

# What Can We Know?

1 John 5:13-21

## Purpose of John's Letter

1. Read 1 John 5:13-21. In verse 13, John states a purpose of his letter. What is that purpose?



2. What “things”<sup>1</sup> has John written to help us know that we (as true Christians) have eternal life?<sup>2</sup>

*Some of “these things” include the following:*

- We know we have come to know him if we \_\_\_\_\_ (2:3).
- We know that we have passed from death to life, because we \_\_\_\_\_ (3:14).
- If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_, God lives in him and he in God (4:15).
- We know [that God lives in us] by the \_\_\_\_\_ he gave us (3:24b).

## Confidence in Prayer

3. What can we know concerning prayer (vv. 14-15)?



Jesus said, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you”* (John 15:7, NIV).

*“Yet not what I will, but what you will”* (Mark 14:36b).

*“This then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven ...’* (Matthew 6:9-10, NIV)

<sup>1</sup>“these things” most likely refer to everything that John has written so far in his letter.

<sup>2</sup>“eternal life” is everlasting spiritual life in union with God who is the Source of life and blessing. It is the highest quality of existence, especially in its final state in the new creation. Eternal life begins when a person is “born of God,” which happens by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *not* by good works. However, good works are evidence that a person has truly become a child of God, and thus help to assure us that we have eternal life.

4. Verses 16-17 specify one kind of prayer that can be made with confidence. Who and what should be included in our prayers?<sup>3</sup>

## What Else Can We Know?

John concludes his letter with three statements of certainty (*verses 18-21*), each beginning with “We know ...”

5. The first two statements of certainty (*verses 18-19*) concern the true Christian’s relationship to sin,<sup>4</sup> the world, and the “evil one.”<sup>5</sup> How do these verses both caution and assure the Christian?

6. How does the coming of God’s Son enable us to know the true God? (*v. 20*)



7. Why do you think John finishes his letter with verse 21? How can we keep ourselves from idols?<sup>6</sup>

## Reflection/Application

- Do you know that you have eternal life?
- Do you have faith in the Son of God? If you say “no,” what are the specific reasons why you do not accept the testimony concerning Jesus Christ? Continue to seek the truth concerning Jesus. If you say “yes,” does your life show that you have been born of God?
- This week, read the entire book of 1 John, and reflect on its application to your life.

<sup>3</sup> “sin” can be defined as any attitude and action that is opposed to God. There are various interpretations of “a sin that leads to death,” including (1) a sin that leads to physical death (*Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30*); (2) the unrepentant sin and rejection of the truth characterized by the false teachers (e.g., denial of Christ’s incarnation, deliberate disobedience, hating one’s brother); and (3) apostasy (i.e., denial of Christ and renunciation of the faith, if possible for a true believer). The meaning of “brother” (*v. 16*) influences the interpretation. Some say “brother” is a true believer, while others say “brother” is a professing, but false, believer. In this context, interpretation 2 is preferred. While John does not promote prayer for those who steadfastly reject Christ and refuse to repent, such prayer is not prohibited. However, it is clear that Christians should pray for others who have fallen into sin – that they would realize their sin, repent, and submit their lives to Jesus Christ, who is the Life.

<sup>4</sup> “does not sin” does not mean that true Christians never sin at all. But as true Christians, we must desire to live godly lives. As new creatures indwelt by the Spirit, we must hate sin and evil; and avoid habitual, deliberate sin. Furthermore, the true child of God is freed and “kept safe” from the evil one’s overpowering influence to sin (*5:18*).

<sup>5</sup> The “evil one” is Satan - the devil, who is called “the prince of this world” (*John 12:31, 14:30*).

<sup>6</sup> In general, an “idol” is a false god or representation of a false god that can be worshiped. This may be extended to a false conception of God, or anything that takes the place of the true God. The false teachers had presented a different Jesus. A different conception of Jesus results in different conception of God. If we reject Jesus as the Son of God, then we are rejecting the God of the Bible – the God whom the Bible claims is the only true God. Thus perhaps John is saying be careful not to be led astray by false conceptions of Jesus, and therefore God. In order to do this, keep you eyes upon the Jesus who is revealed in the Scriptures.