

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

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We Know

1 John 5:13-21

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It's staggering to think of how much knowledge is instantly accessible to the average person. Right now, you can take out your phone and find answers to almost any question you can think to ask. You can know the height of the Great Pyramid. You can learn how to speak Egyptian. You can get the part number for every replacement part on your car. You can watch a war unfold in real-time. All the knowledge of all the libraries in all the world is effectively at your fingertips.

But, strangely enough, it seems the more we know, the less we believe. People are growing increasingly cynical over time. Parents don't know what to believe about vaccines or the best way to educate their kids. Senior adults don't know what to believe about information and technology. Teenagers and college students don't know what to believe about government and people in authority. It seems ironic to me that humanity has never known more facts...and we've never been more in doubt.

We don't simply want more information; we want more certainty. We need assurance. And that's exactly what our text for this morning offers. We are wrapping up our verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 John and in these closing verses John gives us several things we can be certain of as we believe the truth about Jesus.

Big Idea: If you believe the truth about Jesus, you can know for sure the most important things in life.

Look for that big idea as we read our text. Pay particular attention for the phrases "we know" or "you may know."

1 John 5:13–21

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. 14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 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. 16 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. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. 18 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. 19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

This passage is all about certainty. Seven times in our text, John uses the word "know." There are things we can know for sure. But that certainty only applies to you if you believe the truth about Jesus.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,

John is talking to those who believe in Jesus, the Son of God. Remember, that word believe is a word that is closely related to faith and trust. It means we believe the truth about Jesus in a way that we place our faith and trust in Him.

The truth is that Jesus is God the Son, equal with the Father and the Spirit. He came to this earth on a mission to restore sinful humanity to God the Father. He lived the perfect life we have all failed to lived. He died the death we all deserved to die – enduring the punishment of God for our sins. And He rose again from the dead as a display of His power over sin, Satan, and death itself. And if you are willing to place your faith and trust in Him as your Lord and Savior, He will forgive your sin and restore you to God and raise you up by His power to live a brand-new kind of life.

And if you are willing to believe Jesus in that way, John says you can know with absolute certainty the most important things in life.

And in the rest of our time together, I want to show you **FOUR THINGS BELIEVERS CAN KNOW FOR SURE.**

1. YOU CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

1 John 5:13

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.

We talked about this last week, so I won't spend much time here today. Eternal life is the fulness of life that only Jesus can bring. It isn't just life that will last forever, it's life the way God intended it to be. It's abundant life – full of joy and peace and satisfaction. It's resurrection life that raises us up to live like Jesus by the power of His Spirit in us. It's victorious life that overcomes sin and temptation in a way that makes us more than conquerors in Christ.

You don't have to wait for heaven to have eternal life. You have that life flowing to you and through you right now if you are trusting in Jesus.

Listen, your assurance of salvation isn't based on how you feel from day to day. It isn't based on the circumstances you are walking through – good or bad. Your assurance of salvation is based on the bedrock promises of God and the perfect work of Jesus Christ in His life, death, and resurrection. If you are trusting in Jesus, there may be a lot of things you don't know, but you **CAN** know this: you **HAVE** eternal life and will never perish.

2. YOU CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS YOUR PRAYERS.

1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 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.

This is one of the most amazing promises in all of the Bible. You can confidently bring the circumstances of your life to the God of this universe and ask Him to use His Sovereign power to do what only He can do. Because of Jesus, you have unfettered access to the Ruler of heaven and earth.

But be careful not to twist what John is saying here. He isn't saying that prayer reduces God to a genie in a bottle or a cosmic butler who exists to grant our wishes. John says we have confidence when we ask "according to His will." There are at least two things that I believe John is referring to here.

1. We are to ask in submission to God's will.

Asking in submission to God's will means that we humbly yield our lives and requests to whatever God knows to be best and in accord with His good and glorious plan. He knows what is best and, as our Good Father, He is committed to bringing about what's best – namely, that we will become more and more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-30). So, in humble faith, we are to pray with a spirit that submits our requests to God's good and perfect will.

The greatest example we have of this is Jesus. As He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed for the Father to let the cup of suffering and separation from God pass from Him. But, what did He say? He said, "Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done." That's praying in submission to God's will.

For instance, when Paul had a physical pain that he wanted God to remove, he asked God three different times to remove it. It wasn't wrong for him to ask God to do that. But, what did God say? He said, "No." It wasn't His will. He wanted Paul to experience His grace in suffering so that Paul would know His grace was sufficient to sustain him. And Paul had to submit to God's will to experience God's blessing. That's absolutely essential in prayer.

But I believe there's something more John is pointing to here. It seems clear that we can ask specific things of God that we know are His will. And when we pray in alignment with what we know is God's will, we can be confident we will receive what we ask. So, how do we know God's will?

2. We are to ask in alignment with God's word.

The will of God is most clearly known through the word of God.

John 15:7

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Notice how Jesus connects His word to our praying. That's how we pray with confidence. And that's a radically different way to approach prayer than many of us have learned to pray. Most of us learned to pray by simply telling God what we want Him to do. "God, give me this job." "God, give me this house." "God, take away this painful thing." It isn't wrong to ask God specifically for those things, but our will in those things might not reflect God's will for those things.

But there are things we know are God's will because He has said so in His word. And when we pray in alignment with God's word, we can know for sure that we will have what we ask.

For instance, Philippians 4:7 tells us that it is God's will to give us peace that surpasses understanding in the midst of the trials of this life. So, when we pray for that kind of peace with hearts that remain submitted to God's will, He will give us that peace.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." That simply means becoming more like Jesus. So, you can pray that you will be sanctified in whatever circumstances you might be

in and you can be sure that's exactly what God will do. We can know for sure our prayers will be heard and answered when they are submitted to God's will and in alignment with God's word.

Just think for a moment how you are praying each day. What would change about your prayers if you chose to prioritize the word of God in your praying? Grab hold of a promise or precept and make that your prayer.

That brings us to a really difficult part of our text. In verses 16-17, John seems to give these believers a real-world application of what to pray and what not to pray.

1 John 5:16-17

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. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

As I studied for this morning, it remained a mystery to me. So, I decided to go to one of my favorite Bible teachers, Chuck Swindoll, to see if he could shed some light on this. I found something he said to be really helpful.

“I do not have a clue what that means.” - Chuck Swindoll

Thank you, Pastor Chuck! It seems he had the same trouble I had. So, in his sermon on this text, he chose to quote a noted Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest.

“The present writer confesses his utter inability to understand this verse...the rest of this verse is an enigma to him and he will not even attempt to offer even a suggestion to its possible interpretation.” – Kenneth Wuest

If one of the most gifted preachers of our time and men who have spent their lifetimes studying the Scriptures struggle with this text, don't feel badly if you don't understand it. I don't know exactly what John is talking about here. But, let me offer a couple of quick thoughts.

1 John 1:9 says that anyone who is willing to turn to Jesus by confessing and repenting of their sins will be forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness. So, it seems to me that the sin that leads to death is a sin for which someone is completely unwilling to repent. He may even be referring to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit that Jesus talked about in Matthew 12. That's the willful rejection of Jesus and the claim that His works are of the devil. That sin cannot be forgiven because, by nature, it is committed by a person who refuses to repent and turn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Our prayers will not spare a person from the consequences of unrepentant sin.

That's the best way I know to take what John is saying here. But this isn't the main point of what John is saying so don't miss the forest for the trees. We can be sure our prayers are heard and answered as they are prayed in submission to God's will and alignment with God's word.

3. YOU CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT JESUS PROTECTS YOU FROM EVIL

1 John 5:18-19

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. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Verse 18 is reiterating what John said back in chapter 3. He said we don't continue in a lifestyle of habitual sin because the Holy Spirit will change our hearts and minds through the life of Christ in us. Then, in verse 19, he adds that the whole world is under the power of the evil one. That's a shocking statement. This world is aligned with the agenda of God's enemy who is seeking to steal, kill, and destroy the work of Jesus (John 10:10). The academic world and political world and entertainment world – the whole world is under the influence of the enemy of God.

But John says we don't need to live in fear. Greater is He who is in us than He who is in this world. Jesus lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit and will set us free and enable us to overcome the patterns of sin in our lives. And Jesus will guard us from the power of the evil one. That doesn't mean that we will avoid the suffering and hardship of this life. It means that we will not ultimately be defeated by attacks of the enemy.

Satan will not win. The sins that you struggle with will not defeat you. The turmoil of this world will not overtake you. Jesus lives in you and He will protect you from the schemes of Satan and the attacks of this world. And that is closely related to the last thing we can know for sure.

4. YOU CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT YOU HAVE A NEW WAY OF THINKING

1 John 5:20-21

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

This isn't so much a new thing we can know as it is a new way to live in light of what we know. The word that's translated "understanding" means "the faculty or mode of thinking." When we know Jesus and become assured of the things we have talked about this morning, we are able to live with a new mindset, or a new way of thinking. And what is that new way of thinking? John says it includes at least three things.

We know we are in Him.
We know He is God.
We know He is eternal, unending, abundant life.

That's our new mindset. When we know Jesus, we know Jesus has us and that as God He is giving us eternal, unstoppable life.

And that changes everything. It changes the way we face the difficulties of life and pain of death. It changes the way we see our circumstances. Jesus has us and, as God, He is giving us true life in Him.

As I was meditating over this, the picture that came to mind was the scene from Mark 4 when Jesus and the disciples, including John, were in the boat together, crossing the sea of Galilee. Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat, and a storm blew up out of nowhere and started to make the boat sink. Do you remember what happened? John and the other disciples lost their minds. In a panic, they started bailing water and trying to figure out how to save their lives. Finally, they go to Jesus and wake Him up. And they ask Him, "Don't you even care that we are dying?"

Jesus calmly walks to the front of the boat, and He speaks to the wind and seas. Immediately, the storm stops. And what do the disciples do? They say, "What kind of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?" Do you see the difference between the mindset John had back then and the one he is saying we have here?

They thought Jesus was just a man. They doubted that He even cared. They thought He was going to let them die. So, they lived in panic and fear.

But that's not the mindset John has now. In the 50 plus years since that storm, John has faced all kinds of storms – imprisonments, isolation, persecution. And he isn't panicked or paralyzed with fear. He knows Jesus has him and, as God, Jesus is giving him life – abundant, victorious, eternal. And think of those other disciples. By the time John wrote this letter, all the other disciples were dead. They were killed because they refused to say that Jesus was just a man. They weren't panicked or paralyzed with fear. Why? Because Jesus had them and, as God, He was giving them true life - eternal, unstoppable life.

And that's how you can live, too. No matter what comes. Unemployment. Loneliness. Weakness. Persecution. Cancer. War. Death. You don't have to panic or be paralyzed with fear. Why? Because you know Jesus. You know He's God and you know He's good. And in the midst of the storm He has you and is giving you eternal life.

- What storm or trial are you going through today?
- How would your mindset change today if you truly believed that in the midst of your storm, Jesus is with you and He has you and He is using His power as God to give you life in every way you most need it?

And that's why John's last words in this letter are that we should keep ourselves from idols. In other words, don't let anything take the place of Jesus in your life. Worship Jesus. Follow Jesus. Treasure Jesus. He has you. He's God and He's good and He's giving you eternal life. You can take that to the bank. If you believe in Jesus, you can know for sure the most important things in life!