

Sermon: Three Things We Know

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. most of the fall. And we're going to continue in that today as we look at 1 John 2, verses 12 through 14. And we, two weeks ago, the last time we were in 1 John, we looked at those signs that you know that you know God, those things that you can look to that give you assurance and confidence of your relationship with God. What we're going to do today is we're going to look at three things that you can know that's true if you know God. So if you know God, then you can also know these three things. And I hope that it will be a tremendous encouragement to you today. So let's look at 1 John 2. 1 John 2. And we're going to begin reading at verse 12. John is writing here as an old man, and he's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And he says, I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his namesake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Faith family, would you pray with me and pray for me as we ask God to teach us today from his Word? Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the opportunity to be in your Word. Every time we come into your Word, we learn things, we're challenged with things in our life. And I pray that today you would teach us by your Holy Spirit. I pray that you would encourage us with what your Word has to say to us today.

[3 : 46] There is someone watching today. This message is just for them. So thank you for bringing this moment about, God, where you will speak to them through your Word. And we pray this to the glory of Jesus, and in His name. Amen. Amen. Well, for those of you that know me, you know that I love, absolutely love to fish. In fact, I grew up in the Land Between the Lakes area in Tennessee. And so fishing was just kind of a normal thing that you did where I grew up. And so I spent my childhood fishing for things like bass and crappie and bluegill, as we would call it, and many other types of fish. But one type of fish that I was never on my radar as a kid growing up around the fresh water of the lakes of that area, well, that fish that I was never really on my radar was called the cod fish. And of course,

I would later learn that cod is a very popular fish in the northeastern part of the United States. And in fact, it has a very large commercial business as the demand for cod is quite great. Well, I read an article once about how they learned to ship cod around the U.S. When they first started doing it, they would ship the fish frozen. The problem was by the time it got to its destination, it had lost its flavor. It wasn't quite as delicious as it was when it was first caught. And so then they decided they would try a different way. They decided that they would ship the fish in a saltwater tank. The problem was that now by the time it got to its destination, it was kind of mushy, the texture wasn't very good. And so that didn't really work either. Then someone had the genius idea to ship it in a different way. What they did is they put the cod into a tank, along with another kind of fish, a kind of fish that I was quite familiar with growing up in Tennessee.

And that was catfish. They added catfish to the tank with the cod. And what happened was that the catfish would chase the cod around the tank so that by the time the cod got to its destination, was shipped to where it was supposed to go, it was as fresh as if it had just been caught.

You know, and as I thought about that story and read that article, I thought, you know what, that's very similar to the kind of relationships that sometimes we have in our life. Fate family, do you have a catfish in your life? What I mean is, do you have that kind of person that keeps you on your toes? Do you have that kind of person in your life that will not let you compromise, that won't let you settle, that will not let you get complacent? It's almost like their role in your life is to keep you fresh. Maybe for some of you, it's a friend that always has challenged you.

Maybe for some of you, it's a teammate that wouldn't let you take the easy way out. Maybe growing up, you had a teacher that wanted you to reach your full potential. Maybe those of you that are Christians, you have another Christian in your life, a Christian friend that challenges you in your faith. My guess is all of us in some way or another have benefited from people in our lives that kept us fresh and focused. Have you ever stopped to think about the fact that that is why the majority of the New Testament was written? That the majority of the New Testament were people getting in the tank, if you will, with other Christians to keep them focused and fresh.

[8 : 44] For instance, the book of Galatians, you've got a group known as the Judaizers, which are giving some false teaching. They're adding the law of Moses to faith alone in Jesus Christ. And so Paul has to get in the tank and challenge those Galatians so that they stay focused and fresh on the gospel.

The book of Hebrews, for instance, you've got a group of believers that are considering going back under the Old Testament sacrificial system. And the writer of Hebrews gets in the tank and challenges them to keep their faith fresh and focused on Jesus Christ. The book of Jude, you've got more false teaching. And so Jude has to get in the tank and tell them, contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. It's keeping believers from getting mushy and sluggish in their walk with God.

I share that because it's exactly why the apostle John writes this letter. It's why he sends this to these believers. As we have discussed in previous messages, John is writing to a group of believers who've been influenced by Gnosticism. And as a result of this influence, some of them are doubting the Christian faith. Some of them are disobeying the Christian faith. And as a result, John has to get in the tank with them. He has to challenge them. He has to wake them up out of their complacency and slumber. He wants their faith to be fresh. And as we've noted on a couple of occasions, John has a very balanced approach in how he addresses these believers. He gives law, but also love. He gives evaluation, but also edification.

He brings conviction, but his intent is to build up their confidence in their faith. For instance, he said some things like this. First John chapter one, verse six, if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and we do not practice the truth. That's pretty hard hitting.

Or what about chapter two, verse four, whoever says I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar. And the truth is not in him. That's another very in your face statement. Chapter two, verse nine, whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in the darkness. In other words, faith family come in here. Okay. What John has no issues, uh, addressing some of these things head on being blunt, being straightforward, uh, having some pretty black and white, heavy hitting statements, but that's not his only approach. At the same time, John is coming alongside them and encouraging them and edifying them and, and building up their confidence. And that's what he does in the three verses that we just read a few moments ago. He's going to tell them three things they can know if they know God, if you know God, here are three things, you know, about yourself, and it's going to encourage you and edify you in the faith. Let's look at these three things quickly. Verse 12, chapter two, verse 12, verse 12, I am writing to you little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name sake. The first thing you can know, I mean, absolutely know if you know God is that you are forgiven. You are forgiven. You can know that. Now, let me just take a quick little side note. I'm not going to take much time here. Uh, there is some debate around this particular passage as to whether or not John is talking about three different groups, you know, children, young men, and fathers, and that this is some kind of a, maybe a spiritual maturity. That's one view, different stages of maturity. There are other scholars and commentators who say, no, uh, this is kind of a John's way by using different language of addressing everybody within the faith. Now, I think it's a minor point. Uh, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that. I'll just tell you that the three things that are in here apply to everyone in the faith. And again, the first one of those is you are forgiven. John wants you to know if you are watching this today and you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, he wants you to know that all your sins, every one of them is forgiven. Now, this is not the first time John has brought this up before. If you go back to the beginning of chapter two, uh, look at how he starts, uh, this chapter or what we know is chapter two. He says, my little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. He is the propitiation, the sacrifice for our sins and not ours only, but also the sins of the the whole world. John wants to leave no room for doubt whatsoever that a Christian has been forgiven.

[15:10] Now we're going to dig a little deep on this issue because I know there are some of you watching today and you have always struggled with God's forgiveness in your life. Oh, you might intellectually know that you are forgiven. You might theologically know that you are forgiven, but practically you don't live in the forgiveness of God. So let me go a little deep on this and spend a few moments kind of nailing this down in your life. The first thing that I want you to notice here and what John mentions in verse 12 is that it's written in the past tense, at least in our English versions, our English translations, it's written in the past tense. John says, your sins are forgiven. In other words, if you know God, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are not waiting around for God to forgive you. You are not hoping that someday God will forgive you. You're not crossing your fingers, wondering if God will forgive you. No, if you're a Christian, you know that all, all, all of your sin has been forgiven. It's in the past tense, but not only that it's in the perfect tense in the Greek.

It's in the perfect tense in the Greek. Now I don't do this often, but I'm going to pull a little Greek on you. I had several courses in Greek in, in, uh, in seminary that doesn't make me a Greek scholar, but enough to kind of know, uh, kind of how the text is being written here and the point that is being made. What's the, what big deal does it make that it's written in the perfect tense in the Greek?

Well, the perfect tense in the Greek is this. It's an action that happened in the past with an ongoing result or an ongoing effect or impact in one's life. In other words, by using the perfect tense, what John is saying here is that you have been forgiven in the past, but that forgiveness has an ongoing effect. It's an ongoing reality in your life. Brother or sister, you have been forgiven, not only from your past, but your present and also your future. There will never be a time when a Christian is not forgiven. It's in the past tense. You have been forgiven in the English.

It's in the perfect tense in the Greek. It happened in the past, but it has an ongoing impact in our life. But notice thirdly, it is written in the passive voice. It's written in the passive voice. Now, if something's in the passive voice, what it means is that the, the individual is not the one who did the action. Instead, the individual is the one that simply received the action. If you did the action, that would be the active voice. If you received the action, that would be the passive voice. In other words, God's forgiveness, this is great news, has nothing to do with what you have done. It has nothing to do with anything that you've done in your life. It's all entirely about what God has done for you.

You didn't earn it. You didn't achieve it. You didn't merit it. You didn't deserve it. You simply received it. Are you encouraged yet? Faith family, if you know God, you know, you are forgiven.

[19 : 20] Now, the reason why so many of us struggle, uh, with God's forgiveness is because most of us have rarely truly experienced, truly experienced, humanly speaking, real forgiveness because our experience in a human life and in our relationships with other individuals goes like this. I forgive you.

Oh, brother, sister, bless your heart. I forgive you. But what I'm going to do is I'm going to take what you did and I'm going to just kind of put it in my back pocket. But I forgive you. But I've got it so that if I ever need to bring it back out, if I ever need to use it, it's right here. But I forgive you.

Look at me. Look at me. That is not how God forgives his children. Not even for a moment. Listen, notice this on the screen. Forgiveness is the cancellation of your sin debt and the guilt and shame that comes with it forever past, present and future. And if some of you say my future sin has already been forgiven, honey, when Jesus died on the cross, all your sin was future.

But that one time, once and for all, the book of Hebrews says sacrifice for sins was enough for all of your sin in all of your life. Let me give you just some biblical illustrations about forgiveness.

Because again, I really want to nail this down. I want you to know that you know you are forgiven. Here's the first one. Psalm 103. This is one that people will quote often. Psalm 103 verse 11.

[21 : 38] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Now I have with me here a globe. Most of you've seen a globe before. And I want you to visualize this.

The text says that your sin is forgiven as far as the east is from the west. Now, had the text said north to the south, okay? So if you leave the North Pole here, you're traveling south. And you're going to continue to travel south until you get down to the South Pole. And then you're going to immediately be traveling north. You see, there are measuring points of the north to the south. And so if, had the text said that you're going to be forgiven from the north to the south, well, that means you would be forgiven to a point. Do you see? But the east as far as the west, if you start traveling east and west, when do you get to a point where you're no longer traveling east or no longer traveling west? Well, not until you stop and start traveling the other way. You see, from east as to the west is infinity.

What God is saying here is that when I forgave you of your sin, I forgave it to no measurement, to no ending point. You are forgiven forever for all of your sin. Past, present, future, you are forgiven. And as if that wasn't enough, let's just keep going a little deeper. Micah 7, verse 19.

Micah 7, verse 19 says, He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. The depths of the sea. You ever been to the ocean?

Ever been to the ocean? Ever been to the ocean and like gone out to four or five feet of water and dropped your sunglasses and, you know, couldn't find them? Let me ask you, when you went back to the beach the next year on your vacation, did you expect to be able to find your glasses? Well, of course not. Because you know that when you lose something in the ocean, it's gone. I mean, there's loss lost. And then there's ocean lost. And that's just in like four or five feet of water. Think of it this way. The deepest part of the sea, the deepest part of the ocean that we know is the Mariana Trench just off of Japan. It is 36,000 feet deep. To put that in perspective, the highest mountain on earth is Mount Everest. And that is 29,000 feet high, which means that you could put Mount Everest into that trench and still have 7,000 feet left over. And not only that, that trench is five times wider than it is deep, which means it's 120 times the size of the Grand Canyon. And that's the deepest part we know.

[25 : 39] There may be things deeper than that, but we just don't know of it. Here's the point, family. All of your sin, all of it, sin of action, sin of attitude, sin of heart, sin of the mind has in Christ been buried into the depths of the sea. If you know God, you better know that you are forgiven, but I ain't done yet. You say, well, you need to hurry up. Well, I say you need to listen faster. Okay. Listen to what Isaiah 38 verse 17 says, Isaiah 38, 17, behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness, but in love, you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction. You have cast all my sins behind your back. The Hebrew there is talking about the middle of the back. Okay. So if you want a great illustration of how your sin is forgiven, all you got to do is do this. Okay. I want you to take your head. Okay. Take your head and I want you to turn it to where you can see the middle of your back.

Okay. Go ahead and do that. If you are able to do that, you probably should go to the hospital. Okay. Like you, you can't see the middle of your back. Your head won't turn. In other words, what's the point here? What's the imagery? It's this. God has taken all your sin and put it somewhere where he will never look at it again. You come to God and you say, God, I'm so sorry. I did it again. And God says, what are we even talking about? Isaiah 43 verse 25. I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake. And I will not remember your sins. Are you encouraged yet? I'm doing everything I can to encourage you today. If, if, if God has forgiven your sin and he remembers it no more than why do you keep bringing it up? It's done. It's done. John is saying, cause remember he is writing to Christians who have stumbled. He is writing to Christians who have fallen into sin. He's writing to Christians who have given into some of the Gnostic teaching. And he's saying, listen, I'm going to be straight with you. You can't know the light and walk in darkness. You can't be in the light and hate your brother.

And at the same time, he's going to come alongside and say, but know this, if you know Jesus, if he is your savior and Lord, then here's something else. You know, every single one of your sins has been forgiven. Amen. If you ain't jumping for joy on the other side of this camera, I got nothing for you. Faith family that ought to encourage you and wake you up and freshen your faith. You are forgiven.

And I need to move on because there's two other points that I'll just make quickly. But can I just note one thing that it says you're forgiven for his name sake? That's what it says in verse 12. You're forgiven for his name sake. I'll just make this simple point. The point of your forgiveness is not to reveal how big your sin is or was, but how big God is. Listen, stop talking about what you've done as though your sin is big and talk about your forgiveness.