

**“Precious Certainties”—Part 1**

January 15, 2012

Text: 1 John 5:13-15

**We began our study of 1 John 6 months ago, on July 10.**

We are now approaching the end of this inspired letter.

Unlike the letters most of us would write, John concludes his with a series of quick/concise statements that review and summarize the main parts of what he has already written, & emphasize once again key certainties of our faith as Xns. Not only are they foundational truths of Xn doctrine, they are precious keystones in our own personal belief-system, as individuals.

Because they are certainties, John repeatedly marks them all

w/ some variation of “*We know*” or “*You know*”=>

- \* E.g. vs 13—“*That you may know that you have eternal life*” (that you may be certain of that).
- \* Vs 15—“*We know that He hears us in whatever we ask.*”
- \* Vs 15b—“*We know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*”
- \* Vs 18—“*We know that no one who is born of God sins.*”
- \* Vs 19—“*We know that we are of God.*”
- \* Vs 20—“*We know that the Son of God has come.*”

**Today we will consider the first two certainties of which John reminds us in the conclusion to this epistle...**

**\* The Certainty of Eternal Life**

[1 John 5:13]=> “*These things [the whole epistle] I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life*” (that you may be certain of it).

**John reveals the purpose for which he wrote this letter=>**

**To assure believers that they have eternal life.**

Eternal life is everlasting life that goes on forever with a person into eternity; but it's also more than that.

It's a quality of life here/now—not just length of life.

In Jn 17:3, X said it is basically knowing God personally=>

*“This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”*

**Personally knowing God, one's Creator, is a powerful & absolutely life-changing relationship/experience.**

It is being drawn up into the sphere of the Source from which springs all life, all existence, & all things.

And it is the joy of making contact w/ that which is perfect in every way, & then holding on, to find that not only are you accepted there, you're loved/treasured.

**But the knowledge John talks about in our text is different (not relational).**

It's knowledge (or assurance) of a fact=> that we have eternal life because we have come to know Jesus X personally, by believing in His name.

The word “*know*” that John uses to express this knowledge refers to a final/settled understanding of who Jesus is—not a gradual process of gaining-knowledge/learning-about Him.

As we have repeatedly seen over the past few weeks, His “name” stands for all the truth about Jesus X which God has revealed to us in His Word.

Especially the truth that He is the Son of God, which means He Himself is God in a human body.

**Notice first, to whom John says he was writing=>**

*“...you who believe in the name of the Son of God.”*

In chapter 2, he divided Xns into “*little children*” (spiritual newborns); “*young men*” battling-with/overcoming sin and the-world; and mature “*fathers*” of the faith.

No matter where you fall w/i these categories, if you’re a true believer, you need John’s assurance that you too have eternal life, through faith in God’s Son, Jesus X.

Does this exclude anyone? Yes, it excludes nonbelievers.

John doesn’t want to assure anyone who does not believe in the Son of God, that he has eternal life—he doesn’t.

John ended last week’s text saying=> “*He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life*” (5:12).

For a person like that, assurance of salvation would be false hope, and cruel/deadly hoax.

John takes it even farther in John 3:36=> “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*”

That’s a person to whom assurance of eternal-life would be a deception/disservice.

**Q: Don't all believers in X know with certainty they have eternal life?**

\* No, some Xns don't understand that eternal life really is eternal (they think it is temporary/provisional).

These poor souls are often tortured by insecurity and fears that they might lose God's eternal life—that it's not really permanent/eternal.

If you're among those folks, I hope/pray that you will comprehend X's words in the depths of your soul=>

\* *“Whoever drinks of the water [of life] that I shall give him shall **never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to **eternal life**”* (Jn 4:14).

X promised an endless source of eternal life.

\* *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; / & I give **eternal life** to them, and they shall **never perish**; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand”* (Jn 10:27-28).

Someone: “I'm afraid to believe that. I fear it will make me spiritually overconfident, complacent and indifferent.

Ans: Trust X's strong hand, not your own.

**\* Some Xns don't understand they have eternal life right now.**

But John's purpose in writing is=> *“that you may know that you **have eternal life**”* (not “will have it in heaven”).

The spiritual life a believer will enjoy in heaven, is the same life he has already begun to enjoy here on earth. The holy emotions he will feel there, are the same ones he feels here, but he'll feel them all the more intensely w/o the handicaps/distractions/weaknesses of the flesh.

In eternity, his flesh will be redeemed/changed, but his spirit will continue to live the same eternal life he lives now.

**\* Some Xns understand as general truths that eternal life is eternal, & those who believe in X receive eternal life (immediately upon their believing), but they aren't sure they personally have eternal life.**

Intellectually, they agree w/ 1 Jn 5:1=> *“Whoever **believes** that Jesus is the Christ is **born** of God.”*

But it's one thing to know every true believer has eternal life, & quite another to know with confidence that I myself am a genuine believer, & therefore I have eternal life.

These folks don't doubt what the Bible says.

They doubt themselves.

You would be amazed at the spiritual quality of life led by some of those who lack assurance of their salvation, but who are among the godliness people I know.

Sin has devastated our ability to assess such things properly,  
especially w/i ourselves.

When Adam/Eve fell into sin, every human faculty was  
severely damaged, so we cannot judge accurately w/o  
God's help.

We can be very confused about our own spiritual standing.

E.g. Charles Spurgeon is one of my spiritual heroes due to  
his godliness of heart that you hear so clearly in the  
words of his sermons

But this is what Spurgeon had to say about himself=>

“I have been in a state of mind in which I have  
questioned the possibility of there being a grain of  
Grace in me and yet, I have clung to Jesus with a  
death grip.... It is very possible for a man to be a  
very strong Believer and yet to question whether he  
has a spark of faith.... I am personally taught to be  
tender of poor doubters, for I have been one myself.  
I would sometimes give all that I have to be able to  
feel myself to be even the least in the Lord's family.”

That is a remarkable admission for such a godly man!

John wrote his epistle so that believers can know with certainty  
that they personally have eternal life.

Everything he has said leads to the conclusion that such  
confidence is possible.

And if it's possible, it is certainly desirable, so that we may  
serve our Lord with gratitude/joy/love, not wasting  
time and energy worrying and reexamining ourselves

over/over to assess whether/not we do indeed have eternal life.

Not only is it desirable, it is our duty to seek to attain such assurance, because Peter wrote=> *“Be all the more diligent to **make certain** about His calling and choosing you”* (II Pet 1:10).

But the question is, how do we do that?

**Here’s the answer=> Throughout this epistle, John has repeatedly given us 3 tests by which to evaluate the legitimacy of our own Xn faith.**

\* The doctrinal test=> belief that Jesus is the X, the Son of God.

\* I John 5:1—*“Whoever **believes that Jesus is the Christ** is born of God.”*

\* I John 3:23—*“This is His commandment, that we **believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.**”*

So the doctrinal test was believing and holding-to a correct Christology.

\* The moral test=> living a righteous life by obeying God’s commandments, in the strength/power of the H.S.

\* I Jn 2:3-4=> *“By this we **know** that we have come to **know Him**, if we **keep His commandments.** / The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not **keep His commandments**, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”*

\* I Jn 3:24=> *“The one who **keeps His commandments** abides in Him, and He in him.”*

So the 2<sup>nd</sup> test is a life of righteousness lived by the power of the H.S., who dwells w/i every Xn, prompting his new nature to righteousness.

\* The love test=> loving God/man because a believer's new nature has made him a loving person, in general.

\* I Jn 2:5=> *“Whoever keeps His word, in him the **love** of God has truly been perfected. By this we **know** that we are **in Him**.”*

\* I Jn 3:10=> *“Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not **of God**, nor the one who does not **love** his brother.”*

So the primary criteria by which you/I can assume/assure ourselves that we are born of God and are the recipients of eternal life, are true belief in Jesus X as He is revealed in the Bible, a pattern of righteous living in obedience to God's commands, and love for God & our Xn brethren.

**But throughout I John, we have also come across additional tests by which to evaluate ourselves spiritually & assure ourselves we're truly born again.**

\* E.g. Separation from the world=> Satan's evil world system wars against God, & true Xns embrace God's ways and values—not those of the world.

2:15=> *“Do **not love the world**, nor the things in the world. If anyone **loves the world**, the love of the **Father** is not in him.”*

True Xns don't love the things of the world, but we do love the Father, and in that, we have reason for assurance of our salvation.

Having sided w/ God against the world, a true believer is automatically alienated from the world, so it cannot relate to him.

3:1=> *“For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”*

Do you find yourself mocked & put down by worldlings because you won't join them in their sin?

Good for you, that's good evidence you have eternal life.

The serpent's seed will always mock the seed of the woman, & Ishmael will always mock Isaac.

So you're in good company.

Remember what John said=> *“Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you”* (I Jn 3:13)  
(i.e., because that's par for the course).

\* Continuance in the faith=> the longer a person remains in the true faith, the more he has reason to assume/believe his faith is genuine.

2:19=> *“They [antichrists/false-believers] **went out** from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have **remained** with us; but they **went out**, in order that it might be shown that they all are **not of us**.”*

When many of X's disciples were leaving Him, He looked at the Twelve and asked if they intended to leave Him also.

Peter answered=> *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. / And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God"* (Jn 6:68-69).

No one else can regenerate the heart, so there was no place else for the disciples to go, and there still isn't for us.

\* Moral purification=> True Xns seek to keep themselves pure morally/sexually.

3:3=> *"Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him [X] purifies himself, just as He is pure."*

When you sin, do you repent w/ bitter feelings of shame?

Do you confess your sin?

I Jn 1:9=> *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

This means that, if we are the kind of people who are continually confessing our sins because the H.S. convicts us of them, then we are the kind of people X continually forgives and cleanses from sin.

Do you war against evil & the world's ways, w/i yourself?

Let those facts serve as comforting evidence that you are a partaker of new life, & of God's new nature w/i you.

\* A clear conscience

3:21=> *“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”*

If we can say w/ Peter despite our occasional sin, *“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You”* (Jn 21:7) that too is evidence of regeneration and eternal life w/i.

\* Believing in truth, not heresy=> If you hear/believe what the Apostles wrote in the NT, you have a new nature/life from God.

You believe it because God has opened up your spiritual eyes to see/understand/appreciate it.

John wrote (4:6)=> *“We are from God; he who knows God listens to us [the Apostles]; he who is not from God does not listen to us.”*

(He doesn't even take their inspired writings seriously).

\* Love for God that casts out fear of His judgment=>

True believers have a childlike confidence that appeals to God as their beloved “Abba Father.”

4:16=> *“And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him”*

**One final note, before we move on: We are never to allow assurance of eternal life to replace our faith in Jesus.**

We aren't to let such confidence cause us to forget that we were, & still are, saved by God's grace alone, as sinners.

We originally came to the foot of the cross as beggars,  
asking for a salvation we knew we didn't deserve.

Our assurance hasn't moved us an inch from there.

But the assurance that we have, of eternal life in X Jesus, is one  
of our most precious/treasured certainties, as Xns.

**\* The Certainty of Answered Prayer**

[Verse 14]=> *“And this is the **confidence** which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*

**As we come to understand that eternal life is knowing God as our beloved Abba Father, it becomes easier for us to expect that He will hear/answer us, when we pray.**

We come before Him in prayer, confident that He'll listen and respond to us out of His love.

Scripture specifically invites us to do so=>

*“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).*

But John adds that we must pray *“according to His will.”*

**Scripture contains a list of prerequisites for answered prayer, and praying according to God's will is one of them at the top of the list.**

Also included in that list are=>

- \* praying in Jesus' name (Jn 14:13),
- \* praying w/ faith, not doubt (Jms 1:6-7)
- \* abiding in X and His Word as we pray (Jn 15:7)

\* not regarding wickedness in our hearts (Psa 66:18)

\* keeping God's commands as we pray (I Jn 3:22)

\* not praying with selfish/sinful motives (Jms 4:3).

But it's not as if we are to go down the list each time we pray,  
checking ourselves to make sure we've got them all right.  
That might cause us to think God is reluctant to answer us,  
& that He only does so if our prayers are perfect.  
Such a mindset would create self-conscious praying,  
not prayers of faith focused on God & His goodness.  
It would also negate verse 14, leaving us w/ no confidence  
at all, that God hears our prayers, for "*anything*" that  
is in accordance with His will.

**This whole list can be simplified/superseded by the words of  
Psa 37:4=>**

*"Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the  
desires of your heart."*

If we are delighting ourselves in God, we will pray  
according to His will every time, because His will  
has become our will/desire.

Phil 2:13 says God will be at work in us, causing us  
to will for things according to His good  
pleasure.

We will also be praying in faith, & not w/ wickedness,  
selfish motives, or defiance of Gods commandments.

We'll have wholeheartedly adopted His will as our own.

Abiding in X, and in God's Word has enabled us to delight  
in Him.

Fruitful prayer isn't trying to bend God's will to ours, but gladly subordinating our will to His by truly embracing it, as we delight in Him, lining up our hearts/lives with it, as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying "*Not My will, but Thine be done*" (Lk 22:42).

Having prayed 3 times that the Father would let the cup of death pass from Him, He embraced the Father's will as His own, & told His disciples=> "*Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. / Arise, let us be going*" (Mt 26:45-46).

And off He went to the cross, having made His Father's will His own will, and having found peace w/i His own heart.

When we do that, having delighted in our Lord & His will for us, our prayers automatically accord with God's will, & He hears us w/o our putting forth any self-conscious effort to pray perfectly.

This sort of access to God, & fellowship w/ Him is what eternal life is all about, as we live our lives "*before Him,*" in the awareness that He is right there with us, loving-us and caring-for us.

That's when the Xn life becomes one of pure joy.

As Jesus said=> *“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made **full**”* (Jn 16:24).

**Our flesh tends to resist God’s will, rather than line up w/ it.**

We see it as something which will frustrate our happiness, if we given in to it.

But listen to what the Bible says about God’s will for us=> It’s all good.

\* Gal 1:4=> *“[Jesus Christ] gave Himself for our sins, that He might **deliver us** out of this present evil age, according to the **will of our God and Father.**”*

Deliverance is good!

\* Eph 1:5=> *“He predestined us to **adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **kind intention of His will.**”*

Adoption by a kind God is good!

\* Eph 1:11=> *“We have obtained an **inheritance**, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of **His will.**”*

An inheritance is good!

Far from being a cause of unhappiness, surrendering to God’s will is the only way to become truly/eternally happy.

This doesn’t mean a Xn will never experience unhappiness.

The world’s rejection/hatred certainly cause us to suffer.

But God’s will/purpose is to use even this in our lives for our good, as we respond to His will, w/ faith, and He strengthens and takes us through it.

Peter writes=> “*Let those also who **suffer** according to the **will of God** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right*” (I Pet 4:19).

Praying according to God’s will is trusting that His will is best for us in the long run, no matter what it involves.

It stays focused on that long run of life into eternity.

It sets its mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth.

It knows that the things of the world will soon pass away,

*“but the one who does the will of God abides forever”* (2:17).

**Now John adds a statement which is hard for many Xns to actually believe, because they don’t really understand it.**

[Verse 15]=> “*And if we know [have known, w/ certainty] that He hears us in **whatever** we ask [w/o limit, but according to God’s will], we know [w/ certainty] that we **have** the requests which we [already] have asked from Him.*”

This is a very strong, unequivocal statement.

I wonder How many of you have prayed for something & didn’t get it?

So how do we put that apparent fact together w/ this statement?

Notice, that John doesn’t even say that we *will* have the request,” but “*Whatever we ask, we know that we **have** the request*” already!

How can that be?

**Ans: John is saying that we already have whatever we are asking God for, because He grants our requests at once, even though we may not immediately perceive His answer.**

Jesus made the same amazing promise (Mk 11:24)=> *“Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you **have received** them, & they **shall be granted** you.”*

**There are 2 principles we must learn about prayer:**

First, when we pray, we are to believe God has already granted us whatever it was that we are praying for, though the visible fulfillment of His answer may be delayed.

We need to keep praying, but believe we have it already, even if we can't see it yet.

**Let's learn from an OT example of this—the prophet Elijah.**

Jms 5:17=> *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months; / & he prayed again, & the sky poured rain” (17-18).*

There Elijah was on Mt. Carmel, crouched on the ground, w/ his face between his knees, praying earnestly to God for rain.

He told his servant to go look toward the sea for clouds.

The servant did so 6 times, each time coming back to Elijah and saying, *“There is nothing.”*

On the 7<sup>th</sup> time the servant reported, *“Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.”*

So Elijah sent his servant to King Ahab, telling him to prepare for a deluge (I Kg 18:42-44).

Elijah believed all along that God had answered, and would answer his prayer, so he kept sending his servant to look for clouds.

He delighted in the Lord, so he knew God would give him his heart's desires.

He prayed, then he waited w/ faith for the answer he knew he had already received.

Another example, David said=> *"In the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch"* (Psa 5:3).

He prayed in the morning, then watched with faith thru-out the day to see how God would answer him.

He too understood that we may not perceive God's answer to our prayer immediately, but we keep watching, expectantly.

**But if you're a believer, praying according to God's will, He answers your prayer immediately, every time, one way or another.**

You don't have to be a perfect Xn for this to be true, but you do have to pray with earnest sincerity.

Jms 5:17 says of Elijah=> *"[He] was a man with a nature like ours [imperfect], and he prayed earnestly."*

Another principle=> But God doesn't always answer our prayers by giving us exactly what we asked for, because we often ask for the wrong things.

Instead, He gives us what is really best for us.

E.g. Phil 4:6=> *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”*

The “request” a believer is making here is for something he/she believes will relieve his anxiety.

Verse 7 tells us how God answers that request=>

*“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

He will shift our focus off the cause of anxiety and onto His goodness, so that we find inner peace, as we live above the situation.

God promises to relieve the anxiety itself in a way that will cause the Xn to draw closer to Him, even if the cause of that anxiety isn't taken away (*My grace is sufficient*—II Cor 12:9).

He answers our prayer immediately, but in His own wise way.

As believers, we pray in faith, “Not my will, but Thine be done” even when we don't know the exact details of God's will.

We know His moral will from Scripture, but we don't necessarily know His specific will for us in any particular situation.

We embrace His will, whatever it may be, confident that it is best for us, because He's all-wise, & He loves us as our Father.

Fortunately for us, the H.S. reinterprets our prayers in terms of God's wisdom and His exact will for us.

Rom 8=> *“The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us w/ groanings too deep for words” (8:26).*

This too is a “precious certainty” for us as Xns, causing us to say:

I love the Lord—He heard my cries,  
And pitied every groan—

Long as I live, when troubles rise,  
I'll hasten to His throne.

**“Precious Certainties”—Part 1**  
January 15, 2012

Text: 1 John 5:13-15

**Today we will consider the first two certainties of which John reminds us in the conclusion to this epistle...**

1 Jn 5:13, 15, 15b, 18, 19, 20

**\* The Certainty of Eternal Life**

**[1 John 5:13]**

1. John reveals the purpose for which he wrote this letter: To assure believers that they [10 have] eternal life.

Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 2:12-14; 5:12; Jn 3:36

2. Some Christians don't understand that eternal life really is [16 eternal].

Jn 4:14; 10:27-28

3. Some Christians don't understand they have eternal life right [8 now].

4. Some Christians understand as general truths that eternal life is eternal, and that those who believe in Christ receive eternal life, but they aren't sure they [24 personally] have eternal life.

1 Jn 5:1; II Pet 1:10

**5. Throughout this epistle, John has repeatedly given us three tests by which to evaluate the legitimacy of our own Christian faith...**

The doctrinal test

1 Jn 5:1; 3:23

The moral test

1 Jn 2:3-4; 3:24

The [10 love] test

1 Jn 2:5; 3:10

**Throughout I John, we have also come across additional tests by which to evaluate ourselves spiritually...**

\*6. Separation from the [12 world]

1 Jn 2:15; 3:1, 13

\*7. Continuance in the [12 faith]

1 Jn 2:19

\*8. Moral [26 purification]

1 Jn 3:3

\*9. A clear [24 conscience]

1 Jn 3:21; Jn 21:17

\*10. Believing in truth, not [14 heresy]

I Jn 4:6

\*11. Love for God that casts out [10 fear] of His judgment

I Jn 4:16

\* **The Certainty of Answered Prayer**

**[Verse 14]**

12. As we come to understand that eternal life is knowing God as our beloved Abba Father, it becomes easier for us to [14 expect] that He will hear and answer us when we pray.

Heb 4:16; Jn 14:13; Jms 1:6-7; Jn 15:7; Psa 66:18; I Jn 3:22; Jms 4:3; Psa 37:4

13. Fruitful prayer isn't trying to bend God's will to ours, but subordinating our will to His by truly [22 embracing] it.

Lk 22:42; Mt 26:45-46; Jn 16:24; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:5, 11; I Pet 4:19

14. Praying according to God's will is trusting that His will is [10 best] for us in the long run no matter what it involves.

I Jn 2:17

**[Verse 15]**

Mt 11:24

15. When we pray, we are to believe God has already granted us whatever it was that we are praying for though the [16 visible] fulfillment of His answer may be delayed.

Jms 5:17-18; I Kg 18:42-44; Psa 5:3; Jms 5:17

16. God doesn't always answer our prayers by giving us exactly what we asked for because we ask for the [12 wrong] things.

Phil 4:6, 7; II Cor 12:9

17. Fortunately for us, the Holy Spirit reinterprets our prayers in terms of God's [14 wisdom] and His exact will for us.

Rom 8:26