

# AM 1 John 5:13-17

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 18 July 2021

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's hear now from the Bible. Two readings. The first is from John chapter 14. And yes, I do know that we read from that last Sunday when Thompson was with us.

But it still seems very appropriate for our subject today. Reading from verse 1 and down in fact to verse 14. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am there, you may be also.

And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

[ 1 : 17 ] Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Philip, whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority.

But the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

[ 2 : 20 ] Or else believe me on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

And greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do.

That the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

And we turn over now to 1 John. We have been going through 1 John for many months now. We are going to finish 1 John today.

I am going to read this morning the final verses from 1 John chapter 5 from verse 13 to the end. 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.

[ 3 : 36 ] 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.

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 a 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.

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. 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.

[ 5 : 04 ] He is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Well, let me ask you to turn, please, to that passage that we read, in 1 John, chapter 5.

Whenever I'm preaching on a passage of Scripture, I always look for the major theme. I look for some word or phrase that stands out as the leading thought in the passage.

Well, there's no difficulty in finding that here, is there? I hope even the children spotted that repeated phrase, we know.

Six times that phrase occurs, in these nine verses at the end of 1 John, or seven times if you include the you know, in verse 13.

I write these things that you may know, that you have eternal life, he says in verse 13, and then in verse 15, we know that he hears us.

[ 6 : 36 ] We know that we have the requests, that we have asked of him. Verse 18, we know that those born of God, do not continue sinning.

Verse 19, we know that we are from God. Verse 20, we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, so that we may know, him who is true.

And then rounding off the passage, he explains that this is, the eternal life, of which he spoke, in verse 13. We know, we know, we know, that is the language, of certainty.

Never once, does he express, the slightest doubt. He doesn't say, merely, we think these things are true.

He doesn't say, that this is our opinion. He doesn't even say, we believe these things, to be true. But he says, with absolute assurance, we know.

[ 8 : 00 ] This is, in fact, one of the trademarks, of 1 John, this absolute certainty. You may have noticed it before, in these studies. 1 John 3, 14, for example, we know, that we have passed, out of death, into life, because we love the brothers.

1 John 3, 19, we know, that we are, of the truth. 1 John 3, 24, we know, that he abides in us.

He's not the only one, in scripture, who speaks with this, absolute assurance. Paul, also, often speaks, in this same tone, of perfect confidence.

Most famously, Romans 8, 28, we know, that all things work together, for good, to those who love God, who are the called, according to his purpose.

But John, in his letter, particularly, constantly says, we know. One of the reasons, for this, is probably, that John, wants to counter, the teachings, of the sect, called the Gnostics, who were, gaining in influence, in the latter part, of the first century.

[ 9 : 23 ] These people, claimed to have, a secret knowledge, of God. We know, things that you, don't know, they would say.

This is John's, answer to that. There are things, that we Christians, know. Wonderful things. Far better things, than the Gnostics, could ever, offer us.

We, Christians, know these things. There's a note, of exclusiveness there, isn't there? We know, these things.

The world, doesn't know them. But we know them. Because God, himself, has revealed them, to us. There are, of course, many things, we don't know.

Christians, must never, become arrogant. We must be humble, and recognize, that there are, many things, we don't know. But there are, many wonderful things, that we do know.

[ 10 : 27 ] And these last, nine verses, are a celebration, of that. These verses, are in fact, the grand climax, of the whole letter.

The technical term, for it, is a peroration. Great, speeches, sometimes end, with, a peroration. A rousing, finale, in which, the speaker, sums up, what he's said, with, a series of, grand, and, and, memorable, phrases.

Best example, I can think of, is, Winston Churchill, in his famous, wartime speech. where he, ends with, that trenchant, repetition.

We shall, fight on the beaches. We shall, fight on the landing grounds. We shall, fight in the fields, and in the streets, and so on. That's a peroration.

Well, here is, John's equivalent. Having, explained, over the past, five chapters, what real, Christianity is, and how we can know, that we are, real Christians, he sums it all up, with this, repeated phrase.

[ 11 : 41 ] We know. We know. We know. It's a wonderful passage, for these uncertain times, in which we live.

It seems, at times, as if, all the, old certainties, are being, swept away. That's been, especially true, hasn't it, over this past year, with COVID, shops closed, travel plans, cancelled, Christians

forbidden, to sing.

Who would have, thought that possible? But there are, deeper changes, to society, than that. Disturbing changes.

There was a time, when, the vast majority, of people, at least believed, that there was a God. Not now. There was a time, when the vast majority, of people, would agree with you, that it would be good, if people kept, the Ten Commandments, not anymore.

Nowadays, people question, whether truth, exists at all. Basic, distinctions, like male, and female, are called, into question. It seems, as if the very, foundations, of society, are being undermined.

[13:06] How good it is, therefore, to be brought back here, to these great, certainties, of the Christian faith. To the rock, of our faith.

To great truths, that will never change. John, sets before us here, five, great, certainties.

Eternal Life, in verse 13. Answered Prayer, in verses 14 to 17. The Christian Character, in verse 18. The Christian Identity, in verse 19. And Christ Himself, in verses 20 and 21. I want us to look, at the first two, of those, this morning.

Eternal Life, and Answered Prayer. And then we'll look, at the remaining three, this evening. So first then, our certainty, concerning, eternal life.

[14:14] In verse 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 connection, with the, previous verse, is obvious.

In verse 12, he said, whoever has the Son, has life. Whoever does not have, the Son of God, does not have life. Well, you have believed, in the Son of God.

therefore, you, have, eternal life. But we mustn't limit, that phrase, these things, to just the previous verse.

This is the purpose, of the whole letter. Writing to believers, John, wants to, assure them, that they have, eternal life.

What a wonderful, message that is. We, have, eternal life. According to the Bible, eternal life, is both a present, experience, and, a future blessing.

[15:32] The Christian, has life now, spiritual life, life in all, its fullness, because Christ, himself, is dwelling in us.

And we will have, that life, forever, and ever. Because we will be, with Christ, in heaven. And when, we can know, that we have, that life.

We know, we can know it now, here in this world. We don't have to wait, until the day of judgment, to find out, the verdict. We don't have to, wait until we get, to heaven, to know, whether we have, eternal life or not.

We can be sure, of it now. And John, wants us to have, that assurance. Not all Christians, are sure. That's implied, here in verse 13.

But we can be sure. How? Well, gathering together, John's teaching in this letter, assurance comes to us, in two ways.

[16:42] Through faith, in the promises of God, and through the evidence, of God's work, in our lives. Regarding the, first kind of assurance, through faith, in God's promises, eternal life, is promised, in the scriptures, to everyone, who believes.

We have that, repeatedly, in John's gospel, most famously, John 3.16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have, eternal life.

That's clear enough, isn't it? If you're one of those, who believe in Jesus Christ, then you have, eternal life. God says so.

Even if you doubt it yourself. God has declared that, to be true. Trust him. He's right. And John echoes that, in his letter, 1 John 2.25, for example.

This is the promise, that he has made to us, eternal life. This is the promise, notice. And God keeps his promises.

[18:08] God is unfailingly faithful. He keeps his word. If he has promised us life, then we have life. Regarding the second kind, of assurance, through the evidence, of God's work in our lives, John has, through this letter, given us, several tests, whereby we can recognize, that God really is, at work in us.

If we're walking, in the light, if we're walking, in love, if we're walking, in the truth, these are all, signs of life.

life. This simply wouldn't be happening, unless God, were at work in you. These things are not natural. These things are spiritual.

This is God, by his spirit, working in you. And it is proof, that you have, eternal life. We could liken, these two forms, of assurance, to growing, flowers, from seed.

If I buy, a packet of, seeds, at the garden center, it will, say on the packet, that these seeds are, shall we say, antirrhinums.

[ 19 : 34 ] There will be a nice picture, on the front of the packet, showing me, what I can expect them, to look like, when they're fully grown. It will tell me, how big they're going to be, and it will give me, instructions, how to plant them, and how to look after them.

That seed packet, is in effect, the promise. I have faith, in what it says. Those seeds, don't look like much.

But I believe, on the basis, of what it says, on the packet, that they are, antirrhinums, and they really, will look like this, in due time. And I plant them, expecting, that one day, they will look, as they do, in the picture.

There's life, in those seeds. Even though, you can't see it yet. That's the assurance, of faith. But once, those seeds, actually start to grow.

once I see, a little green shoot, coming through the ground, then I know, there's life, in those seeds. And when I finally, see flowers coming, and yes, they do look, exactly like it says, on the packet.

[ 20 : 48 ] Well, there you have, the evidence. Irrefutable evidence, that there was life, in those seeds. That what it said, on the packet, was true.

The promise was true, as we expected. So it is, with the spiritual life. We believe, God's word, that Christ, is the saviour, of the world.

And we trust in him, that he will, forgive our sins, and transform our lives. And to begin with, to be honest, there's not much to see. Not much, in the way of evidence.

But we trust in him, even before, we're able, to see anything. And then, in due time, as we grow in grace, our faith is confirmed, by the evidence.

Faith comes first, notice. The evidence, follows. The evidence, merely confirms, that our faith, is real.

[ 21 : 51 ] And that we really, do have life. So here is the first, great certainty then. We have, eternal life. The second, great certainty, is, answered prayer.

In verse 14, and this is the confidence, that we have, towards him, that if we ask, anything according, to his will, he hears us. And if we know, that he hears us, we know, that we have, the requests, that we have asked, of him.

The connection, with verse 13, is perhaps, not too obvious. But the thought, may be, that prayer, is one of the first, signs of spiritual life.

You remember Paul, after his, Damascus Road experience, God says of him, behold, he is praying. When a baby is born, one of the, first signs of life, is a good, healthy cry.

Very soon, that baby wants feeding, and it will let you know. And so it is, with the Christian. No sooner, are we born again, than we are crying out, to God, for all our, spiritual needs.

[ 23 : 09 ] Perhaps also, there is the thought here, that having, spiritual life, we are, the children of God. And as children, we have a special, relationship, with our father, in heaven.

Before, we were saved, if we attempted, to pray at all, it was only, with great hesitancy, not knowing, if there was anyone, there to hear us.

Or if there was, if he was willing, to hear us. Now, as the children of God, we know, God is there. And we know, he is willing to hear.

John has spoken, of this too. Previously, in this letter, 1 John 2, 21, Beloved, if our heart, does not condemn us, we have confidence, before God, and whatever we ask, we receive, of him.

Both there, and here, he is echoing, our Lord's words, at the last supper, as he does so often, throughout this letter. As we read earlier, in John 14, Jesus says, whatever you ask, in my name, this I will do, that the Father, may be glorified, in the Son.

[ 24 : 27 ] If you ask, for anything, in my name, I will do it. Or again, John 16, 23, truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask, of the Father, in my name, he will give it to you.

Here, in verses 14, and 15, let me ask you to notice, five things, very briefly. Firstly, this is the confidence, that we have, in him, not in ourselves.

John isn't saying, because we're so holy, God will answer us. That would be unthinkable. God hears us, because we are coming, in the name of Christ.

In Christ, and in Christ alone, we can come, boldly, to the throne of grace. Knowing that the Father, will hear us, for the sake, of his Son.

Secondly, he hears us, whatever, we ask. We really do, have a carte blanche, to pray for, absolutely anything. And God wants us, to pray, for absolutely everything.

[ 25 : 49 ] As the psalmist, puts it, pour out your hearts, before him. Thirdly, the only limit, to that, it must be, according, to his will.

Our Lord himself, taught us to pray, your will be done, on earth, as it is, in heaven. And he himself, prayed in the garden, of Gethsemane, not my will, but yours, be done.

One of the reasons, why so many, of our prayers, are not answered, or, at least, the answer is no, is that we ask, according to, our own will, and not according, to his.

As James says, you ask, and do not receive, because you ask, wrongly, to spend it, on your passions. True prayer, is in one sense, seeking, to understand, God's will, and then asking him, to do, what truly, is best for us.

Fourthly, notice here, that this is a privilege, that is ours, as Christians. We know, that he hears us. You know, sometimes, people out in the world, will ask you, to pray, for them, about some problem.

[ 27 : 19 ] And they will actually say, God hears your prayers, he won't hear mine. Well of course, we quite rightly, encourage them, that they should pray, as well. But what they say, is in a measure, true.

God does hear, our prayers, as Christians. Whereas he doesn't, hear, the prayers, that are offered up, without faith, by people, out in the world.

He hears, our prayers. Jesus once said, I know that you, always hear me. And trusting in Christ, we can say the same.

Finally, just notice that, our requests, are granted, the moment we pray. If we know, that he hears us, we know that we have, the requests, we have asked of him.

Daniel was a great man, of prayer, in the Old Testament. And he was once told, that the moment, he prayed, the decree, had gone forth, for that prayer, to be answered.

[ 28 : 27 ] And so it is, with us. What a wonderful, privilege this is, to know, that God, will answer, your prayers.

But we mustn't, use it just, for ourselves. John goes on, in verse 16, to give one, particular example, of prayer. And it is, prayer, for others.

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 a sin, that leads to death, I do not say, that one should pray, for that. All wrongdoing, is sin, and there is a sin, that does not, lead to death. We have life, ourselves.

And that's great. But we're invited here, to pray for life, for others. The obvious application here, is to a Christian, who has gone astray.

[ 29 : 35 ] And sadly, there are plenty of them, to pray for. John is speaking here, of a brother, who has committed sin. But the same principle, could be extended, to praying for the lost.

We have life, but we want them, to have life as well. So pray for them. Now I want to keep focused here, upon answered prayer, and not to get, sidetracked into, unnecessary, controversy.

But what is that, mysterious sin, that leads to death, for which it's futile, to pray? Some of you, will perhaps know, the Roman Catholic Church, uses this passage, to justify, a distinction, between, venial sins, that can be forgiven, and mortal sins, that can't.

And they've drawn up, their own list, of mortal sins. John, however, has already said, back in chapter one, that the blood of Jesus, cleanses us, from all sin.

And he makes, no such distinction. So what is this sin, that leads to death? In the context, I believe, that it is the sin, of apostasy, of turning away, completely, from the Lord.

[ 31 : 10 ] Those who do so, show that they were never, his in the first place, and that they don't even, want to be saved. They've chosen death, rather than life.

It's very similar, to the sin, against the Holy Spirit, in Matthew, chapter 12. Totally, and finally, rejecting Christ.

We cannot, pray, that God will, ignore, apostasy. And yet, while there is life, there is hope.

A sheep can stray, a long, long way from the fold, and still be brought back. There are Christians, who wander for years, and then come back, to the Lord. Perhaps you know of some, perhaps you know of some, who used to come, to this very church. Perhaps you know of some, in your own family. You weep over them, but don't give up, on them yet.

[ 32 : 14 ] While they're still alive, keep on praying, for them. Who knows, if those wandering sheep, might be brought back again. Two great certainties then, eternal life, and answered prayer.

The remaining three, we'll look at, this evening. But let me just ask you, in closing, can you, personalize, all this?

Can you say, I know, that I have, eternal life? Can you say, I know, that my prayers, are answered by God?

Maybe, that there's, someone, listening, who has, never really, trusted in Christ, and never really, received that gift, of life.

You know, there are many people, who vaguely hope, for eternal life, but they don't, really know. Well, now is the time, to put that right.

[ 33 : 23 ] Remember, God sent his son, so that whoever, believes in him, might have eternal life. That whoever, includes you.

There may be others, who do have life, but that life, seems at times, rather faint. The light, seems to flicker a little. There are times, when you're not sure, whether you're saved, or not.

Times, when you're not sure, whether God, hears your prayers. Well, John wants you, to be sure. That's the whole point, of this letter. Read, and reread this letter, to reassure yourself.

It's a wonderful blessing, to know, that you have, eternal life. And it's a wonderful blessing, to pray with confidence. There are countless, examples, in the scriptures, of people praying, with confidence, aren't there?

We could speak, of those Old Testament saints, like Abraham, praying for Sodom, to be spared, if there was even, just ten righteous people there. Or like Moses, praying that God, would spare Israel, even after, the golden calf incident.

[ 34 : 43 ] Or Elijah, praying that it might rain. Or Daniel, praying for God, to bring Israel, back again from Babylon. Babylon. These people, were praying with confidence, for big things.

So should we. Or we could think, of New Testament saints, like Paul and Silas, praying, and singing, in the prison cell.

Even in our darkest moments, we should be like them, praying, knowing that God, will hear our prayers. There are the saints, of history too.

John Knox, for example. Mary Queen of Scots, is reported to have said, I fear the prayers, of John Knox, more than all, the assembled armies, of Europe.

Prayer can be dangerous, can't it? And there are Christians, we've met. I may have met before, I may have mentioned before, an African pastor, that I knew, by the name of, Pastor Josiah, who had been, falsely accused, of all kinds of crimes.

[ 35 : 54 ] And I asked him, what he was going to do, about it. And I expected him, to say, he would appeal, to the bishop, or he would, appoint a lawyer, to represent him. And his answer, was simply, just pray.

And he did just pray. And he was exonerated, and the charges, were dropped. That's the language, of confidence. He knew, that God, would answer his prayers.

Maybe, if you look back, on your own life, you think, you see prayers, that weren't answered. Well, maybe there were some, where the answer was no. Maybe there were some, where the answer is not yet.

But I think, if you look back carefully, you'll be able, to count up, many, many prayers, that were answered. Many wonderful occasions, when the Lord, did hear you. So that you can, truly say, I know, that the Lord, hears my prayers.

May the Lord, grant to us all, this confidence, this assurance, this certainty. And may we all, be able to say, we know.

[ 37 : 11 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.