November 22/23, 2025

# That You May Know

*Face to Face series*

**1 John 5:13-21**

Pastor Ryan Harmon

We live in a turbulent world, each and every one of us. It's one of the reasons we pray with such passion for these little ones that were just on stage. We know that the world is a turbulent place. Each of us walk through life, and there are so many things every single day that we just don't know. And in fact, we cannot know. Just not possible to know. None of us knows what the next year holds, what 2026 holds. We don't know what the markets will do. We don't know if our job will be safe, we don't know if our health will hold up. We can't know those things. We live in a turbulent world, chaotic at times, and in the confusion of not knowing, so often what happens in our world, is people become filled with a desperate sense of insecurity. The not knowing produces anxiety.

Now the question for us, for God's people is in the midst of our world in which there are so many things that we don't know, is there anything that we can absolutely know; that we can know with certainty? Well, John's emphatic, overwhelming answer to that question is yes. There are things that we can absolutely know that we can be certain of. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

If you have your Bibles with me, open them to 1 John. We're going to be in chapter five. We're finishing this letter this morning. We began in September. We're going to conclude it today, and then in the next two weeks, we're going to read John's two other two very brief letters, 2 John and 3 John. But this morning, we're going to conclude with the last nine verses. So beginning in 1John, Chapter five, verse 13, John says this:

> **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.** (*NASB, 1 John 5:13)

Now, it's important as we begin to remember the context of this letter. We've said a number of times there was conflict in the Christian community and John wrote in response to what was going on. There were false teachers that were proclaiming a false Jesus, and they were creating confusion, creating chaos. And so John wrote to clear the record, to set the record straight, but also to assure this community that they could know, they could be assured that they have eternal life. He said, "That you may know". That word **know** that's one we need to talk about for just a few moments. So we're going to do a little bit of a Greek lesson. I think there's going to be an adequate payoff, so stick with me as we talk about ancient Greek for just a moment. The reason I want to talk about it is because there are two words in Greek that are translated know in our English translations. Two different words, both translated know in our English translations, but they have a slightly nuanced

meaning, each of them. The first one occurs in verse 13 when John says **that you may know**. In Greek, if you're into this sort of thing, the word is *eido*. You can write that down and just impress your friends with it. *Eido*. The second word is *ginōskō*. That's not going to occur until verse 20. We'll bring that up when it occurs. The first word, the one that occurs here in verse 13, is just translated *know*, but it speaks about a knowledge and a knowing that is solid, that is sure, that is certain. It references things that we can absolutely know, we can be 100% confident about these things. Often it refers to a knowledge that is inherent. It's kind of in us. It's the kind of thing that we might say, "I just know it deep down in my heart. I know it in my bones." John says, here in verse 13, "Here's what we can know with certainty, that in Jesus—in believing in the Son of God—we have eternal life." We can know it.

The second Greek word, also translated know, refers to a knowledge that is more of a knowledge that grows over time. It's relational, it's interactive. Through thought and through experience we study something, and we come to know it but we can grow in our knowledge of it over time. That's the second type of know.

So let me give you an example here from my own life. On Tuesday, it is my 19th anniversary. That means that as I was dating my wife, as I was dating Jenee, there came a point where I knew I wanted to marry her. I just knew it. If anyone asked me, "How do you know?" I'd say, "I just know." I just know it. Now, 19 years later, I know Jenee much better than I did when I married her, and I hope and pray that as we continue in this interactive relationship together, that 20 years from now, I will know her much better than I know her right now. I knew I wanted to marry her. I have grown in my knowledge of Jenee every single day that we've been together. I knew her as best I could when I married her, but I know her much better right now. Now, why is that important? It's important because John is saying here in verse 13 that we can absolutely know for sure through belief in the Son of God that we have eternal life. In a world of chaos and confusion and unknowable's, we can know it. We can be sure of it. Now brothers and sisters in Christ, if we know that, it drastically changes our life. It sets us on a whole different course of life. It gives us a confidence that is from God to walk through life differently. And that's what John gets to. Verse 14 says:

> **This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

Because in Christ we can know we have eternal life, we can be assured of it, it gives us confidence that as we approach God, we don't need to do that with timidity and with fear. We can do that with boldness. We can come before Him. We can ask things of Him. John's reference is ultimately to prayer, because in the most basic sense, what prayer is asking God. It's bringing requests before Him. It's what we do when we pray, and here's what we can be assured of as we bring our request to Him, we can be sure, we can know, we can be confident that He hears us. Our prayers aren't background noise to Him. He gives us His absolute attention. He pays attention to us. He listens, looks us directly in the eye, and hears exactly what we ask. We can be absolutely confident of that.

But John did add a qualification, didn't he? He said **if we ask anything according to His will** and we need to talk about that. Bryan likes to often remind us that when we talk about salvation, we have to think about salvation as more than merely a ticket to heaven, a ticket to heaven that we have and now we just wait for the plane or the boat or the train to depart. We're just waiting. Salvation is so much more than that. Salvation is being brought into life with God. It's relational. It's growing. And here's what happens as we enter into life with God and we interact with Him over time. As we get to know God, our thoughts, our mind, our emotions, even the things we want, begin to be conformed to what He wants and what He thinks and what He feels. We come before Him, and He begins to change our very wants and desires. See, if we think about prayer outside the context of relationship, then we are apt to start to think of God as a genie that we go to just when we want something, and prayer is merely this divine vending machine and we come and we ask whatever we want and we are sure to get it. But when we think about prayer as conversation, as a relationship with God, that changes the way we approach it. And that helps us avoid a very common misunderstanding that comes often in verse 15. In verse 15, John says:

> **And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask,** (and he just told us, we can absolutely know that) **if we know that He hears us in whatever at we ask**, (we **know**, same word, we can be confident) **we know that we have the requests which we have asked** (for) **from Him.**

Now here's the misunderstanding. If we think of prayer simply as, 'we ask God gives,' and it's not about relationship, it's just about getting what we want. If we think about prayer outside the context of relationship, then we are bound to start to think that when we ask; God has to give us what we ask for. We'll get whatever we want, we can just go ask. Just believe hard enough He's got to give it to you. There are people who believe that, but we all know by experience that is not the case. There are many things I am quite confident that each of us have asked for in our life with God that we have not received. That's our experience. I have said before that when my father passed away in 2019, he was in the hospital for 10 days at the end of his life, and he was only 72, and in my opinion, 72 is very young. He had much more life left. And so we prayed, and we asked God that He would heal him. Of course we asked that, but we also just simply asked, "Will you give him another year? Even six more months? We just want six more months." God did not answer that prayer. My dad passed away. But the fact that my dad passed away does not mean for a moment that that experience of mine stands in conflict with what John has just affirmed in verse 15. See, the key to understanding what John is saying here is to understand that there are things that we can ask for, and it's perfectly appropriate to ask for them, but they sit in the realm of mystery to us because we aren't sure what God's will is in this situation. I'm not sure whether it's God's will that my father have more time or not. I don't know that. So I ask, I bring it before God, but I can't be assured He will answer that the way I hope. But there are prayers that I can offer up to God, and I can be 100% confident that God will answer because they are absolutely in alignment with his expressed will for me. Let me give you a few examples.

You go through the week, and you interact with a friend, and you begin to lie to them. And you realize that is wrong. God convicts you of that, and you come to Him and you say, “Father, forgive me.” Done. Answered. Responded to. Granted immediately. We can be certain of it.

You are wading your way through life, and you're wondering, what should I do? And so you pray, Lord, give me wisdom according to Your word. You can be certain that God is going to grant that. He's going to grant us wisdom.

This morning, you walk into church, and you pray in your heart as you sit down, “Lord, open my heart to receive Your truth.” I can guarantee God will answer that prayer.

We can pray in ways that mimic and mirror the very thing that God has overtly said in His Word He desires, He longs, He intends to bring about in our life. Now this is one of the reasons it's so important that we be people of God's Word because as we study His Word, we begin to know His will. We begin to understand His voice, and we get language for our prayers. We pray in accordance with what He has revealed: His intents, His plan, His plan on the broad scale, but also His plan for you and me right in the center of our life. So we pray in accordance with His will, and we can be absolutely confident that He will respond. As John continues, he elaborates further on prayer. Verse 16, he says:

> **If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make a request for this. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.** (Vs. 16-17)

Now that's fairly self-explanatory, right? No question this is a verse that is along with verse 6 that we discussed last week, most debated in this passage, in this book. It's a difficult verse, so let's begin with what we can say with absolute certainty. It's very certain, it's very clear that John says, if we see a brother, that is another member of the Christian community, a brother or sister, committing a sin, then John says very clearly, “What we are to do is we are to pray for them.” We're to pray for them. He says, “Ask, and God will for him give life to those who commit sin.” Now the first thing that I think that's a good reminder of for us is that we should care what is happening in our midst, in our life groups, in our friend groups, in this body. If we are walking alongside someone and we begin to see that they're flirting with sin, and then they start to engage in sin, and they're committing sin, that should matter to us. That should bother us. We should be concerned about that.

See while the world often says things like, “You know what, just live and let live. If they're not hurting anyone, what business is it of yours?” That thinking has no place in the church because we think sin is a very big deal. And John actually says in verse 17, all unrighteousness is sin. And here's what sin always does, you can count on it: It always ruins, it always destroys, it always brings about corruption. So we should take it seriously when we see a brother or a sister committing

sin. Certainly, we should pray about that, and then we also may be prompted by God to go and speak with them about that. It should be a concern to us. Now with that in mind, John says that as we ask, God will give life to the person we pray for. Ultimately, that reference to life is this call that God will bring them back upon the right path. God will bring about repentance in them. You remember in Psalm 23 we talked about how what God restoring our soul means is that He's the one that rescues us out of the wrong path and brings us back onto the right path. That's precisely what we pray when we see someone committing a sin, a brother or sister. We pray, "Lord, bring them back. Get them back into alignment with Your word and Your ways."

Now the confusion of course, surrounds what I just very conveniently skipped over. What is exactly the **sin not leading to death**? Now, there are many interpretations of this passage. What I'm going to offer to you is, I think the best way to understand this phrase in this passage is to think of it in light of what John has said and talked about throughout the letter of 1 John. We need to think about the context within which this letter was written. False teachers were claiming false things. They were rejecting that God had sent His Son in the flesh. They had rejected that Jesus went to the cross as an atoning sacrifice for sin. They had rejected those things, and in rejecting those things, they had rejected God Himself. They had rejected the life that comes through God. We said last week, John finished in verse 12 saying, **Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son does not have life.**

To reject God and His ways, to reject the clear revelation of who the Son of God is, to reject the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is to reject the path to life and to put yourself on a path that leads to death. The sin that leads to death is not some sin that we might slip into. It is rejection of God and of Jesus whom He sent. That's what the sin that leads to death is.

Now that doesn't answer the question, "Why does John say not to pray for it?" And that's another very complex question. So let me just offer up a few thoughts, because what we're talking about here, when we talk about not praying for the sin that leads to death, those committing the sin leading to death. What we're talking about ultimately, is, how do we pray for those who are and have, rejected God; those who are living in rebellion from Him. I think as we consider that, as we consider how to pray, we need to consider the way that God has chosen to work in the world. God is absolutely sovereign. He could set up the world any way that He wanted to, but the way that He chose to set up the world is that He in His sovereignty, in His freedom, He has chosen to allow people to rebel. I don't quite understand it. I wish that weren't the case. But God has chosen to allow people to reject Him because He has determined free worship is better than coerced worship—than forced worship. And so He has given human beings a will, and if they say, "I want nothing to do with God," He will not come in and force them to surrender in worship to Him. That's the way that God has generally set up the world. And so that means that when I see a friend that is rejecting God, or has rejected God their whole life, I might be very tempted to pray, "God, will you just knock them over the head and make them surrender?" That's what I want to pray. But

that is not generally how God has chosen to work in the world. He never gives up on people. He pursues them relentlessly, but He doesn't force surrender. It's not the way He's chosen to work.

Now here's a hard reality. When we see people rebel against God and reject Him and His ways, what happens is that they make a choice. They are making a choice that naturally but inevitably leads to pain, to pain and struggle and confusion, and ultimately, spiritual and physical death. And that is heartbreaking. Those are the clear inevitable consequences of sin, and when we see that happening in the life of someone we love, the temptation again, or what we are compelled to want to do is to say, "Lord, relieve them of the pain in their life. I know they've rejected You, but could you at least allow them to not suffer so much? It pains me to watch them suffering." That's tempting to pray, but we need to understand that the way God works is that that prayer might be a prayer for the very removal of the thing that God intends to use to bring them back to Himself. To rebel against God, to reject Him, leads to a life of struggle. And while I might be tempted to pray, "Lord, I love these people. Just help them have a happy life. It's just too hard." Ultimately, that is not a loving prayer, because the thing that needs to happen in their life is they need to surrender to the One who created them. And God uses the very consequences of choices contrary to His will, to bring people back to Himself, to help them realize this is not working. To pray against those committing the sin leading to death is to pray that God would stop using the very tools He has to bring people into a place of repentance that He might bring them back into a saving life with Him. That's my understanding of verse 16 and verse 17.

Continuing in verse 18, John gives us more things that we can know with certainty:

> **We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.** (Vs. 18-19)

Here's something else we can be very confident about. No one who knows God, who is born of God, sins. Now we need to remember, that's very John-like language. It's almost verbatim what he said in chapter 3. But in chapter 3, verse 9, he did add a helpful word that helps us understand his meaning. He said, **No one who is born of God practices sin.**

What we've said over and over again is when John says this in this book, he's referring to the regular, habitual, unrepentant practice of sin. And what he's saying is that if we have been born of God, we have life in us that is from an entirely different source. We have life from God. We're no longer of the world. Therefore it is unnatural for us to regularly, unrepentantly, engage in the ways of the world, to engage in sin. That becomes unnatural for one born of God. He's not saying that we're perfect. He's not saying that we'll never sin. He is saying that unrepentant sin, sin that occurs that we just don't care about and we say, "You know what, I enjoy it. I'm going to do it anyway." That is unnatural to those who are born of God. Now, the reason that's unnatural and the reason

we won't live in a consistent pattern of unrepentant sin isn't because we're so strong in ourselves. It's not because we're perfect Christians. It's not because we're so impressive. It's purely because the Son of God has rescued us out of the hands of the evil one and brought us into a new life while the world still remains in the clutches of the devil, we no longer do. Therefore we are not slaves any longer to that way of life. We've been freed for something different. We've been freed. We can be confident that since He has saved us, we will live a life that is from Him. He is the source of our very life. We could be confident of this. Verse 20, he says one more thing we can know. Here's what we can know.

> **And we know 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, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

Finally, we can know with certainty that the Son of God came into the world for us and for our salvation. We talked about this last week, that the Spirit of God in us testifies to this truth, is the one who stirs up in us a deep confidence that says, "Yes, that's absolutely true. I know it. I know it's true. I know it's true." Now here is where the payoff for our little Greek lesson comes, all that work you did. Here it is. See, what's so interesting about verse 20 is John uses the word **know** twice in verse 20, but in verse 20, it's the one place where he uses both instances of **know** in Greek. He says *eido* and he says *ginōskō*. The first instance is at the beginning of the verse, so **we know that the Son of God has come**. We are absolutely certain of that. But now, here's the payoff. The second **know** is this reference to something that we can grow in; this interactive knowledge. So we are assured that God came, that He sent His Son, and that sets us on a course of life of growing knowledge of God that goes on forever and ever and ever. **We know**, John says. **We know that the Son of God has come**. We know it. We are certain of it. He's given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. We know so that we can live in interactive relationship with God all-mighty that created all things, the living God. And we now, because of the knowledge that we have in and through His Son, we now live in this unending relationship where we will grow in knowledge of Him forever and ever. There is always more of God for us to experience and know. It never ends. We know so that we may know.

And finally, we come to verse 21, which is an odd ending, very characteristic of John here:

> **Little children, guard yourselves from idols.**

Period. Now, what is that about? John has not mentioned idolatry in the entire letter, and here in the very final word, he says **Little children guard yourselves from idols**. Now, it's common for us today when we think of idols, to think of figurines or statues made of stone or of wood, and those certainly exist. We think about what happened at the bottom of Mount Sinai when they made an idol of a golden calf. And I've been to places like India and Malaysia, where you can see in

temples these idols, different gods. And it's tragic, but that is very far from our actual life. Not many of us are going to encounter those kind of things.

And so the question is, what does it mean for us to guard ourselves from idols? I would suggest to you that when we think about what idolatry truly is, it actually has been a foremost concern of John's throughout this entire letter. It has been in the background the whole time, even though he never named it. Here at the end he did name it because idolatry is just embracing a false view of God, believing less about God. A. W. Tozer says, "The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him."[1] The false teachers were claiming God did not send His Son. That is a false view of God. The false teachers were claiming that God Jesus really didn't come in the flesh. That's a false teaching about the Son of God. The false teachers were saying He didn't really atone. He didn't really shed his blood. That is a false teaching. That is all idolatry. It is wrong thinking about God. Wrong thinking about God. To embrace the teaching of the false teachers, or any lesser view of God is to accept, to embrace a God that is made in our own image, a God that we can come up with rather than the God who has revealed Himself. And the God that we can come up with is incompetent and impotent and unable to save us. And fortunately for us, we do not need to believe in false gods because the God, the God that brought everything into being, true God from true God, has made Himself known by sending His Son. He sent His Son. Our world is full of uncertainty, but we can be certain of this, that God sent His Son into the world. He sent His Son into the world for us and for salvation. God being rich in mercy, sent His Son that we may know His Son and know Him through His Son. And we can be confident of this: If we know Him, then we have eternal life. Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we, thank You for sending Your Son. We thank You that in mercy You sent Him into the world to accomplish for us what we could not accomplish on our own. Jesus, we thank You that You, in obedience, went to the cross, shed Your blood and arose from the grave victorious that we might enter into life forever with You through faith. We thank You for that. We praise You for that. We pray that You will help us to know that and help us to increasingly grow in our knowledge of You today and every day. To the praise of Your glory we pray. Amen.*

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2025 – Ryan Harmon. All rights reserved.

[1] A.W.Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy (San Francisco, HarperOne, 1978).