

Final Reminders

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[0:00] Last week we looked at the witness of God in 1 John 5 verses 6 through 12 verses 11 and 12 of chapter 5 summarize that passage.

! The question of whether we accept God's testimony or not is more than merely an academic question.

Our answer to that question will determine whether or not we participate in the eternal life that's part of his son. The last part of verse 11 is probably the main point.

But God's testimony concerning his son does result in eternal life. But the point is to stress that this eternal life is only obtainable through his son.

God's testimony is that his son is the only means by which somebody can receive the gift of eternal life. After forcefully restating the way to obtain that eternal life, John now closes his letter.

[1:19] As we look at verses 13 through 21 tonight, we'll see several final reminders. The theme of knowledge for confidence is throughout this section.

Let's go ahead and read the text. We'll take verse 13 all the way to the end. That's verse 21. 1 John 5, 13 through 21 say, These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and he will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death.

I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death. We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

[2:40] We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ.

This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. We'll see six things from the text tonight.

The first is John's clear purpose. So John's clear purpose is the first thing in your handout. Look at verse 13 one more time.

Verse 13 says, These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

You may think that we've studied this verse before. Remember, we've already quoted it many times during the first John study. Now we get to discuss it in more detail.

[3:48] This verse summarizes the main reason why John wrote the letter. John writes the letter so that his readers might know that they have eternal life. Earlier, John said, These things we write to you that your joy may be full.

That was back in 1 John 1-4. And he also said, I write to you so that you may not sin. That was the first verse of chapter 2. Both of these verses also give some indication of John's purpose for writing the letter.

But now at the conclusion of the epistle, John not only gives the reason for why he writes to his audience, he now gives the main reason why he writes. He says, These things I have written to you that you may know that you have eternal life.

In John's day, many in the church were being led astray by false teachings, and they were made to doubt whether they really possessed eternal life. John, therefore, assures his readers that they can and should have confidence that they possess eternal life even now.

Of course, we see that today. We still see people being led astray by false teachers, and that's why it's important that we continue to study 1 John. And when he talks about eternal life, eternal life does not refer primarily to a period of time, but to a person.

[5:09] We'll see that more when we get to verse 20. Eternal life, then, is a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and is possessing his nature, as we also saw in verses 11 and 12 that we read earlier.

When John wrote his gospel, he wrote his gospel to non-Christians to lead them to become Christians. He wrote 1 John to Christians already to give them assurance that they are indeed saved.

What John had written about God's testimony, up through verse 12, aimed to assure his readers that despite anything that the Antichrist said, believers do possess eternal life.

The assurance of salvation, then, always rests fundamentally and sufficiently on the direct promises that God makes to believers. Assurance, then, rests on the testimony of God that we studied last week.

Notice that John is always clear about what people must believe to have the assurance. Twice in one verse, he says that people must believe in the name of the Son of God.

[6:16] Perhaps this statement seemed redundant to some early scribes or editors because some translations actually leave the second phrase out, but the statement actually prepares the ground for the discussion about prayer, which follows, because it invites faith in God's Son on the part of those who have already received eternal life through him.

Prayer, too, then, is an expression of trust in the name of God's Son. That leads us to the second thing that we see from the letter. We've already talked about the clear purpose.

Now, in verses 14 through 17, John reminds us to have confident prayers. Confident prayers is what we'll see in verses 14 through 17, and we'll read 14 and 15 verse.

Verses 14 and 15 say, Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him. He starts that verse with now, and now connects the Christian's confidence in prayer with assurance of a vital relationship with God, and that, of course, includes enjoyment of eternal life.

[7:39] Continuing to believe in the name of the Son of God includes continuing to practice believing prayer. So not only can a believer have assurance of salvation, but he also can have assurance that God will hear his prayers and answer them.

It's the gift of eternal life that allows the believer to come directly before God with boldness or confidence in prayer. The truth of verses 14 and following is a natural result that grows out of the truth of verse 13.

John's already used the term confidence three other times in his letter. Twice, in 2.28 and then in 4.17, it appears in connection with the coming judgment, and then once he used it in chapter 3, verses 21 and 22, in connection with the issue of approaching God in prayer.

So just like the previous three occurrences, the term confidence is applied to a believer's status before God. So let's compare what we saw in 1 John 3.22 with what we see here in chapter 5.

In 3.22, John said, and whatever we ask, we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

[9:00] The condition of answered prayer in 3.22 is obedience. Here in our text tonight in 5.14, the condition is that our petitions should be according to his will.

In his gospel, John records Jesus making similar statements because in the gospel of John, chapter 15, verse 7, Jesus encouraged us to ask whatever you desire and it shall be done for you.

But there's a condition there too. He also said, if you abide in me and my words abide in you. On several other occasions, Jesus also indicated that he or the Father will do whatever we ask if we ask for it in his name.

So the fundamental characteristic of all truly Christian prayer is that the will of the person who offers the prayer should coincide with God's will. Sometimes our desires are not God's desires for us.

Sometimes we have to realize that what we want is not what our Heavenly Father wills for us. That's where faith comes in. Faith will accept that God's will is best and that faith will trust his plan and purpose even if we don't understand it at the time.

[10 : 20] So to ask God according to his will does not mean that before Christians pray effectively, we somehow have to understand God's secret plans for the future. Instead, it means that we should ask according to what the Bible teaches about God's will for his people.

So if Christians are praying in accordance with what pleases God as found in the teaching of Scripture, then they're praying according to his will. One thing we have to guard against though is that we can focus so much on what it means to ask according to God's will that we miss the peace that comes after that.

And if you look at the verse, it says, if we ask according to his will, he hears us. The word hears there signifies that God always hears the prayers of his children but not always in the way that they were presented.

Verse 15 further expands the thought of verse 14 and that's where John assures the believer that the believer can know that word is repeated twice in the verse, the believer can know that God will hear and answer a prayer that is according to God's will.

Because of the context, the use of if there cannot indicate an uncertainty. In verse 14, John made it clear that God does hear the prayer of the believer.

[11 : 40] The text says that for whatever the believer asks, God will hear him. So that whatever, verse 15, is conditions according to God's will that's mentioned in verse 14.

We hit on this already, but we need to talk about it some more. We know that human experience testifies that Christians do not always receive everything that they asked for from God, even things that really seem to be according to his revealed will.

So we have to understand this verse in light of other scripture passages which show that praying according to God's will includes the need to pray in faith.

It also includes the need to pray with patience and also to pray in obedience. We also have to submit ourselves to God's greater wisdom. We know that Jesus himself gave us an example of submission to God's greater wisdom.

Remember Jesus' prayer in the garden on the night before his crucifixion. Luke 22, 42 is where Jesus said, Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me.

[12 : 51] Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. Then in his letter to persecuted believers, Peter wrote this in 1 Peter 4, 19.

He said, Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him in doing good as to a faithful creator. So once again, listen to that verse from 1 Peter.

It said, Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him in doing good as to a faithful creator. Sometimes we have to accept that God may have a greater purpose for suffering.

And whether or not God answers our prayers the way we would like, we can be confident in his overall purpose for believers. And that purpose, of course, is to conform us to the image of his son. That's the best long-term answer we could hope for, regardless of how it seems to us at the time, because we already know the ultimate outcome. Romans 8, 29 is where Paul wrote, For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

[14 : 07] So let's go back to tonight's text now and look at verses 16 and 17 of chapter 5. They say, If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and he will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.

There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

John now gives a specific encouragement to pray, and that encouragement is that God will restore a fellow believer who is sinning. There is, though, one limitation on such a prayer, and that limitation is that if a person's sin involves a sin that leads to death, then prayer should not be offered for that. We need to talk a little bit about what a sin leading to death is. Such a sin could be any premeditated or unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to end the believer's life.

It's not one particular sin, but whatever sin is the final one in the tolerance of God. Failure to repent and forsake sin may eventually lead us to physical death as a judgment of God, and no intercessory

prayer is going to be effective for those who commit such deliberate high-handed sin.

[15 : 31] God's discipline with physical death is inevitable in such cases because he wants to preserve the unity of his church. The contrast to the phrase there is sin leading to death, though, with there is sin not leading to death signifies that John distinguishes between sins that may lead to physical death and those that do not.

That's not to identify a certain kind of mortal sin, but to say that all sins are judged by God, but some are not necessarily judged with the same severity.

Let's go back to Scripture and look at a couple of examples of where sins led to death. Perhaps the best-known example is Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, verses 1 through 11.

Ananias and Sapphira's sin leading to death was that they wanted people to think that they had given all of the proceeds to the church when they had not. So here are Acts 5, 1 through 11.

But a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[16 : 45] But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? All that remained, was it not your own?

And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.

And this is a great sentence here. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. She said, Yes, for so much. Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door and they will carry you out.

[17 : 49] Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead and carrying her out buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all those who heard these things.

I would say that's probably an understatement, wouldn't you, about that? You could say that Ananias and Sapphira were dead wrong, but that might be a little too obvious there.

In the Corinthian church, we know that some believers committed a sin leading to death by approaching the Lord's Supper incorrectly. Listen to 1 Corinthians 11 verses 29 and 30.

Paul wrote, For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.

So to recap what we're saying here, when thinking about the sin leading to death, the key is to remember what we discussed earlier. Such a sin could be any premeditated and unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to determine to end a believer's life.

[19 : 06] It's not one particular sin, but whatever sin is the final one in the tolerance of God. Listen to 1 John 5.17 one more time.

John wrote, All unrighteousness is sin and there is sin not leading to death. John apparently wanted to avoid any misunderstanding here.

He doesn't want people to think that he's soft on sin even if the sin doesn't lead to death. He states that all unrighteousness is sin and that really underscores that no act of unrighteousness is so trivial that it can be ignored or neglected.

We saw earlier in the letter where he said that sin is lawlessness and here he states that it's unrighteousness. Lawlessness speaks of rebellion against God.

Unrighteousness talks about a violation of God's standard of what is right. Most of the debate around these verses is devoted to understanding the sin that leads to death but John's real concern is to encourage believers to pray for those whose sin is not to death.

[20 : 14] So John again states that there is a sin that does not lead to death. The words are added to show the wide scope which is given the exercise of Christian sympathy and intercessory prayer.

Believers can pray with confidence knowing that it's the will of God that believers should stop sinning. So we've seen the reminder about John's purpose and we've just talked about how we can be confident in prayer and we can be certain of those things because what we see next in John's

third reminder in verse 18 tells us about the Christian's protection.

So the Christian's protection is what the third reminder is. Verse 18 tells us we know that whoever is born of God does not sin but he who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him.

The protection part comes in the last part of the verse. Before we look at that though the first part of the verse is important. The first part of the verse says we know that whoever is born of God does not sin.

we talked earlier about this when we had other first John studies John's not suggesting that a child of God will never commit a single act of sin instead he's describing a way of life it's a character or a prevailing lifestyle.

[21:41] In other words a believer will not live a life that's characterized by sin. From John's earlier statements it's obvious that the Christian even though we enjoy a position or standing of sinlessness because we identify with Christ will still sin on occasion and will still need to seek God's forgiveness.

What's also apparent from John's writings though is that a genuine believer won't live in continual unrepentant sin. Let me summarize that one more time.

John's not suggesting that a child will never commit a single act of sin instead he's describing a way of life a character or a prevailing lifestyle. In other words a believer will not live in a life characterized by sins.

A believer will not live in continual sin then. And he uses a perfect participle there when he talks about being born of God and that suggests a permanent relationship that was begun in the past but still has continuing results because of a new birth.

And one of these results is the God given ability not to fall into long term habitual sinning. The reason why the child of God avoids continual sin is because he who was born of God keeps him safe.

[23:04] If you're following along in the New King James you'll notice that I just read the text slightly differently than how the New King James renders it. The New King James says he who has been born of God keeps himself.

The better reading from the original Greek is keeps him. So the identity of the one who was born of God is not immediately clear but most scholars believe that John is referring to Jesus Christ.

And one reason we can be confident that John is referring to Jesus is because John changes the verb tense in the Greek. A second reason is that if the one who was born of God refers to the believer the text would say himself there instead of keeps him.

In other words it would say keeps himself safe. The third reason we can be confident that John is referring to Christ is the idea of a believer being kept or protected by Jesus is found elsewhere in the New Testament.

Christ's protection of the believer then allows the believer to keep the commands of God. Listen to a couple of cross references showing how Jesus protects the believer.

[24:19] The first is from Jesus' high priestly prayer and in the gospel of John chapter 17 verse 12 Jesus said while I was with them in the world I kept them in your name.

Those whom you gave me I have kept and none of them is lost except the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled. you see twice in that verse Jesus talks about keeping his own.

Another cross reference showing that Jesus protects the believer is in Revelation 3 10. Revelation 3 10 is where Jesus said these words he said because you have kept my command to persevere I will also keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on earth.

So we see in other parts of scripture and there are even more references than that if we wanted to look at them tonight that do show that Jesus keeps the believer. Going back to 1 John 5 look again at verse 18 because of Jesus' protection of the believer the wicked one does not touch him.

There John means that the wicked one does not touch believers in the sense of causing permanent spiritual loss. Because the believer belongs to God Satan has to operate within God's sovereignty and he cannot function beyond what God allows.

[25:46] We know a perfect example of that is Job. While Satan may persecute tempt test and even accuse the believer God protects his children and places definite limits on Satan's influence and power.

Remember what John told us in 1 John 4.4 he said you're of God's little children and have overcome them because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. Who is the he who is in the world there? He's actually talking about the devil there. John Stott comments the devil does not touch the Christian because the son keeps him. And so because the son keeps him, the Christian does not persist in sin. So verse 19 then takes us to the next reminder in verse 19 John talks about the controlling powers. Controlling powers is what we'll see here. Christians are under the control of God. Unsaved people are under the influence of the devil.

[27:04] Verse 19 says we know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. So what he expressed in verse 18 is now stated in terms of a general principle here.

He says we know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. This is the second time John has used we know in verses 18 through 20. God's people are comforted then with the certainty that God is their father and that he will protect them. We saw the protection of Christ in verse 18. We see the protection of God in verse 19. And this should remind us of what Jesus said in the gospel of John chapter 10 verses 27 through 30. John 10 27 through 30 are where Jesus said my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand I and my father are one so do you see the double protection there we're both in Christ's hand and we're in God's hand as well so go back to 1 John 5 19 now the second half of the verse says that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one just like we've seen in other places in 1

John John's use of the world represents human society under the power of evil and that society is at war with God and his people the wicked one does not touch the Christian but the world is in the wicked one's grasp you can tell from that there are only two possible positions either everyone is of God or everyone is under the control of the evil one neutrality then is impossible John was seeking to summarize these statements so that he could reinforce the reader's consciousness that they are distinct from the satanically controlled world system and are basically free from its power that means we don't have to listen to worldly ideals advanced by the antichrist and we don't have to succumb to worldly desires moving on to verse 20 John gives us a fifth reminder that's where we see

[29:51] John's consistent proclamation so consistent proclamation is what comes in verse 20 verse 20 says and we know there's his use of that term again we know that the son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true in his son Jesus Christ this is the true God and eternal life ultimately our assurance is grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ the son of God John states we know that the son of God has come not only can we be sure that Christ came but we can also be sure that he has given us understanding we talked when we first started this letter that John was concerned about some of the heretics in the church so against the heretics who only claim to have the proper understanding of things

John assures his readers that through faith true believers can have confidence in the truth about Christianity and of course that faith needs to be in Christ the son of God the term translated understanding occurs only here in John's writings and it contains the notion of reasoning which leads to perception so he's given us the ability to reason and logically then perceive the truths of what he's telling us true believers are given this insider understanding so that we may know him who is true you may not have caught it when we just read the verse but look at the verse again John uses the word true three times in rapid succession there John doesn't say so that they may know the truth which could come across as abstract and be susceptible to false teaching John proclaims that the object of this Christ given knowledge is personal because he switches verbs for his second use of no and the latter focuses on experiential knowledge when he talks about him who is true that refers to God the ultimate reality and that ultimate reality is contrasted then with the idols of verse 21 verse 20 really summarizes

John's whole letter the greatest certainty of all the incarnation of God in Christ guarantees the certainty of the rest this is the doctrinal foundation out of which comes love and obedience the coming of the son of God has granted to believers an understanding which makes possible a

knowledge of God John and his circle were in him who is true and so were his breeders as they continued to abide but to abide in God is also to abide in his son Jesus Christ for that matter we know that Jesus Christ himself is the true God we see that of course in John's gospel in the gospel of John chapter 1 verse 1 and also verse 14 we know that Christ is eternal life we see that several times throughout this letter and so with this grand affirmation of the deity of Jesus John concluded his summary of fundamental truths which stand against the falsehoods that were taught by the antichrist we've had five reminders already we've seen the clear purpose the confident prayers the Christian's protection the controlling powers and the consistent proclamation verse 21 has the final reminder here we see the concluding pronouncement the concluding pronouncement is what we see here and he says little children keep yourselves from idols amen anything that stands between Christ and the believer is an idol John says that you are to keep yourselves from the things of the world which occupy your mind and your attention keep yourselves from idols means keep yourselves from trusting obeying revering and following that is worshipping anyone or anything other than God himself and his son Jesus Christ once again John highlights the importance of adherence to the fundamentals of the faith listen to how the Puritan Matthew Henry explains this verse Matthew Henry wrote the God whom you have known is he who made you who redeemed you by his son who has sent his gospel to you who has pardoned your sins begotten you unto himself by his spirit and given you eternal life plead to him in faith and love and constant obedience in opposition to all things that would alienate your mind and heart from God to this living and true God be glory and dominion forever and ever amen

John Calvin put it like this John Calvin said let us then remember that we ought carefully to continue in the spiritual worship of God so as to banish far from us everything that may turn us aside to gross and carnal superstitions that brings us to the end of our first John study the letter speaks to contemporary Christians in a significant way today there are many people who profess to know God and have fellowship with him but do not demonstrate the faith at all John's test concerning obedience love and belief provide warnings for the unfaithful as well as assurance for genuine believers to be sure that we know God we must keep his commandment if we lack love for others it indicates that we do not know the love of God in our hearts foundationally then we must believe rightly about Jesus

[36 : 14] Christ he is the Christ the son of God who has come in the flesh earlier we read the summary quote from Matthew Henry listen to it one more time he said the God whom you have known is he who made you who redeemed you by his son who has sent his gospel to you who has pardoned your sins begotten you unto himself by his spirit and given you eternal life cleave to him in faith and love and constant obedience in opposition to all things that would alienate your mind and heart from God to this living and true God be glory and dominion forever and ever amen Matthew Henry summarized John's first letter well John himself though summarized it better remember verse 20 that's where he said and we know that the son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true in his son

Jesus Christ this is the true God and eternal life! Thank you.