

Week 10 – 1 John 5:13-21

That You May Know

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- **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.”*

The purpose of the Epistle is not merely to state that you may have Eternal Life by believing, but to emphasize that you may *know* that you have it. Some believe John is referring to all he had already written in this letter, while a few believe “*these things*” refer just to verses [5:1-12](#).

Spiritual feelings, which may come and go, can be deceiving. To counteract this, God gave you His Word to ground your faith in His truth ([2 Peter 1:19](#)). In previous verses of this letter, John gave us various “*tests*” to assess the authenticity of our faith and give us this assurance. Such tests are noted in [1 John 2:3](#); [2:5-6](#); [2:29](#); [1 John 3:2-3](#); [3:14](#); [3:18-19](#); [3:24](#); [1 John 4:13](#); [1 John 5:2](#) (compare [John 20:30-31](#)).

You have the evidence in your life that He has changed your heart. The more you engage with the Word, allow the Word to dwell in you, and live it out through the power of the Spirit, the greater the assurance of your faith will be.

- **1 John 5:14** – *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.”*

You can have boldness and assurance before the Holy God. Stop for a moment and meditate on this truth.

The word “*confidence*” is a compound noun (Greek: [parrēsia](#): [par](#) = “with” and [rhēsis](#) = “boldness, confidence, openness, plainness”). It basically denotes the freedom to express your thoughts and desires before God without hesitancy or fear of embarrassment.

What a privilege to have a continual invitation into His very presence in the Throne Room! ([Romans 5:1-2](#)) As the writer of Hebrews says,

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” ([Hebrews 4:16](#), ESV)

In earlier verses, John had written of confidence in prayer.

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” ([1 John 3:21-22](#), ESV)

The phrase “*according to His will*” is the critical caveat! Is what you are asking in His will? Your praying is never on a surer foundation than when grounded in Scripture, for here God reveals His will.

This does not mean that if you are sincere, God will answer your prayer. Sometimes your desires are not what God desires for you. Rather, ‘*Not my will, but yours...*’ ([Luke 22:42](#), ESV) That is the essence of assured prayer, the secret of prevailing prayer.

- **1 John 5:15** – *“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.”*

Having submitted your will to God's will, you may feel at liberty to make any request. When you know something to be in God's will and purpose, it doesn't matter how unusual it may seem. When you have your heart fixed on Christ and are trying to glorify Him, you pray constantly, even when you are not conscious of it.

You presently have whatever you have asked in accordance with His will. You may not actually see it immediately, but it's as good as done. There is much in Scripture about waiting for God. You would be mistaken to think that God is promising that whatever you pray for will instantly come to pass. Sometimes, in His purpose and wisdom, God delays the answers to your prayers for years. Yet, in another sense, He has already granted the requests.

Usually, you should continue praying until you get answers to your request (re: parable of the Persistent Widow ([Luke 18:1-8](#)). At other times (I can't give you a rule for this), you must stop praying and thank God, even though you haven't yet received what you were praying for. There are many examples of these types of prayers in the Psalms ([Psalm 118:21, 28-29](#)).

Consider James' admonition:

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." ([James 1:6](#), ESV)

➤ **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."*

Note that this passage clearly addresses prayer; specifically, praying with assurance that God will answer when you ask according to His will. It is not now a case of petition, but of intercession.

- There is *"sin not leading to death."*

These *"brothers"* had once been members of the visible congregation and had then no doubt passed as *"brothers."* But they went out, and by their withdrawal, they made it obvious they *"did not really belong to us"* ([1 John 2:19](#)). By rejecting the Son, they gave up life ([1 John 5:12](#)). Their sin did indeed lead to death.

"Committing a sin" is in the present tense; supporting that this is not an isolated incident but a persistent practice. Obviously in this scenario, *death* would not refer to eternal death. A prayer for this person (assuming they are a true believer) would cause restoration of fellowship if the sinner confesses and repents (*walk in the light* [1 John 1:7](#)).

This person is a believer, called to love his brother (a believer) by interceding for him. It is interesting John does not say first go to the sinning brother, but go to God in intercessory prayer. Before you speak to a brother about his sin, you need to speak to God about the brother. Also, John does not give a command to pray for the sinner. Clearly, loving your brother motivates you to pray for one who is persistently sinning.

Assuming this is a sinning believer, *"give him life"* would refer to restoration of fellowship with the brother and with God ([1 John 1:7-9](#)). There is no guarantee that even though this prayer is in God's will (and did not involve a sin unto death), the sinning brother may not cease committing his sin. His will is still involved in this process.

- There is a sin *"leading to death."* The natural question is which sin is this?

James writes,

"Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." ([James 1:15](#)).

There is a sense in which all sin ends in death! Clearly that is not John's intended meaning here because he distinguishes between sin that does not lead to death and sin which leads to death. The Bible mentions specific sins that resulted in death.

The Old Testament distinguishes sins of ignorance, committed unwittingly – which are cleansed through sacrifice – and wanton or “*presumptuous*” sins ([Psalms 19:13](#)), committed “with a high hand” – for which there was no forgiveness. There are several examples of sins resulting in death.

1. There is a list of sins for which the death penalty is called for: [Leviticus 20:1-27](#).
2. There are also examples sins for which God imposed the death penalty.

Moses: [Numbers 20:8-13](#)

God forbade Moses to take the children of Israel into the land. God left Moses to die on Mount Nebo. Why? Because of disobedience. Disobedience can have serious consequences.

Uzzah: [2 Samuel 6:1-7](#)

Uzzah felt it was his responsibility to save the integrity of God, and that God somehow needed Uzzah's help. Uzzah presumed that, without his intervention, it would damage God's presence.

Ananias and Sapphira: [Acts 5:1-11](#)

This was willful disobedience. They were struck dead immediately. Dishonesty and lying can have serious consequences. ([Why did God kill Ananias and Sapphira for lying?](#))

Drunken Christians: [1 Corinthians 11](#)

“For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.” ([vs. 29-30](#), ESV)

Not all physical weakness comes from this, not all premature deaths arise from this, but some likely do. It arises from willful rebellion against clear knowledge of the truth.

3. **Total apostasy.** [Hebrews 10:26-27](#), [2 Peter 2:20-22](#)

Another suggestion of a sin that leads to death is neither a specific sin, nor even a ‘backsliding’, but a total apostasy, the denial of Christ and the renunciation of the faith.

4. **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.** [Mark 3:28-29](#), [Matthew 12:32](#)

This sin, as committed by the Pharisees, was a deliberate, open-eyed rejection of known truth.

The outcome of your sin will be spiritual ruin, the final separation of the soul from God, which is ‘the second death’, reserved for those whose names are not ‘written in the book of life’ ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

The distinction John makes between the sin that does not lead to death and the sin that leads to death illustrates that some requests do not align with God's will. You should not expect some requests to be granted. This principle is simple and straightforward. If you're praying for things outside of God's will, then you should not expect an answer.

- **1 John 5:18** – *“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.”*

“Know” (Greek: [oida](#) = **know**) really means *an inward knowledge*, not merely that you know because you have read it, heard it, or because someone has told you, but you know because an inward assurance has come to you.

Everyone God has saved continues to give evidence of that fact in the present (in context; they do not habitually keep on sinning). Your new birth is not a passing experience but a new nature that continues to produce a spiritual change in you.

“We are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” [2 Corinthians 3:18](#), ESV)

A Wesleyan term for this is “[progressive sanctification](#).”

Aware of your own weaknesses and failures, you can rejoice in the assurance that your soul’s security does not depend solely upon your own efforts. This does not imply that you can be indifferent to or relax your efforts to keep the commandments of God, but it assures you that you are not doing this alone.

The “*evil one*” is not content with being corrupt by himself but actively seeks to corrupt others and draw them to the same destruction! The “*evil one*” can never sever the bond between the believer and Christ. No child of God can be snatched out of the Lord’s almighty hand and the hand of His Father ([John 10:28-29](#)).

If you are being tested right now, you may feel desperate, even abandoned. Persevere one more day, knowing that these God-allowed attacks cannot ultimately harm you and will, in fact, ultimately help you become what God wants you to be ([James 1:2-4](#)).

➤ **1 John 5:19** – *“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*

Since you are “*from God*,” you belong to Him and should order your steps as His holy, precious possession! Are you living like you are His children? Does His kindness toward you motivate you to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age? ([Titus 2:11-14](#))

The entire world – its politics, economics, education, entertainment, and, above all, its religion – lies in the power of the evil one. The evil world system is hostile to God and believers ([John 15:18–19](#)). The world follows its ruler, Satan ([John 12:31](#); [Ephesians 2:2](#)), the archenemy of God and His people ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God ([James 4:4](#)).

➤ **1 John 5:20** – *“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.”*

“We may know” (Greek: [ginosko](#)) refers to knowledge gained by experience. It is an intimate knowing intimately rather than an intellectual knowing. That *ginosko* is present tense signifies that you continually know or you have the constant experience of knowing.

This divine gift of knowing brings you into a personal relationship with the only true God. This enlightenment also enables John, all true believers, and you to see through and refute the heretical claims of the false teachers. It is the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s “anointing” that gives you this understanding ([1 John 2:27](#)).

Considering John’s polemic against the false teachers, who denied Jesus’ deity, it would seem fitting that the end of the epistle refers to Jesus as “*the true God and eternal life*” ([John 17:3](#)).

“True” (Greek: [alethinos](#) = genuine, from [alethes](#) = true, one who cannot lie) is an adjective that agrees with historical fact - genuine, real, true, valid, trustworthy (worthy of

confidence, dependable). *Alethinos* describes “genuine” as opposed to the false and counterfeit, here, the genuine God as opposed to the false God of the heretics -- thus genuine, not spurious, fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated, or pretended.

Biblical scholar William E. Vine explains John means “*true*” as opposed to what is spurious and unreal, not true as opposed to what is false (as expressed by [alethes](#)).” Again, God is not only the source of truth, He is the one and only genuine God.”

The relationship expressed by “*in Him*” brings us back to the fellowship with God with which John begins the epistle ([1 John 1:3](#)).

➤ **1 John 5:21 – “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”**

In the previous verse, John mentioned the true God. This undoubtedly brought to his mind the false god of the heretics. They denied the God of the Bible. They said that “the Christ” came upon the man Jesus at His baptism and left just prior to His crucifixion. They did not believe He was the eternal God in human flesh. Considering their false god, it was natural for John to warn his “*little children*” ([1 John 2:1](#)) to keep themselves from idols.

“*From*” (Greek: [apo](#) = from or away) is a preposition that conveys the idea of separation! The idea is to put some distance between yourself and seductive idols, whatever those “*idols*” are in your life! Don’t fool yourself. You know the idols to which you are likely to “bow down”! Avoid them. Your “*idols*” will take advantage of any provision you make for them (see [Romans 13:14](#)). Making provision is not in itself a sin, but it clearly opens the door for lust to walk in and lead to sin! ([Matthew 26:41](#), [1 Timothy 6:9](#))

John is not thinking of the heathen worship of Ephesus – [Artemis](#) and her temple – but of the heretical substitutes for the Christian conception of God and of guarding against everything that occupies the place of God. In the most basic sense, an idol is anything that takes the rightful place of God in your life. Also, a false picture of God can be an idol.

Consider the book: [Seduction of the Lesser Gods](#) by Leslie Williams.

1 John Commentary – Precept Austin

https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_john_513_commentary

COMPARISON OF THOUGHT AND STYLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE		
First Epistle of John		Gospel of John
1 John 5:13	These Things Have Been Written	John 20:31
1 John 5:14	Ask Anything	John 14:14
1 John 5:20	The True God Eternal Life	John 17:2-3