

# That You May Know

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Date: 30 June 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] As you're getting settled, if you have a Bible, please turn with me to 1 John 5. As was mentioned earlier, Matthew is away this week, and we have finished up Judges, and today we're going to finish up 1 John as well, which I'm very excited for.

This is God's Word. 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.

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 request 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.

[ 1 : 19 ] But he who is 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 know Him who is true.

We are in Him who is true in His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God in eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we are thankful for Your Word. For it is by Your Word that we have life. And it's by Your Word that You correct Your children. And it's by Your Word that You comfort us. We pray that You would do those things this morning. In Christ's name, amen. Early in the fall of 1797, the American Daily Advertiser published an article.

Really, I don't even know if it was an article. It's 32 pages long. And in that article, President George Washington wrote a letter to the American people.

[ 2 : 26 ] It really wasn't him, though. It was a letter that was revised by Alexander Hamilton that was written by James Madison with a little tweaks by the president. And in that letter, if you know history, you kind of know the contents of this letter.

And even if you don't know history, if you know pop culture and you've seen or heard the musical Hamilton, this is detailed in that work. But what George Washington wanted to convey to the American people is a couple things.

He wanted to summarize and give a farewell speech to all of his supporters and address some of his detractors. But he also wanted to chart a vision for the future and to leave the American people with a vision of what America could become because it was still kind of in question.

And when he did that, all these people were clamoring for a third term. He kind of put all that to rest and said, this is what's going to happen. It was so moving, or maybe kind of even so long, it was 32 pages, that no president after him had a farewell letter or speech until 40 years later with Andrew Jackson.

But in that, something's come about. We have this staple of the American presidency where there's a farewell speech, and some have used it to vindicate their actions. Some have used it to introduce new policies.

[ 3 : 51 ] Some have used it in much more moving ways, like Washington so many years before, to chart a vision for the future, to conclude their time together.

In this final section of 1 John, we have a farewell speech. It's pretty moving as well. It's not like when we just ended Judges last week, right?

You're kind of left with this, wah, wah, wah. And now what do we do, right? What are we waiting? We're still waiting.

Israel's a mess. Israel's sad and spiraling out of control. But here, we have this focused, like almost football coach-like speech.

It's an exhortation for Christians of any time, of any age, with this important message, this message that John has repeated over and over and over again for five chapters, that we can be assured because of what Christ has done.

[ 4 : 53 ] And if we look at our own lives, we can see God is at work. And we can be confident because it's not secured by us, even though we look at our lives and see all this work.

But it's secured by Christ. So this morning, we're going to look very practically at four different arenas in which we can see that God is at work, that we know God is at work.

The first one is prayer. The second one is holiness. The third one is in real spiritual battle. And the final one is an understanding.

So prayer, holiness, spiritual battle, and understanding. These four ideas are the real-life application of what we read in verse 13.

Just to remind you, 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. That's that summary statement of all of 1 John, that you may know that you have eternal life.

[ 5 : 55 ] And if you've been worshiping at Shine Mountain for any amount of time, you've known that we're marching through books. We march through judges. I've been marching through 1 John. It's taken me a stinking long time.

And thankfully, we've spread that out a little bit, because there's one message in 1 John, that you know that you have eternal life. That is the one-sentence thesis statement, kids, for on summer break of 1 John, that we know we have eternal life.

But really, it's this idea of certainty. How do we know? How do we know that we have eternal life? Can I really be sure that the gospel is true?

Can I really be sure that John is talking on behalf of God? How do I know John's right? How do I know that I'm in the faith? Those are questions that we all kind of still struggle with.

If you think about it, at different points in our lives, we've probably had these questions, and that's okay. How do I know that the gospel is true? How do I know that I'm a Christian, and I'm supposed to be righteous, and supposed to be without sin, but if I look at my own life, I still see sin?

[ 7 : 07 ] What do I do with that? Am I really a Christian, because I think these things, and do these things? Or I heard my neighbor say this, but I know that the Bible says this.

What do I do with those things? Maybe it's not my neighbor. Maybe it's a friend. Maybe it's somebody in my class, or maybe somebody I heard on the radio, or even a YouTube commentator said this.

But it doesn't square with what I see in Scripture. So what do I do with that? Who's right? Is it the guy on the internet, or is it God's word? What do I do?

John is reminding us that we have to take this very clear, hard look at our theology. What we think about God. That seems really big, but all it is, is what does God's word say, and what do I think, and what do I believe?

And then our ethics. How do I live in light of that theology? And kind of a subcategory of that is how do I love those around me? Our relationships.

[ 8 : 14 ] So what do I think about God? How do I live? And how do I love? You see, assurance is for the Christian. For the one who has faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

And this farewell speech is not narrowly for the Christian, but it's focused on someone that has faith in Christ. There's implications for the skeptic. It raises questions even if implicitly.

But they're not meant to be gotcha questions for the Christians. Like, ha, you're not as holy as you think, so therefore you must not be a Christian. Or, yeah, you don't really love in this area.

You must not truly be a Christian. John's not doing that. He's saying, look at your life, look at the sum of your life from you becoming a Christian until now, and do you see growth?

If at any amount. And we know that God is at work because you would be way worse off. You would be back where you were.

[ 9 : 19 ] And that's how we know that God is at work. And that's how we have confidence. So that first category is prayer. This is the most lengthy one, to be honest.

And it's the most confusing of the bunch if you've been following along as I've been reading. It starts in verse 14 where he says, and this is the confidence that we have towards him that if we ask

anything according to his will, he hears us.

That first component is confidence. Confidence before the throne of God, big and scary, right?

Confidence because of the person and work of Jesus.

Not confidence in Andy, but confident because of what Christ has done. And that's applied to me.

Confidence because of his merits.

Not me, not you, not the work of the elders, not the work of our church, but confident because of Jesus. And that extends to prayer.

[10:23] Prayer and asking for things, as John says, according to his will. Whenever I see that, I'm like, gosh, what does that mean? Makes me a little nervous.

Am I asking for things that are outside his will? John's saying, no, we're just asking for things in submission to his will. Not just our own, not my own desires, although that plays a role.

It's kind of like what we just prayed for in the Lord's prayer. Your will be done. It's not a robotic thing. It's not a very narrow thing.

It's pleading with God for things to be done according to his will, for even his kingdom to come, for his reign even now to be present. Not things that are just willy-nilly.

But as we have confidence in approaching the throne and praying for things that we know are according to his will, we have to come with the expectation that we are heard. In prayer, there's a confidence, but there's an anticipation that we are heard.

[11:32] Look at verse 15 with me. And if we know that he hears us whenever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of him. This is a result of the confidence that we have in eternal life because it rests on Jesus and not me, but it's also flowing out into our asking as we go before the throne.

It's not asking these careful and very narrow prayers because I'm scared that I don't want to ask these things that are outside of his will. No, very practically, we're asking for big things.

We're asking for God to move. We're asking for God to do things that only he can do or through other means. But God is not hemmed in by the rules of this world.

No, he's gonna do great and amazing things. And as we approach his throne, we should be expectant. We should anticipate that he is. We gotta remember that this is the way in which we commune with God.

That's the really fancy way of saying, I have a relationship with God. And one of those ways in which we engage with him is through prayer. Because that veil has been torn and we now enter in to the holy of holies.

[12:52] As the writer of Hebrews reminds us of this, we have boldness to enter into the holiest of places because of Christ, because of Jesus.

What a great privilege that is in prayer. And as we reorient ourselves in prayer and it goes from this duty or this thing that I kind of stink at and I avoid it because I'm not really good at it or I don't make time for it, we have to have this grander vision of who God is and our ability to have relationship with him and realizing this is one of the avenues in which that happens.

What a great privilege that is. If we have a bigger vision of God, then prayer becomes a delight and not a duty. But then we have this problem of this real life example in 1 John.

Look at verses 16 and 17. 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 a sin that does not lead to death.

[14:09] What in the world is he talking about? This is pretty stinging tough, I'm not gonna lie, okay? There's a lot of ink shed over different views of this, but if you start breaking it down, it kind of makes sense.

John's drawing the distinction between the sin of a believer and the sin of an unbeliever. Everybody has sin, we know that, right? But the sin of the Christian is different, right?

Kind of yes, kind of no, all right? Yes, it still warrants death. Yes, it still needs to be punished. It needs to be atoned for, but it is atoned for by Christ.

But the sin of the unbeliever is not. John reminds us of this in the first chapter of this letter. He says, The blood of Jesus cleanses all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[15:09] The Christian is admitting he has sin, and that he has a problem, and he can't do anything about it. That sin is forgiven. That sin is atoned for. But what about this guy right here?

This gal? There's sin that leads to death because this sin is not paid for, and it leads to the death of this unbeliever. Remember the context here.

This letter is written to a group of people, to a church, where there's different ideas being thrown around. There's deviation away from the true gospel and from what John has taught them.

What they know. And there's people that have walked away that are saying, Jesus is not fully God. He's not fully man. And John's reminding them that this deviation, this wayward stepping, is sin.

And they're presenting a false gospel. So this person that's an unbeliever that has once known, that says they've confessed these things, now thinks something very different.

[16:12] And John is saying, don't pray for this person to be saved in spite of the gospel. He's not saying for us, for our unbelieving parent or spouse or child, save them, I don't care what your word says.

He's saying, save them, draw them back to yourself, draw them back to the truth, so that they might be forgiven. Does that make sense? Those are two different ideas and two different ways in which sin is to be prayed for.

We're to walk away from this with this bigger vision of prayer. There's confidence, there's expectation, there's anticipation that he's gonna do this if we pray according to his will.

But oftentimes, as a Christian, your prayer life looks a lot like Little League baseball players.

There's two kind of hitters in Little League baseball. For those that, it's been a minute, I've spent a lot of time watching Little League baseball recently.

And there is one hitter that comes into the box, the batter's box, and he's practiced, he's trained, he knows how to hit. He's just waiting for his pitch, which in Little League baseball, you can be waiting a while, just to be honest.

[17:32] There's no pitch timer, and a lot of those pitches are balls. But then there's one type of hitter that comes into the box, and I'm not sure he actually wants to hit the ball.

He's a little nervous, and he's just waiting everybody out. As he waits everybody out, he's hoping, he's wishing that there's four balls and he can go to first base.

And so he doesn't even have to think about hitting. I think oftentimes we approach prayer like that second Little League hitter. We're not confident.

We don't really believe it does anything. We just know that we kind of have to do this, or I feel guilty when I don't do this. We don't approach God's throne with the confidence of Christ.

We don't approach God's throne with anticipation that I am going to hit the ball. That it's going to do anything. Christian, we are called to pray.

[18:32] We are called to do so because of that confidence of our relationship with Jesus. We're to do it with anticipation and do it according to his will. But maybe you need help.

I need help. Probably most of us need help. But we need a bigger vision of God and what prayer does and communing with him and that's our first step.

Maybe we need practical help. There's well-trodden paths of prayer warriors of years gone by and they're printed and that's great. Use them. Jump start how you pray.

There's also the Psalter, the Psalms, right? where they have every emotion and all those emotions that are poured out before the throne are enshrined in Scripture and they're a lot more raw than we think so.

So that whole praying according to God's will, remember, David is just pouring out his heart most often even when he sins. That's our model of prayer.

[19:36] We need to get to that point. The second application of Christian assurance is holiness. Look at verse 18 with me. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning but he who is born of God protects him and the evil one does not touch him.

This is not a new idea. Again, John is just recirculating all these ideas and he's giving us them in his farewell speech. This idea, he unpacks and turns it around like a dime and looking at every aspect in chapter 3.

He writes something like this, whoever practices righteousness is righteous as Jesus is righteous.

Then he says further, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him. In fact, he can't keep sinning because he's been born of God. We see this in 18, this idea again that

there's this call to holiness, this call to righteousness and what do we do with sin?

But it's tied to being born of God. Even further back in chapter 2, he says practicing righteousness is connected to those who have been born again very clearly and now here in chapter 5, John's reminding all of them that it's tied, that not sinning, that righteousness is tied to being born again and that active component of the original language is here, right?

[ 21 : 06 ] It's not, hey, I'm going to be an unbridled, unchallenged, unchecked, keep on sinning. It's not that sense. But yet we know Christian sin.

Yet I know I sin. But there's that change in relationship that we saw in prayer. There's a desire for holiness. Yes, it might wax and wane over the years or the minutes.

There's not the same love of sin that there's always been because they've been born again. If you remember, the Christian is supposed to strive after holiness and fleeing from sin because they've been born again and they're being kept from the evil one.

And this shift in your own heart is cause for assurance. But again, it's tied to what Nicodemus and Jesus talked about in the Gospel of John. Nicodemus comes up to him, he's supposed to be a wise guy and says, how can this be?

And Jesus says, you can't even see the kingdom unless you've been born again. And now here in 1 John, John is saying, you can't even be righteous unless you've been born again.

[ 22 : 18 ] But it's not like we're changed into children, we're new babies and then we're turned out to pasture with no oversight. Kids with no parents on the playground and mayhem ensues.

No, God preserves them. He keeps them. You might be thinking, yes, that's all well and good.

Yes, a Christian is called to pray and see some kind of fruit of holiness and God's calling each of us out of our sin and to himself. But what if I don't believe that?

What if I don't see those things in my life? Well, God is very clearly calling each of us to deal with the message of the gospel. We're called away from sin because it warrants death as we confessed. Away from sin and to him and put our faith and trust in Jesus. and unless we've done that, we're not going to see this growth in holiness. We're not going to see any shred of desire to pray.

[ 23 : 23 ] Maybe we will for a time, but it won't endure for a season. And so if you have none of these markers, you shouldn't be assured. And you have to come back to that simple message of the gospel.

Have you done that? That's kind of the implicit thing that John is asking and that we have to deal with this morning. But year over year, do we realize that we're growing in righteousness?

Can we look back over five years and see how we're not struggling in the same way or maybe even with the same sin? Do we see God at work?

Are we pursuing lives in which that happens or are we so busy and so myopic that we don't even have time for something like robust community where other people are speaking into our life and saying, hey, I have seen this or hey, what's up with that, dude?

There's also a real spiritual battle. Assurance reminds us of this fact. It's an individual battle, but it's in a campaign of much larger warfare.

[ 24 : 38 ] Look at verse 19 with me. We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. It's less direct in application.

It's almost just like, hey, this is a billboard reminder. This is what you're up against. Just so you don't forget, John is saying, there's a real battle going on between real spiritual forces.

It's not just a nicety to say, I've accepted Jesus into my heart. He's accepted, we've accepted that we're to go to war. And this world lies in the power of the evil one.

He preserves them and their safety in this cosmic battle. This is really the point at which Christians start to sound crazy. All right? Because a nice, modern conversation, we can talk about the good the church has done, you know, helping homeless people, things like that.

But when it comes to this stuff, it's like, we're in the modern age, right? We don't talk about this in nice, among nice, polite, empirical people.

[ 25 : 45 ] evil. But God's word reminds us that that is a deception in and of itself, that we are engaged day by day in a real battle.

And if we can't see it on display, we kid ourselves. We must be reminded from God's word that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

But we shouldn't be scared because we have the power inside of us. We have the Holy Spirit and we are kept by him. But it's real and we should be ready.

In the army, there's this list of rules sometimes when you learn as a young lieutenant and one of them is this. Have your musket clean as a whistle, hatchet scoured, 60 rounds powder and ball, and be ready to march at a minute's warning.

There's a famous list of these standing rules from a British American officer that have endured the test of time. Yes, we don't fight with muskets or hatchets anymore.

[ 26 : 54 ] But the principle is to be ready no matter what you think is going on. No matter if we think that this is a spiritual battle or not.

It is and we need to be ready. These principles that still influence the modern military because they transcend time, because it's still happening.

This spiritual battle is not a thing of John's time or a thing of the Old Testament. This is still happening. This is still a thing. So we need to be ready.

And if a soldier is ready to fight, we would be wise to prepare ourselves for battle. We can't let our guard down because the battle is in our own home. It's for the hearts of our children.

It's in schools. It's in the cubicle at work. It's in HR policies. It's everywhere. The fourth and final application of assurance is understanding.

[ 27 : 58 ] I don't mean understanding and live in an understanding way, but it means something like this. Look at verses 20 and following. 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. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

When we realize the truth of the gospel message, as good as it is, it seems eminently logical, people, right? But people refuse to believe it because the Spirit is the one that comes and invades our hearts and opens our eyes.

The Spirit is the one that gives understanding of who Jesus was, the fact that He was fully God and fully man, that He paid for sin.

Logically, that seems so good, but why do so few people believe it? Because it's the Spirit that works in people to open their eyes.

[ 29 : 05 ] This last statement is the essence of this whole letter. He's referring back to Jesus Christ, His Son. He is true God. John is leaving this farewell speech, he's leaving his readers with this theological truth.

He's pointing it back from application all the way back to this bigger vision of what Jesus has done and who He is. He's saying, look to Christ who's the true God.

And so all these practical outworkings of how we should pray, how we should pursue holiness, how we are righteous, this real spiritual battle, the fact that God lifts the veil from our faces so that we can see Him as He truly is, that's all because of God's work.

because Christ is at the center of it all, that we may know and be certain. That's what John is reminding us even today.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we're thankful for this keen reminder of certainty in life that's drawn from your word, that's drawn from who you are and what you have done.

[ 30 : 20 ] We pray that you would remind us even today of how this plays out in our daily lives that there is real battle for the hearts and minds of men.

And may we fight with the weapons in which you have given us. Prayer, your spirit, and we ask these things in Christ's name.

Amen.