

Assurance: Security in the Gospel

Study Passages

1 John 5:9-13

“We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Introduction

If every Christian were completely honest, they would admit doubts and deep soul questions about their faith throughout their journey. This is normal. The Psalms are filled with questions and doubts, wondering where God is or if God has abandoned his people. Some of the greatest men and women of faith who suffered great trials and persecution had worries and doubts throughout their experiences—but ultimately continued to seek God and were surrendered to God.

However, when our worries and doubts are kept to ourselves it can lead to tension and frustration. But our God is able to handle our deep questions. He's able to handle our doubts. He wants to hear our confusion. And he wants to help bring clarity.

Is it really possible to *know* (not just wish) that we are now and forever will be in a relationship with God? Is it really possible to *know* that we will survive the final examination and be approved by God? The Bible says that believers can know—and that God *wants* us to know—that we are saved and therefore safe. The basis of our assurance is the certainty of God's promise to give us eternal life when we place our faith in Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, and to know that this eternal life begins *now*. "[T]his is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). But how do we *know* that we know God? John's letter gives us this assurance.

Discussion Questions

Starting the Discussion

1. On a scale of 1-100, how sure are you that you are in a relationship with God and will enter into his presence when you die? Why? What keeps you from believing 100%?

Exploring the Text

Read 1 John 5:9-13

2. Verse 10 says that we must believe in Jesus as the "Son of God." What is the difference between believing Jesus merely existed versus believing he is the "Son of God"?

3. How would you describe eternal life to someone else?

4. What do these verses say is true about eternal life? When does eternal life begin?

5. It's clear that if you have the Son, you have the life. But how can you be sure you have the Son?

6. When John says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life," he is referring to his entire letter. Scan back through it and underline these passages, all of which use the phrase, "we know."

What are the three "we know" statements in these passages?

a. 1 John 2:3; 2:5; 3:10

b. 1 John 3:10; 3:14; 3:18

c. 1 John 3:24; 4:13

7. Why would *obedience* be proof of a secure and genuine relationship with God through Christ? How have you seen this be true in your life?

8. Why would *our love* be proof of a secure and genuine relationship with God through Christ? How have you seen this be true in your life?

9. Why would *the Spirit* be proof of a secure and genuine relationship with God through Christ? How have you seen this be true in your life?

Implications and Applications

10. If you have not placed your faith in Christ, what are the major obstacles for you? If you have, describe what that was like.

11. What are the key things we should believe of Jesus? How would you describe the gospel message?

12. How should being sure of our salvation affect the way we live? Do you live like that?

Considerations and Synopsis

In this brief passage, John summarizes the main purpose of 1 John. He has written to a group of believers who are uncertain of the reality of their salvation. John is writing so they will know that they have eternal life. In this short letter, he says at least *nine times* that we can know that we are safe in Christ. It is a book about certainty and security.

Says Who? (vv. 9 and 10)

In verse 9, John is talking not about one of his own ideas, but about a declaration made by God. He calls it the “testimony of God”—a solemn and truthful declaration of fact. In verses 11 and 12, he articulates that testimony.

God’s Testimony (vv. 11 and 12)

John says that God has made two critical declarations about eternal life: that it is a gift from God, and that this gift is found in Jesus. Based on that statement, he observes that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who have the Son and, therefore, have life; and those who don’t have the Son, and therefore, don’t have life.

Even though we may be uncertain of our standing before God, John wants believers to know that we can be sure we are safe. He gives us the basis for our confidence. It is not some arrogant

presumption that we deserve heaven, but rather the trustworthiness of God's promise. God has said that heaven is an unearned gift, given to those who believe in Jesus.

Who Has the Son? (v. 13)

It is clear that if we have the Son, (if we've placed our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins), we have eternal life. We can know this not only because of John's words here, but also because of Jesus's other promises and the consistent message of the New Testament. (See, for instance, John 3:16; John 5:24; and Revelations 3:20.) Faith in Christ is all we need.

But there's still a problem. The theological treatise that "he who has the Son has life" is true but it may not be all the help a person needs. For that reason, John's entire letter is written to answer the follow up question: "Do I have the Son?"

That's a great question to ask. If you are taking part in this study, you are probably part of a Christian community. I hope you find this community to be encouraging, challenging, and uplifting. But have you ever wondered whether you are *really* in Christ, or if you are just going through the motions while there is cultural support (or even pressure) to do so? John is writing not only to assure us that life is found in Jesus, but also to give us the *evidence to look for* so that we can know our faith is genuine. When we exercise real faith, Jesus will also produce other changes in our life that give evidence that we have the Son.

Look at verse 13 with this understanding: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." This is the summary statement for the entire book. "These things" refers not only to the immediately preceding verses, but also to John's entire letter. If you were to scan

through the text and look for the words “we know,” you would find multiple places where John tells us what the signs are that indicate someone has the Son.

Three Categories of Signs

We know because of our obedience

2:3 We know that we have come to know him, if we obey his commands.

2:5 But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to walk in him must walk as Jesus did.

3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

We know because of our love

3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

3:18 Dear Children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us.

We know because the Spirit lives in us

3:24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

4:13 We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us of his Spirit.

These three categories of evidence build in our lives after we place our faith in Christ. The gift of eternal life is ours solely because of Jesus's death on the cross and our faith in him. However, as we walk with him and increase in faith, we will naturally grow in obedience and love for others. These serve to strengthen our assurance that Jesus has come into our lives to forgive our sins and make us the kind of people he wants us to be. They are the *evidence* of our salvation, not a *condition* of it.

You need the solid theological answer that "he who has the Son has life." Praise God that eternal life is a gift. But, week after week, year after year, you will also find security from the mounting evidence that you are growing in obedience and love as you yield more and more of your life to the Spirit. If you see this evidence in your life, rejoice. If you don't, don't be discouraged. Yield and surrender anew to him as the Spirit takes greater and greater claim in your heart, producing the love and obedience that are the marks of true