

We have come to our last message from John the Beloved. He has assured the believers of their standing in Jesus by telling them the telltale signs of a true Christian. He has refuted the false teachings of Cerinthus by reminding us of what he personally witnessed as well as the testimony of God. He challenges us to live daily through Jesus. (1John 4:9)

¹³ *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.* Assurance of salvation has been a major theme throughout this letter. As participants of their fellowship left to follow the false teachers, the believers must have wondered if they may have missed something. Did they have eternal life or were one of these new teachings and secret wisdom the way to something more? John emphatically tells them that he has written so that as believers in the name of the Son of God they could be confident that they possess eternal life.

Listen to some of those assurances in this letter. ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.* 1 John 1:7 (NIV) ³ *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.* 1 John 2:3 (NIV) 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:* ⁶ *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.* 1 John 2:5-6 (NIV) ¹⁰ *Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.* 1 John 2:10 (NIV)

²⁰ *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.* 1 John 2:20 (NIV) ¹ *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* 1 John 3:1a (NIV) ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.* 1 John 3:14a (NIV) 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.* 1 John 3:24 (NIV) ⁴ *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 John 4:4 (NIV) ⁷ *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* 1 John 4:7 (NIV)

¹³ *We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* ¹⁴ *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.* ¹⁵ *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.* 1 John 4:13-15 (NIV) ¹ *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,* 1 John 5:1a (NIV) ¹² *He who has the Son has life;* 1 John 5:12a (NIV)

We could sum up these expressions of assurance like this: You know you have eternal life because you believe in the One who is life, Jesus. You know because your moral life has been transformed. You obey God instead of your lusts. You know because you love one another, which is the image of the Father in the child. By

Commented [notes1]: 1 John 4:9 (ESV)
9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

these doctrinal, moral, and societal reasons, you can rest assured that you are God's child. These are evidences of the new birth made possible by His Spirit in you. If you are a child of the One who is life, then you have eternal life. Look at verse 13 again.

¹³ *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.* If these things are true of you then you can rest assured. You don't need to wonder if you have missed some secret thing.

Our human nature is very cunning. (Jeremiah 17:9) I want you to understand that this thirst for something more is either one of two things. Either it is that healthy hunger and thirst after God, a healthy desire to know Him better and glorify Him (Matthew 5:6), or it is an ungodly desire for superiority. The healthy thirst is characterized by humility and service. (Philippians 2:3) The ungodly thirst is characterized by arrogance and pride. It exalts itself over others. It can't listen. It has no hunger for the Word except to prove oneself superior.

The healthy thirst is exemplified by Rabbi Saul at his conversion (Acts 9:9), the Bereans who searched the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), Peter at his restoration (John 21:17), and most perfectly by Jesus in His constant looking to the Father and living to serve (Matthew 20:28). It is demonstrated in love for others.

The unhealthy thirst is exemplified by King Saul seeking the witch at Endor (1 Samuel 28:7), Simon the Sorcerer desiring to buy the Holy Spirit to do miracles (Acts 8:18), Cerinthus and the false teachers of 2 Peter 2 and those who had left the Asian churches to follow them. Diotrophes is a prime example. Of him it was written, He loves to be first. ³John 1:9 (contrast with Jesus teaching in Mark 9:35) That thirst is love for self exaltation rather than exalting God. Keep your heart in check by discerning between the two.

If you see the things that John pointed to as proofs of your relationship with God then you can expect to be heard when you pray. ¹⁴ *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* The confidence is that we are in Him, desiring His will, living for Him and not for self. That is why we desire His will. We pray His will and we can be confident that He hears us. The word for "confidence" in Greek means "freedom of speech, openness". In other words, when you have that assurance that you are right with God, you feel free to talk openly. There is nothing to hide. (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 66:18) We don't have to come cowering up before God wondering if we are going to get smacked down or yelled at. We are His children. He wants to hear our request.

There are times when I don't know what to pray and I ask for God's will to be done. (Matthew 6:10) Sometimes I ask for what I desire knowing it may not be God's perfect will, so I pray for God to do what is best in spite of my desire. (Luke 22:42) Even Jesus prayed, "Not my will but yours be done." He hears that! Sometimes I'm sure of God's will and I can confidently ask and expect God to answer in His perfect time. If the heart is right, the prayer will be answered for the heart is praying God's will. Prayer is often coming to God and having Him change our request rather than us getting Him to do what we would like. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Commented [notes2]: Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)
9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Commented [notes3]: Matthew 5:6 (ESV)
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Commented [notes4]: Philippians 2:3 (NIV)
3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Commented [notes5]: Acts 17:11 (NIV)
11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Commented [notes6]: John 21:17 (NIV)
17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

Commented [notes7]: Matthew 20:28 (NIV)
28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Commented [notes8]: 1 Samuel 28:7 (NIV)
7 Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said.

Commented [notes9]: Acts 8:18 (NIV)
18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money

Commented [notes10]: 3 John 1:9 (NIV)
9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrophes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.

Commented [notes11]: Mark 9:35 (NIV)
35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

Commented [notes12]: Ephesians 3:12 (NIV)
12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Commented [notes13]: Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)
16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Commented [notes14]: Psalms 66:18 (ESV)
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

Commented [notes15]: Matthew 6:10 (ESV)
10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Commented [notes16]: Luke 22:42 (ESV) ... [1]

Commented [notes17]: Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ... [2]

¹⁵ *And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.* God is all-powerful, all knowing, and always present, so what would hinder Him from doing what we have asked when it is according to His will? There is a real peace and joy that comes from confident trust of praying God's will into the earth. (Philippians 4:6-7) We pray for the lost souls, for the needy, for the sick, for nations and when you know in your heart you have prayed God's heart, it will happen. (Proverbs 15:29)

John is saying, "Look, you believe in the name of the Son of God, in Jesus, God's provision to make you a part of the family of God. Since that is true, you can pray God's will into the earth! You can know it will happen!" What an amazing opportunity to participate with God! I hope you are getting a greater vision for prayer. Maybe God is calling you to pray through the service once a month in our prayer room. Do you think God would answer a prayer for us to receive His word and for it to be proclaimed faithfully? Or perhaps you could start a prayer list of the things you know are God's will and set aside a time each day to pray for them to come to pass. We are going to have a round the clock prayer week soon.

John immediately follows this declaration of God hearing us with an example, perhaps one that is often on our heart. ¹⁶ *If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.* Here are examples of prayer that is God's will and prayer that isn't God's will. If you witness a brother caught up in sin, you should pray that God will give him or her life. Life is to be in Jesus. To be in Jesus is to be free from sin's enslaving power. (John 8:36)

An example of a prayer that would not be God's will is praying for those who have committed a sin that leads to death. There are any number of interpretations of this expression based on each one's theology. I want to set aside my theological bent and just try to understand what John is saying in the context of this letter. I know if I read this commentator I'll get spin number one. If I read that one I'll get spin number two. It is difficult for us to set aside our personal emphasis and in an unbiased way just let the passage speak for itself.

First, is John speaking of spiritual death or physical death? All sin by its very nature leads to physical death so I assume John is speaking of the second death, spiritual death, or judgment of the wicked. What sin leads us to that? Rejection of Jesus who is life. This passage began assuring those who believe in the Son of God that they have eternal life. Therefore, rejection of the Son would be the sin that leads to death, and that is what was just stated earlier in the chapter. (1John 5:12)

Now, does this mean that if someone leaves the fellowship and denies Jesus is the Son of God we are not to pray for them? The passage says, "about that". You can't pray a person will give up his willful rejection of Jesus in pursuit of his own lusts. You can ask God to warn them, to deal with them, to give them every opportunity to change their mind, but you can't pray to override their will. We should even be sure we are Spirit led in praying anything for them, for we may be asking for them

Commented [notes18]: Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)
6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes19]: Proverbs 15:29 (NIV)
29 The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Commented [notes20]: John 8:36 (NIV)
36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Commented [notes21]: 1 John 5:12 (NIV)
12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

to be put under greater condemnation for rejecting a greater witness of truth. How do we know what to pray? We know by the Word of God and the Spirit. (Romans 8:26-27)

18 *We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.* Here is another assurance of salvation. John has mentioned it several times already in this letter. The new birth frees us from sin's bondage. (John 8:34; Romans 6:16-22) The second "born of God" in the verse is Jesus, the only begotten Son. John repeats the language to emphasize that we are to be like Him. He is the One that keeps us. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13) This is another prayer that we know is in God's will. He won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to withstand. (1John 4:9) We know He wants us kept from sin and the harm of evil attacks.

Just as when Satan had to go to God to get permission for every increase in his attack on Job, and just as God set boundaries on what he was permitted to do, so Jesus keeps us. (Philippians 1:6; John 10:28) It doesn't mean hardship and temptation will not come our way. It doesn't mean we won't be tried, but rather that everything that is allowed will be to strengthen us and build our character. (Romans 5:1; 2Timothy 4:18)

This doesn't mean that we just kick back and do nothing. We are told that the devil flees when we resist him. (James 4:7) We are also told that, though Jesus keeps us, we are to keep ourselves. It is that paradox of being all of God and His grace and yet participating with all our might. Listen to the Word. *Keep yourself pure.* 1Timothy 5:22c *...keep oneself from being polluted by the world.* James 1:27c *Keep yourselves in God's love...* Jude 21a and the last verse of this letter, *keep yourselves from idols.* We keep ourselves by cooperating with the Spirit of God keeping us. He will not keep us from choosing to do the wrong thing if we insist on taking that route. Even as He keeps us, we must keep ourselves.

19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.* We know! This is how we know! John keeps assuring them and us again and again. The signs he gave are sure. You can't imitate them for long without it being the real thing. You can't obey the Spirit, love your brothers, and live a righteous life without being born again by the Spirit of God. (2Peter 1:9)

The world, on the other hand, the whole world, is under the control of the evil one. (John 12:31) The world has overcome them. Satan offered it to Jesus on the Mount of Temptation. (Matthew 4:8-9) He manipulates powers and authorities through temptation of greed and pride. This does not mean that God is not sovereign, rather that the world of unredeemed man has chosen to serve the evil one. We have read the end of the story (John wrote in his book called Revelation). God prevails. Evil is judged. Righteousness is rewarded.

John is pointing out that we live in a world that is hostile to us. (Luke 11:23) We should not be surprised when people leave our fellowship and go on to some seductive cult. We should expect society to oppose our love, compassion, kindness

Commented [notes22]: Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)
26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Commented [notes23]: John 8:34 (NIV)
34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

Commented [notes24]: Romans 6:16-22 (NIV)
16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were ... [3]

Commented [notes25]: Matthew 6:13 (NIV)
13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Commented [notes26]: 1 John 4:9 (NIV)
9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

Commented [notes27]: Philippians 1:6 (NIV)
6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes28]: John 10:28 (NIV)
28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

Commented [notes29]: Romans 5:1 (NIV)
1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Commented [notes30]: 2 Timothy 4:18 (NIV)
18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Commented [notes31]: James 4:7 (NIV)
7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Commented [notes32]: 2 Peter 1:8-9 (NIV)
8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective ... [4]

Commented [notes33]: John 12:31 (NIV)
31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

Commented [notes34]: Matthew 4:8-9 (NIV)
8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ... [5]

Commented [notes35]: Luke 11:23 (NIV)
23 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

and joy. (John 15:19; 17:14) We are citizens of different worlds. (Philippians 3:20) We are strangers and aliens on our way home, but those of the world just want more of this fallen world. (1Peter 2:11; Ephesians 4:19)

²⁰ We know also 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--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. This is the final grand "We know!" We know the Son of God has come! The Son of God was incarnate as a babe in the womb of Mary. He came to redeem us, but He also came to give us understanding of God, the One who is true. (John 14:9) God is the only truth. He is truth in a world filled with lies, for the devil is a liar from the beginning. (John 8:44) Truth and lies have been in conflict from the Garden. Distortion about who God is and His intentions were the first lies to which the evil one would resort. (Genesis 3:4-5) So Jesus came to make it perfectly clear. His life shows us the One who is true like nothing else. It is clear in the Word, but Satan loves to distort the Word, so Jesus came and demonstrated it. He gave us understanding by His every action and every word. (John 12:49)

We understand God is love because of the love Jesus showed for the least. We understand God is life for Jesus raised the dead and arose from death Himself. We know God is all wise for every answer from Jesus to His critics convicted them with unquestionable truth. We know God is all-powerful for He commanded the elements and conquered sin and death. We understand God in every way possible for us to comprehend because Jesus was willing to take on flesh and live among us. (John 1:14)

He is the One in whom we live. (Acts 17:28) We live through Him, the magnificent, holy, perfect, loving, Lamb of God. Look carefully at the end of verse 20. He, Jesus, the One in whom we live, is the only true God and eternal life! You won't find it anywhere else. Jesus said that no one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6) He and the Father are one. (John 10:30) You need search no further.

John leaves us with one final exhortation. ²¹ Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. It's hard for us to relate to the term today. We don't make figures of gods and worship them. An idol is anything that comes between God and us. Anything you love more than God is an idol. Idols are soul-seducing lies that promise happiness and deliver death. Idols cost you more than you want to pay and take you further than you want to go. Idols will steal your soul if you let them. Keep Jesus first. He is the only One that deserves that place. He is the only One that can have that place that will end up be a blessing to you. He's the One that is really looking out for you. See idols for what they really are. (2Corinthians 10:5) Keep the things of this world in their rightful place. Use them but don't abuse them.

(1Corinthians 7:31) Don't believe the lie that they will satisfy your heart. After a temporary thrill, they will only leave you empty. Keep yourself from idols by keeping Jesus exalted in your mind and heart. (Hebrews 12:2)

Commented [notes36]: John 15:19 (NIV)
19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

Commented [notes37]: John 17:14 (NIV)
14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

Commented [notes38]: Philippians 3:20 (NIV)
20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Commented [notes39]: 1 Peter 2:11 (NIV)
11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

Commented [notes40]: Ephesians 4:19 (NIV)
19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Commented [notes41]: John 14:9 (NIV)
9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Commented [notes42]: John 8:43-44 (NIV)
43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.
44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Commented [notes43]: Genesis 3:4-5 (NIV)
4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Commented [notes44]: John 12:49 (NIV) ... [6]

Commented [notes45]: John 12:49 (NIV) ... [7]

Commented [notes46]: Acts 17:28 (NIV) ... [8]

Commented [notes47]: John 14:6 (NIV)
6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [notes48]: John 10:30 (NIV)
30 I and the Father are one."

Commented [notes49]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)
5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and w ... [9]

Commented [notes50]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)
5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and ... [10]

Commented [notes51]: Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)
2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endur ... [11]

Page 2: [1] Commented [notes16] Paul Wallace

Luke 22:42 (ESV)
42 saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Page 2: [2] Commented [notes17] Paul Wallace

Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Page 4: [3] Commented [notes24] Paul Wallace

Romans 6:16-22 (NIV)
16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. 19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.
20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Page 4: [4] Commented [notes32] Paul Wallace

2 Peter 1:8-9 (NIV)
8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Page 4: [5] Commented [notes34] Paul Wallace

Matthew 4:8-9 (NIV)
8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.
9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Page 5: [6] Commented [notes44] Paul Wallace

John 12:49 (NIV)
49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

Page 5: [7] Commented [notes45] Paul Wallace

John 12:49 (NIV)
49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

Page 5: [8] Commented [notes46] Paul Wallace

Acts 17:28 (NIV)

28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

Page 5: [9] Commented [notes49] Paul Wallace

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Page 5: [10] Commented [notes50] Paul Wallace

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Page 5: [11] Commented [notes51] Paul Wallace

Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.