**Sermon Manuscript: Sunday, August 10, 2025**

**Title: Assurance, Prayer, and Protection**

**Text: 1 John 5:13-21**

Good morning church, I hope you have enjoyed hearing from all of your pastors during this Summer Series of 1 John.

**Introduction:**

Well, here we are in the final verses of the book of 1st John. We have seen throughout the summer that there are a number of topics and applications to this letter from John. Such foundational core topics as:

* **The Nature of God:** John emphasizes two key attributes: "God is light" (1 John 1:5) and "God is love" (1 John 4:8), This reveals God's purity, holiness, and the foundation for ethical and relational living.
* **Christology:** The letter affirms the Incarnation of Christ, highlighting that Jesus came "in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). This counters false teachings, particularly early forms of Gnosticism, which denied the physical reality of Jesus.
* **Love and Community**: A central command in 1 John is the call to love one another, which is presented as the very essence of God and the identifying mark of true Christians (1 John 4:7-8). This love is not merely emotional but is expressed through actions and care for one another.
* **Assurance of Salvation**: John writes to assure believers that they can know that they have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:13). This assurance is grounded in God's love and Christ's work, not on personal feelings or experiences.
* **Warnings Against False Teachers:** The epistle includes strong warnings against those who spread deceptive doctrines and deny essential truths about Jesus, labeling them as "antichrists" (1 John 2:18-19). Believers are urged to discern truth from error by testing the spirits and adhering to the apostolic witness found in Scripture.
* **Obedience and Righteousness**: Living in obedience to God's commands is presented as an evidence of true faith and love for God (1 John 2:3-5). This obedience is not a means of earning salvation but a natural outflow of a transformed life in Christ.

In essence, 1 John can be understood as a call to embrace true doctrine, obedient living, and faithful devotion in a world threatened by deceit and division.

**Let’s read 1 John 5:13-21**

**Assurance**

**13**I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

**Prayer**

 **14**And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. **15**And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

**16**If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%205%3A13-21&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30624a)] will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. **17**All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

**Protection**

**18**We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

**19**We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

**20**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. He is the true God and eternal life. **21**Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

If I were to summarize these verses it would sound something like this:

**Thesis**: John is reminding believers that trusting Jesus means having the assurance of eternal life, confidence in prayer, and God’s protection from evil. John encourages us to lean on this hope, pray for each other, and stay away from anything that pulls us away from God.

This morning, we will turn our attention to these three topics: Assurance, Prayer, and Protection. Let’s first be reminded of a common theme in this letter, and that is one’s assurance of salvation. Look with me at verse 13.

**Assurance – 1 John 5:13**

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.  1 John 5:13*

John restates the purpose for which he is writing this letter, “…that you may KNOW that YOU HAVE eternal life.” Listen to the language. You can know (have confidence) that you are a child of God, and you can live boldly by faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. John then does not say, “you **may have** eternal life.” NO, he says you can know that “**YOU HAVE** (right now) eternal life” in the Son.

Well, how does this happen? It happens by the work and power of the Spirit in regeneration through faith in Jesus Christ by the means of grace primarily through the Word, Prayer, and Worship. John said he is writing to you who believe that you may know (have assurance and confidence) in whom you have believed.

This theme of assurance is sprinkled throughout this letter.

**Prayer – 1 John 5:14-17**

John then moves to the topic of prayer within our assurance. If you know that you have eternal life and have become a child of God, look what John says next in verses 14-17.

*14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

*16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God[a] will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.*

Before we venture into the meaning of what John is saying here, or more accurately what he is NOT saying concerning prayer. The whole concept of prayer is truly a mystery and a blessing for the believer. How and why our prayers are answered by Almighty God is astounding and beautiful. Let’s look at a few misconceptions of prayer before we look at these verses.

**Prayer**

**Prayer is NOT:**

* A magical formula – Prayer is not a set of words or rituals that automatically obligate God to respond according to our desires.
* A wish list for selfish gain – It is not a means to simply obtain personal comfort, wealth, or material blessing while ignoring God’s will and purpose.
* An empty tradition – True prayer is not a mindless repetition of phrases or a mere religious duty devoid of heart and genuine faith.
* A way to manipulate God – Prayer is not an attempt to bend God’s will to ours, but rather to align our hearts and requests with His sovereign plan.
* A one-way conversation – It is not only bringing our requests to God, but also listening, yielding, and responding to His Word and guidance.

**PRAYER IS:**

* A relationship with God – Prayer is entering into communion with our Creator, where believers experience intimacy, fellowship, and the assurance of being heard by a loving Father.
* An act of faith and dependence – Through prayer, Christians express their trust in God’s wisdom, power, and goodness, recognizing their need for His guidance and provision.
* An opportunity for transformation – Prayer shapes and changes the heart of the believer, aligning desires and attitudes with God’s will and conforming us to Christ’s likeness.
* A participation in God’s purposes – In prayer, believers join in God’s redemptive work, interceding for others, seeking His kingdom, and inviting His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
* A source of peace and comfort – Prayer offers refuge amidst life’s challenges, providing assurance, rest, and strength through God’s presence and promises.

Now, with these things concerning prayer in mind, let’s look at what John is saying in verses 14-15.

*14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything* ***according to his will*** *he hears us. 15 And if* ***we know that he hears us*** *in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests* that we have asked of him.

James M. Boyce makes this statement related to verse 14, “The Christian need not fear that for some unknown reason God will refuse to hear him when he prays or turn from him.”

Notice that we are to pray, “according to His will.” How do we do that? What is His will concerning our burden, need, or request? John actually alludes to how by his opening statement of “the confidence that we have toward Him.” It is by constant communion with the Lord Jesus, constant abiding in the Word that we begin to see our heart and mind molded and bent toward Christlikeness. We also see in Romans that the Spirit will intercede for us when we don’t’ know how or what to pray. This is our confidence as well.

God will never act or move contrary to His Word. We can count on His Word to always be TRUE. Learning the precepts and principles of the Word when our request or prayer doesn’t have a chapter and verse directly is also necessary.

What does it mean that if we ask anything according to His will “He hears us?” It has to be more than simply acknowledging our words or thoughts. One commentator suggested that usually concerning prayer “He hears us” refers to God answering. Well then, what do we make of the second part that John says “we know that we have the requests” The second statement is referring to confidence in the present, “WE HAVE IT NOW” in God. That’s how much we can trust in God according to His will. In my own words it would sound like this, “When we pray according to God’s will, we know that He hears and answers us and that we have that answer even now as we are praying.”

The qualification to confidence in prayer is in these verse “according to His will” as we have already seen in 1 John 3:21-22, “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” Notice the qualification here is that we are keeping his commands and doing what pleases him.

Now let’s look at verses 16-17

*16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.*

Now, before we get too far into this difficult passage to understand, don’t miss the main point of John’s statement in verse 16. John is stating with certainty that fellow Christians ought to pray for one another especially as you see a brother (or sister) caught up or ensnared in sin. Even though John states in vs.18 that those who are born of God do not keep on sinning, they can, and do often times fall and stumble in sin and we should intercede for them.

James Boyce again cuts to the quick on this issue of praying for a brother who is in sin. He says, “In all honesty it must be acknowledged that in this area Christians often fail grievously, for sin in a brother becomes all too often a cause for gossip rather than a cause for heart felt prayer…These verses suggest that it is when a believer is himself in the will of God and is therefore praying according to the will of God that he will pray for others.”

Now for the not so clear part of this passage. What does John mean that there are sins that do not lead to death and sins that do lead to death? Remember that the wages of ALL sin is death according to Rom. 6:23.

(There are three or four possible interpretations – of the sin that leads to death)

1. It could be referring to some particular heinous sin, which God, will not forgive or pardon.
2. Another view follows the thought of “blasphemy against the Spirit” as mentioned in Matthew 12, ascribing God’s work to that of Satan.
3. It could be, as this letter may support, that John is thinking of what we would call apostasy or those who have now renounced the true nature and work of Christ on our behalf and are un-repentant to the end.

My opinion is that John is making a distinction between believers who sin but have eternal life and persons (not brothers) who continue in unrepentant sin unto death and do not have life, particular those anti-Christs mentioned earlier in this letter. An example to consider would be Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. If you remember, Jesus prayed for Peter in Luke 22:32 “but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Jesus, on the night that he was to be betrayed simply tells Judas in John 13:27, “Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” One was a sin that did not lead to death (eternal) and on that did.

Let’s now move to our third point of emphasis, now that we have seen Assurance in vs. 13, and a call to Prayer in vv. 14-17, we now focus our attention on Protection in vv. 18-21.

**Protection – 1 John 5:18-21**

*18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning,* *but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

*19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

*20 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. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Once again John starts verse 18 with “We know..” Confidently stating that everyone who has been born of God (truly saved, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit) does not keep on sinning. Believers do sin, but they desire to sin less and to confess, repent and be restored. There will be a day when we will NO LONGER sin, NO LONGER be bent toward sin, that will be HEAVEN.

John then reminds us of the keeping and protecting power of Christ when he states, “he who was born of God protects him” Notice it is not that we protect ourselves. We have no power against the evil one. We are not left alone, Christ covers us. From what do we need protection? Look at vvs. 18b-19.

18b …*but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

*19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

The evil one does not touch him. Again, John states with confidence, “We know…” that we are from God (not from this world), in a world that is ruled by the evil one. We are no longer bound and enslaved to this world’s system. We are in Christ and He is in us. Now that is true protection.

John then closes this letter with even more assurance and protection.

*20 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. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

John says again, “And we know…” What do we know? That Jesus, the Christ, has come and has given us understanding (by the Spirit) Why? So that we may know Him who is true, who is eternal life, and who is God. Notice here that God has GIVEN us understanding, we did not know God until He opened our eyes to His glory.

John uses such rich language of union with Christ, “we are IN HIM” we are “IN his Son Jesus Christ.” What a safe place to be. Listen to John 10:27-29

“27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”

Finally, John wraps this letter up in one last heartfelt warning and affirmation. Little children (term of endearment and love as well as positional authority as an Apostle) with all of this assurance and prayer and protection, use all of this to keep yourselves from idols (anything that would distract you from your complete focus, love, and loyalty to the glories of Christ).

Practice what you KNOW and BELIEVE is TRUE!!!

John wants you to know something. Do you know God through the Son by the Spirit? Can you pass the triple test of authentic faith: doctrinal test, relational test, and moral/righteousness test?

Let’s Pray Together