



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Assurances for the Child of God (1 John 5:13-21)

MAY 6, 2014

Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, May 6, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, May 6, 8:30 PM in Office #225**
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

Written by Reginald Heber, 1826.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity

INTRODUCTION

The two main purposes of the Apostle John's letter are to expose the false teachers and to encourage the true believers. He laid out three tests concerning those who truly follow Jesus. True believers will...

...have a right morality (2:3-6). They will live in obedience to God's commands and will not persistently live in sin. Even though they will sin at times, the true believer will repent and find God's forgiveness (1:9).

...have a right social ethic (2:7-11). They will be known by their *agape* love for one another and for those outside the fellowship. They will exhibit a love that is a conscious decision to take care of the needs of others. This love comes because God the Father first showed this love to them (4:7-21).

...have a right doctrine (2:18-27). They will have a right understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The false teachers (presumably the Gnostics) promoted false teachings about

Jesus, but the true followers of Jesus understand that He is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. The One who came in the flesh, of whom John and the other apostles saw, heard and touched (1:1-4); in whom there is life (5:1-12).

One may claim to follow Jesus and love God, but unless he or she passes these tests, one's claims can be questioned.

John also wrote to give assurance to those who do follow Jesus. The tests laid out in the letter could cause a true believer to wonder about his or her own relationship with God. But sprinkled throughout the text of John's first letter are assurances to those who truly love God and are trusting in Jesus. As he wrapped his letter, he reminded his readers of these certainties once more.

1 John 5:13-21 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. ¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. ¹⁶If 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 request for this. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. ¹⁸We 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. ¹⁹We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰And 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. ²¹Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

As he draws the letter to a close, John brought up four assurances for the child of God. These are four assurances that he has addressed already this letter, but brings them all together as he finished.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #225

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

Assurances for the Child of God (1 John 5:13-21)

A CHILD OF GOD HAS ETERNAL LIFE (5:13)

Just like the Gospel of John, the Apostle reveals his purpose statement toward the end of his writing. In the Gospel, he stated “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). In this epistle, John wrote a similar purpose statement “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” (1 John 5:13).

This purpose statement continued John’s thought concerning the great testimony of God “...that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (5:11b-12).

When John wrote of eternal life, he did speak of the length of this life—there is no end of life for those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ.

He also spoke of the quality of life; the kind of full life that God intended people to have. Unfortunately, people continue to seek for that which lasts in all the wrong places. They seek it in pleasures (sex, booze, parties, events), possessions (houses, money, stocks, stuff), and power (which comes in all types). Some try to find “life” in abstaining from all the above. But the pleasures of the world and a “piety” without Christ are both lacking in fulfillment for it cannot deal with the certainty of death.

The testimony and assurance of God is that full and eternal life is found in His Son. It is a fulfilled life, life with the Creator, a life with purpose, a life with peace, joy, forgiveness and a life with no end. The Apostle Paul wrote that the “mortal will take on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). John also wrote:

Revelation 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

As with the previous passage, John proclaimed an exclusive message. This eternal life is only for those “who believe in the name of the Son of God” (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6). The person who trusts in the work of Christ instead of his or her own works of righteousness for forgiveness and salvation is the one who has this eternal life.

But the person who seeks his or her own way, apart from God and His Son, does not have this life. That person has nothing but disappointment awaiting them when all the temporal “pretties” have gone away.

A CHILD OF GOD WILL HAVE ANSWERED PRAYERS (5:14-16)

The second assurance for the child of God has also been brought up in John’s letter (3:21-22). The assurance is this: when God’s redeemed and cleansed people stand before Him without fear (2:28; 4:17) in prayer, He hears and answers.

In understanding the full teaching on prayer, these requests must be in line with the will of God. God’s people are not to pray for those things which they know are outside of God’s will. How do they know what is in or out of God’s will? By being “of the truth”, growing in love toward God and others, and knowing and doing what pleases Him.

In fact, John stated that if we know that God hears (implying “answers”), then we know that even the requests we ask are from Him (5:16). Thus, it can be safely implied from this passage also that if prayers are not answered for a child of God, then the prayer was not according to His will.

One must understand a primary purpose of prayer is to form the will of God’s people to His own. It is not for the purpose of getting God’s attention to the things we desire, but to get in line with His perfect will. C.H. Dodd penned “Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfill our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of His will.”¹ Yes, we are to pray the desires of our hearts, but as our desires are shaped to be like His, we will find more and more answers to prayer.

The great example is Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed “yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39b).

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How can John be so sure that God will answer these prayers? As he has in other parts of his letter, he is echoing what he heard Jesus teach:

John 14:13-14 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

John does add an interesting exception to this great assurance of answered prayer: A child of God is not to pray for a brother or sister who is committing “a sin leading to death”. The clear teaching from John’s words is that we are to be praying for those who are in sin. Prayer for one another is an act of the *agape* love that a child of God lives out.

PRAYER RIGHTLY CONSIDERED IS NOT A DEVICE FOR EMPLOYING THE RESOURCES OF OMNIPOTENCE TO FULFILL OUR OWN DESIRES, BUT A MEANS BY WHICH OUR DESIRES MAY BE REDIRECTED ACCORDING TO THE MIND OF GOD, AND MADE INTO CHANNELS FOR THE FORCES OF HIS WILL. --C.H. DODD

What is not so clear in John’s words is what he means by “a sin leading to death”. While it was probably understood to John’s initial readers, it is quite foggy in the 21st-century. It could be a reference to the “unpardonable sin” of “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” discussed by Jesus (Matthew 12:30-32). It could refer to a believer who is living in such serious sin that God takes his or her life, like the tragic story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Other possibilities include a particularly heinous sin that God will not pardon or a rejection of the faith that a “former believer” once held.

These various positions have their pros and cons. The truth is that we cannot be fully confident of the actual meaning. Therefore, today, since the child of God does not know, he or she needs to be diligent in prayer for all fellow believers when they are seen to be in sin. One should be in prayer for confession and repentance. Thus, leaving the results in God’s hand.²

A CHILD OF GOD WILL BE KEPT BY GOD (5:17-19)

As John has noted throughout his letter, the true child of God is not one who claims to live in the light, but lives a life of unrighteousness, or professes to love God, but hates his brother, or one who hold erroneous

views about Jesus Christ. The true child of God has been “born of God” (5:1) which can be seen in one’s new life of holiness, love and right thinking.

The third assurance in for the true child of God is that he or she will be kept safe in the hands of God.

John addressed the things that could possibly separate a child of God from the Father. First of all, he noted that those born of God do not sin. This seems to contradict his point back in chapter one that “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1:8). But as he has taught in this letter, John is not saying there is sinless perfection in Christians, but rather they do not live in a pattern of sin. Believers do sin, but when they are convicted they repent and confess their sin and find forgiveness (1:9). Their new desire is to please God and avoid sin; in the past, they had no desire for God and thus lived enslaved to sinful passions.

Secondly, God Himself keeps his child. God is omnipotent; nothing can overpower Him to take His children. God is all-knowing; nothing can sneak around the side and steal nor make false accusations to deceive God into giving up His children (Job 1-2). God is love; nothing can sever the relationship between the child of God from His Father (Romans 8:33-39).

Not even the “evil one” can touch God’s child—this is the third thing. The evil one is a reference to Satan, the Adversary. God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son like a shepherd protect the ones that have been taken from the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:12-14). Satan and the world system, which is under his control, cannot touch or lay hold and grab the child of God. Satan and the world may tempt, persecute, punish, harass, and even kill God’s children, but they cannot reclaim that soul that has been redeemed by God. God keeps that precious person in His powerful hand and thus His children are eternally His (John 10:28; 2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 24-25).

A CHILD OF GOD KNOWS WHO IS TRUE (5:20-21)

John wrapped up his letter with one last assurance for the child of God. The child of God truly knows that Jesus Christ, the Son of God has come and that He is the true God.

The Apostle noted that the child of God has a factual knowledge that Jesus has come, but he took it further. The believer has also been given an

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understanding that allows him or her to also to have a personal, intimate knowledge of Christ, as well. It is not mere head-knowledge, but also a relationship with this true God, Jesus Christ. As I have illustrated in the past, I know much about my boyhood baseball hero, George Brett, but I cannot say that I know him as a close, personal friend.

God's people have a knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ—who He is, what He has done, where He came from, His purpose and work as an advocate and sacrifice for God's people. And they will continue to grow in that understanding. But the child of God also knows Jesus as a close personal friend (John 15:15); a friend who is their salvation and their life.

In defining "true", James Boice wrote, "...refers to that which is authentic as opposed to that which is false, the ultimate reality as opposed to that which is merely its shadow."³ It seems that John lobbed one last salvo at the false teachers that he has attacked throughout this letter. Three times he made reference to that which is "true" about Jesus Christ. And he gave one final challenge to stay away from that which is false—the idols.

Anything set up above God and set in the rightful place of God is an idol. Any false ideas about God, which includes false teachings about Jesus also causes one to make an "idol" for it is not God but an image one has created.

The child of God knows—factually and personally—the true God, Jesus Christ, from whom eternal life flows. In this, there is great assurance,

comfort and boldness to live out a life in which the child of God reflects the image of his or her Father.

CONCLUSION

John closed out this hard-hitting and challenging letter with some great assurances to his readers. If they are true children of God, which he defined throughout his epistle, they know they have eternal life; they know God will answer their prayers; they know God will keep them for Himself and they know Jesus Christ.

If there is doubt in one's life concerning any of these assurances, a person's life is lived out entirely different. It becomes a life of doubt, concern, worry, legalism, false hope and spiritual misery.

But with these assurances in hand, a child of God can live a life pleasing to God, dependent on God which, in turn, fully frees a person to truly live. It will not be a perfect life, but it will be a life of courage, hope and joy.

Again, this passage is addressed only to those who are God's true children. But the good news is that God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can adopt you, as He has all those who belong to Him.

He can and will forgive a person of his or her sins--are you interested?

¹ C.H. Dodd, quoted by James M. Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), 139.

² Prayer is not all that believers are called to do when they witness another in sin. Jesus taught about lovingly calling those who are in sin to repent and

what to do if those warnings go unheeded (Matthew 18:15-20; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 6:1). Prayer, though, is key. For it is still the work of God in changing a person's heart.

³ Boice, 148.