

## FIRST JOHN PART 11 "We Know..."

### 1 John 5:13 thru 21

We've been exploring the letter of First John. Sadly this morning our journey comes to an end. We'll wrap up our thoughts with a look at the very last part of this letter.

If I ever wrote a book on First John, I'd call it, *"A Christian's Certainty In An Uncertain World."* The fact is that everything related to the world we live in is filled with uncertainty. It was Benjamin Franklin who once said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." True, we all know that we're going to die someday, but then what? And as for taxes, well we all pay taxes but rumor has it our taxes are going to increase, but by how much? And there's uncertainty in the headlines. What's going to happen in Ukraine? Where is our country headed? Will the Republicans take back the house and the senate in the midterm elections? Is Covid ever going away? The entire insurance industry is built around uncertainty. Will I get into an auto accident? Will I be hurt? Will my neighbor's tree fall on my house? What does the future hold? Where will I be 5 years from now? What will I be doing? Will I still be here? Over half of all marriages end in divorce. Every couple says their vows with full intention of staying together "until death do us part." But then people change, problems arise, life happens. Next thing you know they're in divorce court. There is just so much uncertainty in life! This depressing thought prompted me to ask you the first question on your sheet [Show Q1 slide] "What are you personally absolutely certain of? Anything?"

About all we CAN be certain about is what God has told us here in His word. Right? As we come to the end of First John he gives us several certainties. Let me read our passage for this morning and then we'll go back and talk about it. Here we go...

READ 1 John 5:13-21

In the passage I just read John uses a particular word, a verb 7 times. He uses this same verb 36 times throughout the entire letter of First John. What is the word he repeats so often? **KNOW**. We know! In a world filled with uncertainty there are some things we CAN know. John's not just talking to anybody here. He is addressing Christians. In v 13 he says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God..." John's message is for believers in Jesus Christ. It is quite evident based on the content of this letter that these Christians (whoever they were) didn't exactly have their act together. They had problems. Some had apparently lost their joy; a few questioned their own salvation; many had become allured by the things of the world; a lot of them had been shaken by false teachers. Their faith was being severely tested. Fear, doubt and uncertainty had crept into their lives. And so John writes to these believers to address all of these issues.

I see the letter of First John as a follow up to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John was written so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing they might have life in His name, they might be saved (John 20:31). First John was written so that the saved might know, be assured of their salvation.

In our passage this morning John gives us Christians 5 certainties – truths we can cling to as we move forward and live out our faith. So let's look at them.

READ 1 John 5:13

Certainty #1 – From verse 13 we are certain that we have what? **ETERNAL LIFE**. What I want you to notice is that it is present tense. John does not tell us that we WILL HAVE eternal life. He says we HAVE eternal life. We possess eternal life right now. And since it's "eternal" it will last forever. OK, so what is eternal life? It is more than just a quantity of life. It is a quality of life.

Let me share something with you. Paul is praying for the believers in Ephesus. He is praying that they might have right then and for the remainder of their time on this earth. Something for the here and now. Last week we talked about all those promises for the future. Paul mentions many blessings we Christians can enjoy now in this prayer. They correspond with what John has been talking about in 1 John...

V 16, God the Holy Spirit strengthening and empowering our inner being (mind, will and emotions); V 17, Jesus Christ, the Son of God living in us thru faith; V 17, our lives being rooted and grounded in love; V 18-19, knowing, comprehending just how much Christ loves us; V 19, being filled with "all the fullness of God." All of this is a part of eternal life. This is what we can have and enjoy today. Eternal life is not just the idea of living forever with God (though it IS that). It is possessing the very life of God.

So then Certainty #1, we know we have eternal life right now!

READ 1 John 5:14-15

Certainty #2 – From v 14-15 we are confident that God does what? **HEARS US**. We know God hears our prayers. V 14, "The confidence we have toward Him" means we have access TO GOD and to all of His resources. We are free to enter His presence. We can go to Him in prayer and ask Him anything. Which takes us to the next question...

When we pray what is the one stipulation placed on us getting what we ask for? It tells us in v 14. "if we ask anything **according to his will** He hears us." It MUST... **BE IN GOD'S WILL**. One commentary put it this way: "We have a blank check in the bank of God's will." Did you realize that the little phrase we tack on at the end of our prayers, "In Jesus' name, Amen" is basically saying this: "If what we have just prayed is Your will, if it is Your desire, if it will glorify Jesus, then we ask You Lord to grant our request." This idea is expressed in the Lord's prayer, the model prayer... Jesus prayed, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

V 16-17 at first they seem to be out of place. But really they are not. Here is what's going on – John has just finished making the point that we pray according to God's will. And now what John does is he illustrates how this works with an example.

READ 1 John 5:16-17

What is "sin that leads to death"? in v 16? Is it spiritual death or is it physical death? Well, I'm not completely sure but I think that what John is referring to is a believer who commits a sin for which God has decided to take his or her life. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Ch 5 come to mind. If you will recall they both lied to God and God judged them harshly for it. He struck them both dead. Paul gives another example of this in 1 Corinthians Ch 11 when he warns believers about taking the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner." Paul says, "That is why many of you (Christians in Corinth) are weak and ill, and some have died." So here in our passage the sin that leads to death I believe is a physical death that happens to Christians as a direct result of God's judgment on them for blatant sin or disobedience.

Now that we understand what it is we can focus on what John's main point is here in these verses. In the example John gives a believer is aware that his brother, a fellow believer, is sinning. So this believer begins to pray with the right motives, with good intentions, fully convinced that he's praying in God's will. He prays that God will forgive his brother and restore him, "give him life." That is all he can do and then leave him in God's hands. The way God answers that prayer is up to the brother who is sinning. God's Holy Spirit, the preaching of the word of God, the witness of Christian friends will be at work in his life. If he repents God will restore him, if not, God may choose to end his life.

The main point of verses 16-17 is to emphasize what important aspect of God's character? **HIS SOVEREIGNTY**.

Our desire for a brother or sister in Christ might be for physical healing, for their salvation, to not be in pain, to get that job, to have a relationship healed, whatever. We cannot presume to know God's will for any of these things. It is possible that what we're asking for may not be God's plan for them at all. We don't see the big picture. We don't know what is going on in secret. The whole point of v 16-17 is for us to realize that God is in control. His fore-ordained will, His plans and purposes will be accomplished even if we don't totally understand how or why.

John's example here a Christian is praying something good for his brother – v 16, that God will give him life. It is just an example. By contrast there are 11 what we call "imprecatory" psalms where the psalmists – David and others – are praying down judgment on God's enemies. In either case, whether we are praying good or bad for someone, God is under no obligation to answer our prayer the way we want Him to. We yield to His sovereign will.

READ 1 John 5:18

Certainty #3 – From v 18 we are sure that we have victory over **SIN** or **SATAN** or **EVIL**. We know we have victory over all of these. John talked about this at length in Ch 3 (v 4-10). Jesus defeated sin, death and Satan at the cross and by His resurrection. John is not saying we will never sin because truth is we WILL sin (1:8, 10). But sin won't be our lifestyle. Instead we will demonstrate godly living. The bottom line is that, as Christians, we have been set free from the power of sin. Satan has no authority over us. We have a new life in Christ. We are a new creation with a new nature serving a new Master.

READ 1 John 5:19

Certainty #4 – From v 19 we are told "that we are

from God." This means that we **BELONG TO GOD**. "To all who believed in His name (Jesus), He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). We have been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20). We have

been adopted into God's family (Gal 4:5). We belong to Him! By contrast, John says, the whole world, the evil world system that opposes God, is under Satan's dominion, under his authority and power.

Do you all remember the courtroom scene from Ch 2 (v 1)? God the Father sits as the Judge; we stand accused, guilty before Him; Satan is our accuser, the prosecuting attorney (Rev 12:10); our Defense Attorney, our Advocate is none other than Jesus Himself. Jesus stands alongside us and presents our case to the Judge who happens to be His Father. Jesus' argument on our behalf is short and to the point – "I have already paid the penalty for his or her sin!" To which the Judge rules, "Case dismissed!" What a relief to know that we belong to God, that we are His children and He stands alongside us.

READ 1 John 5:20

Certainty #5 – From v 20 WHO IS the true God and eternal life? **JESUS CHRIST**. We know that Jesus Christ is the true God. He is the Son of God. He is truth. He came to earth and gave us understanding. He showed us the Father. He died so that we might have eternal life. And now we abide (we remain connected to) Jesus. We are "in Him who is true." John ends his letter the way he started it (1:1-3). He comes full circle telling us who Jesus is and how eternal life comes only through Him.

READ 1 John 5:21

John closes his letter not with a doxology or a prayer or listing a bunch of names. He closes abruptly with an admonition for us believers. Given everything he presented, given that we know Jesus Christ as the true, authentic God... Don't you be distracted and sidetracked by any others who may come along and pretend to be God or to have a special message from God. They are false teachers peddling false doctrine and false gods. They do not speak the truth. Stay away from them! That's how he ends.

I began by asking you this question. Today's lesson gave you five certainties. All came from God's holy word and that is really all we can be

certain about isn't it? What God has spoken we know is true! This last handout is for you to take home and look up these verses. There are in fact many things we KNOW for certain. Hopefully this will help to remind you of what you already know and encourage you. This was the first time I ever studied First John in depth and taught it. I don't know about you, but I really needed to be reminded of all this. May God honor the reading and study of His word!