

THINGS KNOWN AND DIVINE ASSURANCES GIVEN AS A RESULT OF DIVINE REVELATION

1Jno.5:13-21

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This final section of 1Jno. begins by reminding his readers of the purpose for his having written “those things.” It even seems to sum up the purpose of the whole Epistle better than any other statement in the Epistle. Cf. 1:4; 2:12-14,26.
2. He begins the final section by laying stress upon the fact that believers can know they have that eternal life promised in his Son. This follows the distinction made in V.12 between those who have it and those who do not, and likewise connects this passage with Vv.4,5.
3. He then proceeds to show what the possession of this life in Jesus Christ involves in regard to boldness toward God, in regard to prayer: prayer on behalf of one’s self, and one’s intercession on behalf of erring brethren.
4. This leads to the conclusion of the Epistle, in which he specifies the assurances which believers possess, things they know, which involve the great fundamental principles of the Epistle itself, or of the Epistle as a whole.
5. Thus the arguments and persuasions of John were intended to bring personal confidence and assurance to each believer, over against the adverse influence of the lying antichrists of the day.
6. Our plan to study and develop our text is under three sub-headings as follows.
 - A. John’s Purpose For Writing The Epistle, V.13.
 - B. The Life Of Faith And Obedience In Relation To Confidence In Prayer, Vv.14-17.
 - C. Three Final Fundamental Certainties Concerning The Present Life And Eternal Destiny Of The Believer, Vv.18-21.

II. DISCUSSION

A. JOHN’S PURPOSE FOR WRITING THE EPISTLE, V.13.

1. V.13 is introductory in nature to this section and forms a transition from the preceding Vv.11,12, stating the purpose for having written

these things “unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,”
V.13a.

a. “that ye may know that ye have eternal life,” V.13b.

- (1) Note the force of his declaration: We can know this; that is, be perfectly assured of it; That is, those who keep on believing on the name of the Son of God have this assurance.
- (2) “Know” is from “oida,” speaking of absolute, beyond the peradventure of a doubtful knowledge, a positive knowledge.
- (3) Have eternal life in the sense of promise, or in prospect, as discussed in previous lessons. Cf. 1Jno.2:24,25; Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; Mk.10:29,30.
- (4) Stress is upon the word “eternal” in this promise to believers – those who keep on believing.
 - (a) This faith does not produce in the believer a transient emotion of enthusiasm, nor does it bring him under a passing influence.
 - (b) It introduces him to a life of union and fellowship with Christ in its fixed and unchangeable character.
 - (c) It’s an assurance not based on mere feelings but on facts and truths.
 - (d) Furthermore, this faith is not merely an acquiescence in certain facts, but the means of permanent relationship with him who is the very source of life.
- (5) We thus have the “full assurance of faith.” Cf. Heb.10:19-23.

b. “And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God,”

V.13c

- (1) Yes, believers already believe on the name of the Son of God.
- (2) But John’s point is, in order to secure this promise, they must keep on believing on his name.
- (3) They must persevere and endure in their belief; for there is no such thing as a person believing and then ceasing to believe and still being one receiving eternal life. Cf. Mt.10:22; Jno.8:31,32; 1Th.1:5; 2Tim.1:12; Heb.4:11; 10:22,23; 1Jno.2:3.

- (4) This clause seems to be put in the position of emphasis, at the end of the verse, to set true believer in renewed contrast to those lying, deceiving antichrists of 2:18-23; 4:1-3; 1:6; 2Jno.7, who denied Jesus as the Son of God, and therefore had neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the hope of eternal life, yet claimed fellowship with the Father in spite of their denial of his Son.
- c. Contextual proof of the one who is a believer, on who keeps on believing, one who is in fellowship with God, and in hope of eternal life.
 - (1) By perfecting the love of God in oneself by keeping his word and his commandments, including brotherly love, 1:6; 2:3-6; 4:20,21; 5:1-3.
 - (2) By doing or habitually practicing righteousness, 2:29; 3:6-10.
 - (3) By standing begotten of God and continuing to overcome the world by an obedience faith, 5:4,5.
 - (4) By continuing to “believe on the NAME of the Son of God,” 5:13c.
- d. How and where eternal life is to be found, as previously argued by John, no doubt, had been and continued to be the subject of animated debate.
 - (1) With the lying, deceiving antichrists claiming that it was to be found in their circle by reason of their superior knowledge and higher teaching which they embraced as the so-called “initiated” ones.
 - (2) But John by the Holy Spirit affirms that they, by denying that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, did not truly believe in his person (which is what is meant by “the name” in such contexts as the present) and so had no true claim on the eternal life which was to be had in him alone.
 - (3) And, of course, John’s argument applies, with equal force, to all in every generation of all time who do not so believe in Jesus as the Son of God!
- e. Note the relationship or the comparison between the Epistle of 1Jno. and the Gospel of John.
 - (1) The Gospel was written that men might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life through his name, Jno.20:30,31.

- (2) The Epistle was written to those who believe on the name of the Son of God in order that they may know they have eternal life in and through him, 5:11-13.
 - (3) The Gospel was written to produce faith and its effects; the Epistle, to confirm that faith and its effects.
 - (4) The purpose of the Gospel was evangelistic – to make Christians; the purpose of the Epistle is to instruct and strengthen Christians, and to produce assurance and confidence.
 - (5) The key word of the Gospel is “believe”; of the Epistle, “know.”
 - (6) The Gospel was written that the blessing of life might be obtained; the Epistle, to produce the joy that comes from its possession (1:4), the joy of fellowship with God, his Son, and fellow-saints in Christ.
 - (7) This would indicate that the Epistle supplements the Gospel by taking us from initial belief to the obedience of faith, once more emphasizing the inseparable connection between faith and obedience in order to have eternal life in the world to come.
- f. This certainly puts the lie to those who deny there can be any definite assurance of salvation in the here and now!
 - g. The value of such assurance cannot be over estimated. Cf. 2Tim.4:6-8; Jas.1:12; 1Cor.10:12,13.

B. THE LIFE OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE IN RELATION TO CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER, Vv.14-17.

- 1. Assurance of the hope of eternal life through believing on the name of the Son of God leads to confidence in prayer with reference to the believer’s own personal life, circumstances, and needs, Vv.14,15. Cf. 1Jno.3:22; Mt.7:7-11; Heb.4:14-16.
 - a. Note well: “This is the confidence we have”, i.e., “free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance.”
 - b. “In him,” is speaking of the believer’s attitude toward God as a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.
 - c. “Ask,” meaning “to ask for something to be given.” And it is the present subjunctive, which speaks of continuous action; that is, “if we keep on asking;” asking, of course, “according to his will.”

- d. Asking “according to his will” means to ask in faith in harmony with what he has set forth or taught in his revealed will – in the sacred writings – regarding prayer. Cf. Jas.1:5-8; Rom.10:17; Heb.11:4,6.
 - (1) Even Jesus had to recognize this principle, Mt.26:39.
 - e. Cf. what Jesus said to his chosen apostles in Mt.21:22; Jno.14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24.
 - f. The subject of boldness has been mentioned previously in three different sections of the Epistle; and, now, in this fourth one.
 - (1) In 2:28, in connection with freedom from shame at the judgment seat of Christ.
 - (2) In 3:19-21, in connection with the possession of a clear conscience towards God, or when we know we are of the truth and have a heart that condemns us not.
 - (3) In 4:17, as the outcome of the perfecting of God’s love in us, and of our likeness to Christ.
 - (4) Now, for the fourth time, in this section, boldness is the basis of our confidence in prayer.
 - g. V.15 seems to be adding this thought: The assurance which we as believers have that God does indeed answer the prayers of faith encourages us to ask, and enables us to know, have confidence, that we do indeed receive the things for which we ask of him in faith.
 - (1) John goes from the general in V.14 to the particular in V.15.
 - (2) 1st there is the assurance that God hears whatever, anything, the believer asks according to his will.
 - (3) 2nd there is assurance that God grants the particular petitions that may be requested.
 - (4) What he is affirming is the believer’s consciousness of being heard.
 - h. This definitely limits access to the prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God to the obedient believer, the faithful, penitent followers of his Son Jesus Christ. Cf. Psa.66:18; Prov.28:9; Jno.9:31; 1Pet.3:12.
2. Further assurance as to the right of intercessory prayer for erring brethren in accordance with the principles of brotherly love, Vv.16,17.
- a. The erring brother for whom another is authorized to pray in harmony with God’s will, V.16a: A brother sinning not unto death (“sin not unto death,” ASV).

- b. The object of praying on this erring brother's behalf, V.16b: his forgiveness, restoration, and preservation of his spiritual life. Cf. Jas.5:13-16; Gal.6:1.
- (1) This does not say or mean that if we see a brother in the actual commission of sin, we may ask God on his behalf and God will forgive such a one **while sinning**.
 - (2) Such a conclusion is alike repugnant to both reason and revelation; it's obviously false reasoning. Cf. Lk.13:3; Ac.8:22-24.
 - (3) There is no offer of amnesty to the rebellious and impenitent.
 - (4) certainly, Jon intended no such conclusion should be drawn from his words here.
 - (5) But he does assure us that God will hear the prayer of faith for the brother sinning not unto death; that he is an erring brother for whom we may pray with confidence.
- c. The erring or sinning brother for whom we cannot pray with confidence of being heard or having our prayer answered, V.16c: the one guilty of "sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
- (1) But who is that brother and the sin he is committing?
 - (2) Due to what the N.T. says, even in 1Jno., about sin, repentance, confession of it, and forgiveness of any and all sin repented of and confessed, seeking forgiveness, "sin unto death" would include **a sin, any sin, all sin that a brother will not repent of and confess!**
 - (a) The N.T. teaches, including 1Jno., that the Lord will forgive the erring brother of the guilt of any and every sin, of whatever nature, that the erring brother confesses, 1Jno.1:9.
 - (b) There is, however, according to 1Jno.5:16c, a sin of which the Lord will not forgive a brother; it is "a sin unto death."
 - (c) Therefore, the sin of which the Lord will not forgive an erring brother, is **a sin, any sin, all sin that brother will not confess.**
 - (3) Therefore, "a sin unto death" is a disposition of heart, a perverseness of attitude and an unwillingness of mind to acknowledge one's sin and from it turn away.

- (a) Such a disposition effectively closes the door of heaven in one's fact.
- (b) Cf. Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-31; Eph.4:18-20; 1Tim.4:1,2.
- (4) But it seems to me that perhaps John specifically has in mind the lying, deceiving antichrists of 1Jno.1:6; 2:18-23; 4:1-5; 2Jno.7, who, no doubt, furnish us a specific example of one sinning "a sin unto death."
 - (a) Cf. Jude 4,12,13,16-19; 2Pet.2:1-3; Col.2:8-10.
- d. An additional explanation and warning pertaining to sin and intercessory prayer, V.17.
 - (1) "All unrighteousness is sin," V.17a.
 - (a) "Unrighteousness," signifies that which is contrary to what is right. It's a general term indicative of the absence of righteousness for whatever cause. Cf. Rom.6:20; Psa.119:172.
 - (b) There is not a single act of unrighteousness that is not sin; all of them are; each and every one of them.
 - (c) Too often, too many people think too lightly of some unrighteous acts. They rank some as not so bad; some more acceptable to God; some not sin at all (1Jno.1:6).
 - (d) No matter what men may think or how they may tend to rank sin; there is no such thing as sin that is not sin with God, or sin that will not condemn; unrighteousness is unrighteousness; and sin is sin; and sin condemns. Cf. Isa.59:1,2; Rom.1:18; 6:13; 14:23; Jas.4:17; 2Pet.2:13; 1Jno.3:4.
 - (e) Whether in 1Jno.3:4 or 1Jno.5:17, John is striking a blow against the teachings and practice of the Gnostics, that what would be sin in ordinary cases is not sin for enlightened, initiated people such as they claimed to be.
 - (2) "And there is a sin not unto death," or rather, "sin not unto death" ASV), V.17b.
 - (a) Restating this perhaps suggests there is abundant scope for intercessory prayer, that there are plenty of cases demanding it, and that, with the exception mentioned in v.16, an act of unrighteousness is an occasion for intercession. Cf. Jas.5:16; Gal.6:1, etc.

- (b) See Lk.22:32 where Jesus prayed interceding for Peter.
- (3) V.17 combines a warning against unrighteousness on the part of each one of us, along with an intimation of the need for intercessory prayer on behalf of erring brethren guilty of sin not unto death.

C. THREE FINAL FUNDAMENTAL CERTAINTIES CONCERNING THE PRESENT LIFE AND ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE TRUE BELIEVER, Vv.18-21.

1. The first of the three concerns knowledge of the fact that the believer who stands begotten of God does not habitually practice sin; that he keeps himself from the wicked one, who is the devil, V.18.
 - a. Cf. 1Jno.2:29; 3:3,6-10; 5:4,5.
 - b. It is not that he cannot sin; but that he does not make a practice of sinning.
 - c. And when and if he does sin, he makes no excuse for it, but confesses it. Cf. 1Jno.1:8-10.
 - d. He resists the devil. Cf. Jas.4:7; 1Pet.5:8,9; Jas.1:12; 1Cor.10:13; 9:27.
 - e. There seems to have been something in Gnosticism that encouraged a loose attitude toward sin and unrighteousness.
 - (1) Perhaps it was their claim to some kind of initiation into the mysteries of the universe that gave them an exclusive insight into its deep and hidden secrets and placed them above such petty things as sins of the flesh.
 - (2) But John declares that the Christian, the true follower of Jesus Christ, is the true initiate, the one who has received the Spirit-inspired, Spirit-revealed truth of God, and is the one, and the only one, who is of the spiritual world.
 - (3) And that true wisdom is that which is of God in Jesus Christ his Son.
 - f. "We know" of V.18:
 - (1) Is expressive of the confident certitude begotten of faith.
 - (2) It likewise begins both Vv.19,20.
 - (3) At the same time, it is obviously designed as against the boasted and spurious "knowledge" of the Gnostics.
2. The second of the three concerns knowledge of the fact that the believers are the ones who are of or from God (his offspring in the

spiritual sense, 1Jno.3:10; 4:6); and that the whole world, all others, are declared to be in wickedness, V.19.

- a. That is, the whole world lieth in wickedness and in the evil one.
 - b. “World” here is not the material universe in which all men, both believers and unbelievers, live, but those who have abandoned themselves to a life of unbelief and sin; those who are in the “evil one”; the devil; the prince of this world, the ruler of its citizens. Cf. Eph.2:2; 1Pet.5:8; Eph.6:11; Col.1:13.
 - c. Here we have an obvious and telling contrast between believers and unbelievers; between the saved and the unsaved; between those of God and those of the devil.
3. The third of the three concerns the fact that “we know” the following things:
- a. “That the Son of God is come”; this is the very thing the antichrists deny and refuse to repent of!
 - b. “And hath given us an understanding” (signifies a process of mind leading to a conclusion; thus denotes the faculty of forming a conclusion from certain facts).
 - c. “That we may know him that is true” (the believer is not groping in the dark).
 - d. “And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. (again, the antichrists denied it)
 - e. “This is the true God, and eternal life.” (this, in spite of Gnostic denial)
 - (1) God is not an abstract conception existing in the minds of people who hold certain doctrines; he is a Personal reality, revealed in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, and experienced personally by those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - (2) And this is how men have hope of eternal life; that is, to know – to have an understanding of the true God, and to be in his Son, Jesus Christ – is to have the assurance of eternal life, 1Jno.2:24,25; Jno.17:3; Tit.1:2.

III. CONCLUSION

1. In V.21, in his very final, concluding thought or admonition, his readers, of which we are one, are urged to be evermore vigilant against any effort that would involve them in the awful evil of idolatry.

2. Let your hearts ever rest in the true, the genuine God of the Bible.
3. Remember: A person, any person, can make an idol out of anything, whether a person or thing or an ambition or ideal, including a false concept of God, such as the Gnostics had done
4. For an idol is anything that takes first place in a person's life; anything that person puts before God; anything that consumes man's focus and concentration; anything that consumes his energy and efforts more than God! Cf. Lk.12:15; Eph.5:3,5; Col.3:5; Rom.1:22,23.
5. We have in these last verses a final emphasis laid on the fundamental principles and truths on which the entire Epistle rests:
 - a. That we through the mission of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have fellowship with God, the Father.
 - b. That this fellowship gives us great assurance or confidence of the hope of eternal life.
 - c. That our prayers of faith can and will be answered by virtue of being Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - d. That those who stand begotten of God do not habitually practice sin.
 - e. That by the grace of God we can keep ourselves from that wicked one, even though he is ever present, and ever seeking opportunity to tempt us to yield to his temptation to sin.
6. In the very last verse – V.21 – we have:
 - a. The last of the striking contrasts of which the Epistle is so full. We have had light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, God and the world, Christ and antichrists, life and death, doing (practicing) righteousness and doing (practicing) sin, the children of God and the children of the devil, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, the believer keeping himself untouched by the evil one, and the world lying in the evil one.
 - b. And now at the close we have what in that age was the ever-present and pressing contrast between the true God and idols.

7. In conclusion we offer one last thought – a summary of why the Epistle was written to believers:
 - a. That they may know they have eternal life, V.13.
 - b. That they may believe on the name of the Son of God, V.13.
 - c. That they may have confidence that he hears and answers their prayers prayed according to his will, Vv.14,15.
 - d. That they may know for whom they may offer intercessory prayer with confidence, Vv.16,17.
 - e. That they may know for whom they may not offer intercessory prayer with confidence, V.16.
 - f. That the wicked one toucheth him not who stands begotten of God and keeps himself form sin, V.18.
 - g. That they are of God and not like the whole world that lieth in wickedness, V.19.
 - h. That they may know the Son of God is come making it possible for us to know him and are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, V.20; Cf. Jno.17:3; 1Jno.2:24,25.
 - i. That they may know to keep themselves from idols, which includes anything that supplants the place of deity in our hearts whether pleasure, property or person, V.21.
8. Thus the Epistle begins and ends on the emphasis of the eternal, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, and with how and where and who can have the eternal life he makes possible, 1Jno.1:1-3; 5:20.