

John finishes out this epistle by specifying 5 certainties that we can know and be confident in as Christians. We can know we have eternal life, that God answers prayer, that we have victory over Satan, that we belong to God and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, through Whom we have eternal life.

We pick up this lesson in the middle of John's discussion that the only way to have eternal life is through Jesus Christ, God's Son. The previous verse (v. 12) states that to have the Son is to have life and to not have the Son of God is to not have life. John now states in v. 13 his purpose in writing this epistle.

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<sup>13</sup> These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

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**“These things have I written”** - That is, all the things he has written in this epistle. Throughout this epistle he has been describing the evidences and characteristics that distinguish those who know God and those who don't. He has now brought the discussion to a head in the previous verse, stating as simply as possible the basis of having eternal life (having the Son of God).

**“unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God”** - Notice to whom John has written this epistle. He has not written to those seeking to obtain salvation through keeping the law or some other human effort. He has written to those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God for salvation.

**“that ye may know that ye have eternal life”** - The first certainty that John gives us is knowing that we have eternal life through Jesus Christ. John's purpose in writing is not to cause believers to doubt their salvation but to give them confidence in it. He wants them to be secure in the knowledge that they do indeed have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

**“and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”** - The word “believe” is in the present tense, meaning a continuing action (“that ye may continue to believe” or “always believe”). John wants his readers to have their faith and trust continually in Jesus Christ as their source of eternal life.

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<sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

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**“And this is the confidence that we have in him”** - The second certainty that we have is that God answers prayers. John says that we can have confidence in God and that He will answer the prayers of His children.

**“that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”** - Our prayers are not background noise to God, but He listens to us when we pray. However, contrary to the “name-it-and-claim-it” teaching, we cannot just as for anything we want and expect God to give it to us like some heavenly genie. He does not serve us; we serve Him and He will not give us anything that is contrary to His will. Our sinful tendency is to ask for things to satisfy our fleshly desires (**James 4:2b-3** “...yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”).

**“And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him”** - God wants to answer our prayers, but He will only answer those that are in our best interests, according to His will.

**Jer. 29:12-13** “<sup>12</sup> Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. <sup>13</sup> And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

**Matt. 7:7-11** “<sup>7</sup> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: <sup>8</sup> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

**John 15:7** “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

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<sup>16</sup> If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. <sup>17</sup> All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

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John gives us an example of asking for things according to God's will: praying for others who have sinned.

**“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death”** - The Greek indicates that a “sin unto death” is a sin which leads to or ends in death. John seems to be painting a hypothetical scenario where we see a brother in Christ committing a sin which will lead to their death. Theologians have debated for centuries what type of death John is referring to here – spiritual or physical. Since someone who is born again cannot die spiritually, John must be speaking of a physical death. Likely John is speaking of intentional sins committed by a rebellious and unrepentant Christian or that has shown great disrespect to the things of God. Once they have crossed the line that God has set for them He decides to end their life rather than allow them to continue to bring reproach to the name of Christ. There are Biblical examples, such as Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:1-11), the man sleeping with his father's wife in 1 Cor. 5:5 (“*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*”), and those who were taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:30 “*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*”).

**“he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death”** - John encourages us to pray for those who have not committed sins worthy of death, for God will answer our prayer and show them the mercy of giving them further time to repent.

**“There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”** - It is pointless to pray for those who have crossed the line into sinful territory from which there is no return. These people have written their own death warrant and have shortened their own lives because they have placed themselves under the judgment of God. We see an example of this in Jeremiah 7 where Judah had rebelled against God to the point that they would no longer repent. The Lord pronounced judgment on them and instructed Jeremiah not to bother praying for them because it would be pointless to do so. **Jer. 7:16** *“Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.”* Judah’s sins led to their deaths at the hands of Babylon. Sometimes God must punish sin through death in order to be an example to other Christians. Such was the result of the incident with Ananias and Sapphira. **Acts 5:11** *“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”*

**“All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death”** - In case we were to start thinking that only the sins that lead to death are significant, John reminds us that all unrighteousness is sin, whether it leads to death or not. There are some sins that lead to death and some that do not. Only God knows the distinction and it may be different for some people. Only God knows their heart and when they have gone so far that He must resort to such extreme measures of punishment.

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<sup>18</sup> We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

The third certainty John gives us is that God has given us victory over Satan and the world.

**“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not”** - The word “sinneth” is in the present tense, indicating a continual action. Although Christians do sin from time to time, it is not an ongoing characteristic to do so, unlike those in the world.

**“but he that is begotten of God keepeth [to guard or protect] himself”** - Commentators say that in the better manuscripts the word “himself” is actually “him.” “He that is begotten of God” refers to Christ and it is He Who protects those who are born again. We cannot protect ourselves for we are powerless against Satan in our own strength.

**“and that wicked one toucheth [to fasten one’s self to, adhere to, cling to] him not”** - The word for “toucheth” was sometimes used to refer to the sexual intimacy between a man and his wife. Satan can sometimes harass or oppress a child of God, but he can never be intimately involved in a Christian’s life because God protects us from Satan’s influence.

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<sup>19</sup> And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

The fourth certainty is knowing that we belong to God. John draws the contrast between the children of God and the world. The world lies helplessly under the influence and control of Satan but we are of God and have escaped Satan’s wicked control.

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<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

The fifth certainty that John gives us is knowing that Jesus Christ truly is the Son of God.

**“And we know that the Son of God is come”** - We can be certain that God has indeed sent His Son into the world, that that Son is Jesus Christ. **Matt. 3:17** (God speaking from heaven at Jesus’ baptism) *“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* **Luke 9:35** (God speaking at the transfiguration) *“And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”* **John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

**“and hath given us an understanding, that we may know [understand; perceive] him that is true”** - Not only has God sent His Son, but He has given us the ability to recognize and know His Son as the source of eternal life.

**“we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ”** - The result of God giving us the ability to know Christ is that now we are “in Him.” Salvation is the result of God giving us the ability to know Christ.

**“This is the true God, and eternal life”** - Christ is truly God and the source of eternal life. Christ is the conduit through which we gain eternal life. John said as much back in verse 11 of this chapter: *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”*

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<sup>21</sup> Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

John’s closing words are to warn us to protect ourselves or to be on guard against the dangers of letting worldly things draw our hearts away from God. Anything that steals our affections from God are idols and should be avoided. The same thing happened to Solomon: **1 Kings 11:4** *“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”* If Christ does not reign supreme in our heart and affections then we have an idol.