the other certainties we've talked about so far. We can know that we have eternal life, we can have confidence in prayer, and we can be sure that we have overcome the power of sin all because of this one reality: we belong to God.

The Greek the word "of" in verse 19 denotes origin. It means to proceed from or to come out of. What John is saying is that those who belong to God are of Him. They proceed from Him. We are his possession.

And John makes it clear in this passage that there are only two types of people in this world. Those who are of God and who belong to Him and those who are under the sway of Satan. There is no in between. You either belong to God now or you don't. God doesn't take possession of His children when they die. He possesses them even now. This is a certainty, and it should bring us comfort. To belong to God is to no longer be under the influence of Satan or the world.

How does knowing you belong to God help you with struggles in this life?

5. We Can Know Jesus, the True One (v.20)

Read 1 John 5:20

According to this verse, what has Jesus, the Son, given us?

What does John means when he says we are "in the True One"?

Of all the things that John wants his dear children to know, He wants them to know Christ most of all. The Son has come, and His name is Jesus. Jesus has come and has given us understanding. The wonderful mystery of Christianity is that God didn't sit and wait for His people to find them. He isn't hoping that in their endless search for meaning and purpose that maybe they'll stumble upon His reality. The wonder of Christianity is that God the Son temporarily left his place in heaven and came down to earth and made himself known. In Christ, God has made himself known.

What a beautiful truth to conclude with. In a world of uncertainty, knowing Christ makes all the difference in the world. He is our salvation. He is our propitiation and atonement. He is the exact expression of God, the radiance of His glory. He is the embodiment of truth and love. He has conquered sin and death by his own death and resurrection. He purchased His Bride with his own blood, and He is working even now to purify her. And one day He will bring her home to experience eternal fellowship with Him.

What does it mean to you that you have come to know Jesus?

What other certainties can you think of that God has given His people?

Read 1 John 5:21 to conclude

Why this warning at the end?

Why must we be on guard against idols?

What do our idols look like?

It is fitting, given all that warning against false teachings that John has given his readers that he conclude with a warning against idolatry. We need God every day. Without him we are prone to wander. Without his work in us we would constantly create idols in our hearts. An idol is anything that would draw our affection away from the Lord. We must be careful if we erect idols in our hearts. If we belong to God, we can be sure that He will tear those down. He is jealous for his glory and honor. He will not stand by as His people worship lesser gods and give glory that only belongs to him to idols. He loves us too much to see our worship go to any but Him.

APPLICATION

How can you interceded for someone you love caught in sin this week?

What can you do daily to help you overcome your own sin?

What idols have you erected in your heart that need to be torn down?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

Write or insert any Bible study notes or commentary from your preferred sources.

1 John 5:13-15

Toward the end of his first epistle, John stated his purpose for writing it: That you may know that you have eternal life. First John is written to those who are Christians to give them assurance that they are saved (v. 13).

The Christian may have confidence in approaching God in prayer (vv. 14-15). Our confidence in prayer is a natural consequence of our assurance that we have eternal life (vv. 12-13). We may ask anything according to God's will, and we will receive it. This leads many Christians to ask, How can I know what the will of God is? Sometimes Scripture will tell us what the will of God is, either explicitly or in principle. It may take spiritual maturation and discernment to learn which principles of Scripture should guide our prayers. (Taken from Smallgroup.com)

Upon all this evidence, it is but right that we believe on the name of the Son of God. Believers have eternal life in the covenant of the gospel. Then let us thankfully receive the record of Scripture. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Lord Christ invites us to come to him in all circumstances, with our supplications and requests, notwithstanding the sin that besets us. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of God. In some things they are speedily answered; in others they are granted in the best manner, though not as requested. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

1 John 5:16-21.

In verses 14 and 15 John gives the reader assurance that God will answer prayer. Now he gives a specific encouragement to pray that God would restore a fellow believer (“brother”) who is sinning. There is, however, one limitation to such a prayer. If this person’s sin involves a “sin that leads to death,” prayer should not be offered. John has often mentioned the theme of sinning in this epistle (e.g., 1:7-10; 2:2, 12; 3:35, 89; 4:10). The believer is not without sin (1:8), but at the same time he is not characterized by an ongoing sinful lifestyle (3:89; 5:18). When a Christian “sees” his brother sinning a sin that does not lead to death, he is to pray for that person. The verb translated “he should pray” is a future tense verb (lit., “he will pray”), which expresses the Christian’s inevitable and spontaneous reaction. The result is that God will grant the sinning brother life.

But not every sinner is granted life as a result of answered prayer. The praying Christian can have confidence if the person’s sin is not of the sort that leads to death. John does not strictly forbid prayer for such a person, but it is clear that he is in doubt about its efficacy. What exactly is the “sin that leads to death”? A few suggestions about the nature of the “sin to death” include the following: total rejection of the gospel, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or a specific, deadly sin. We cannot be sure of the correct interpretation of the “sin to death.” Thus, we need to focus on the positive point: we are to pray for our sinning brothers. This is certainly in line with God’s will. Jesus prayed for Peter on the night Peter betrayed him (Luke 22:32), and we should do the same for one another.

John brings his first epistle to a close by summarizing three final affirmations, each introduced with the phrase, “we know”: 1) A person born of God does not continue to sin and is kept away from Satan’s harm. Jesus keeps him safe. The believer is secure in the grace of God, and Satan cannot take his salvation from him. 2) We are children of God, not under Satan’s control as the world is. This reinforces the distinction between the satanically-controlled world system and the Christ-controlled body of believers who have been delivered from its power. 3) The Son of God has come into this world to give us understanding which leads to salvation. This strikes a one-two blow against the false teachers, the antichrists who claimed to have special inner knowledge of God and salvation apart from Jesus. God can be known in only one way—through Jesus. Truth can be known in only one way—through Jesus. (Taken from Smallgroup.com)

We ought to pray for others, as well as for ourselves. There are sins that war against spiritual life in the soul, and the life above. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that mercy, which supposes the forgiveness of sins, should be granted to them, while they wilfully continue such. But we may pray for their repentance, for their being enriched with faith in Christ, and thereupon for all other saving mercies. We should pray for others, as well as for ourselves, beseeching the Lord to pardon and

recover the fallen, as well as to relieve the tempted and afflicted. And let us be truly thankful that no sin, of which any one truly repents, is unto death. (Taken From Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

You can even search our library of studies to find commentary, then just copy and paste it here.