



1 JOHN

YOU CAN KNOW

1 JOHN 5:11-13

MAIN IDEA

Those who are truly in Christ will persevere until the end because they are preserved by God. Their love for God and obedience to His Word is evidence of God's preserving work in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- **Have you ever craved something so much that you couldn't think of anything else?**
- **What is the hungriest or thirstiest you can remember being? Why did this moment stick with you? When have you experienced this spiritually?**

For those who are in Christ, taking up and reading the Scriptures is like sitting down to a plate of meat and potatoes after a long day without food. It's like a mason jar of water and ice after push-mowing the lawn in July. It's like gulping down air after your brother held you under the creek water longer than he should have.

As Thomas Watson wrote,

The Word written is a divine treasury or store-house. In it is scattered truth as pearls to adorn the inner man of the heart. The Word written is the true manna, which has all sorts of sweet taste in it. It is a sovereign medicine. It gives wine to them with a heavy heart. The opened Bible is a sovereign cure to those that would drink of it. David drank of this cure: “This is my comfort in my affliction; for your Word has quickened me.” (Psalm 119:50) Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden; every line in it is a fragrant flower, which we should pin not to our pocket but to our heart.¹

The condemnation of our hearts, the assailments of the world, and the attacks of the devil leave us weak and weary. We need nourishment and replenishment. The promises of God are nourishment for Christians. In our text today, we will consider a foundational promise to Christians.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **Have someone in your group read 1 John 5:11.**

The foundation of John’s argument concerning the certainty of salvation for those who trust in Christ is the testimony of God. John answered the question, “Has God truly saved sinners?” His answer pointed to God’s own testimony. In other words, the certainty that God has provided salvation for sinners lies in the fact that God has said that He has.

- **How is this truth a comfort in times of doubt?**

God's Word is faithful and true. He is trustworthy and does not lie. Scripture says, "God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19; see also Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). God is truth and His Word is truth. God is not like man who says yes when He really means no. Closely connected to God's truthfulness is His faithfulness. God is faithful to keep His promises.

In essence, the entirety of the Scriptures is God's unfathomable promise to redeem people from every tribe, tongue, and nation from sin and death. The Scriptures tell the story of a glorious and good creation, the entrance of a destructive, evil being, and the fall of humanity into slavery to this evil one. The Scriptures also testify of the one true and living God who was and is sovereign over all of this and more. In fact, He numbers the very hairs on our heads, oversees the death of every sparrow, and knows the name of every star in the sky.

According to the counsel of His own will, God has determined to save people from every tribe tongue and nation. He has purchased them by the blood of the Lamb and has given His redeemed ones the call to testify to the world about Jesus Christ. To some the gospel is honey, but to others it is bitter as wormwood. God is glorified both in grace extended to humble sinners and condemnation meted out to the proud.

God has promised, "I will also make you a light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). And Christ told His disciples, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and "when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

- **How does knowing and leaning on God's Word and promises bring us comfort in times of doubt? How does remembering God's past fulfillment of His promises give us hope for the future?**

Christians appeal to God's Word as a proof of the trustworthiness of His Word. True, this is a circular argument, but circular arguments are necessary when one is appealing to an ultimate authority. Christians know God's Word is trustworthy because they have seen it with their own eyes. Christians who have tested the promise of peace when they give their anxieties to the Lord in prayer have found it to be so. Further, many prophecies in the Old Testament were confirmed and fulfilled in the New Testament. "The grass withers, the flowers fade when the breath of the Lord blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever" (Isaiah 40:7-8).

- **What promises of God are most precious to you? How have you found God to be faithful to His Word?**

> **Have someone in your group read 1 John 5:12.**

It is critical for Christians to approach the Word of God rightly. This means they read the Scriptures with both right posture and the right method. A danger Christians must avoid is claiming promises that aren't there. Some promises have applied only to certain persons in certain contexts. Students of the Scripture must be diligent to consider the context of the passage and the broader teaching of Scripture.

- **Is the promise in this verse for only a certain group of people? Who can rightly claim it? To whom has the Father given eternal life?**

The apostle John wrote this letter to a certain group of people, though we aren't altogether sure who they were. However, when we consider that these people were those who had repented of sin and placed their faith in Jesus Christ, it helps us to see that the promise given here is to all people who look to Christ. This promise is for people from every tribe, tongue, and nation in every age. Indeed, everyone who comes to Christ will

never be cast out (John 6:37). “God gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

- **What benefits accompany the eternal life God gives to those who come to Him in Christ?**

When a person hears the gospel and responds with faith and repentance, God does two very important things: He takes away their guilt, and He makes them a part of His family. Jesus’s death on the cross not only saves sinners from death and hell but also makes sinners children of God. Christians aren’t just pulled out of the stormy sea; they’re given clean clothes, a hot meal, and a warm embrace. They are now children of a good and tender Father.

Yet not everyone on earth is a child of God. Everyone has been created by God, but only those who have repented of sin and placed their faith in Jesus are children of God. The fact that Christians are children of God should both cause them to rejoice and to inquire about what it means to be a child of God. Essentially, this is sanctification. As they grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, His followers will look more and more like true children of God.

What privileges do children of God have? Those who are children of God enjoy the forgiveness of sin and a right standing before Him. This is the foremost hope, joy, and identity of a child of God, but it isn’t all. The Bible is full of promises for the child of God. Here are a few examples:

They are assured that their Father will always bless them with good gifts, even if they don’t seem so. They can rest in the fact that their Father sees the bigger picture (Matthew 7:11).

- Their Father feels compassion toward them (Psalm 103:13).
 - Their heavenly Father rewards those who seek Him in prayer (Matthew 6:6).
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- Their Father lovingly disciplines them (Hebrews 12:5-6).
- God the Father holds them securely in His hand (John 10:29).
- Their heavenly Father shepherds them (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11).

These are only a few of the benefits of those who have God as their Father. There are many more that can be discovered and believed if Christians read the Bible carefully, prayerfully, and humbly.

- **What benefits of new life in Christ have been especially meaningful to you?**

> Have someone in your group read 1 John 5:13.

John was certain all who believed in Christ had eternal life. He said his readers could be certain of this reality and that they ought not doubt it.

- **What gave John certainty in the salvation He spoke of? If you follow Jesus, what gives you certainty?**

John had heard Jesus teach about this reality directly. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:27-30). A Christian’s position is secure because God the Father and God the Son secure it. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit also ensures it as He indwells the believer.

Consider what Jude wrote to Christians: “Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy” (Jude 1:24). Only those who are without blemish (without sin) on the day of judgment will be allowed to enter heaven. Yet, a person could never cleanse themselves or keep themselves cleansed. However, this verse says God Himself will make you stand in His presence without blemish and great joy. Paul told the Philippians: “he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Salvation is God’s work from start to finish. True Christians cannot lose their salvation because it is God who maintains it. Truthfully, if Christians could lose their salvation, they would.

- **Does this assurance mean Christians can sin all they want and God will forgive them? Why or why not?**

God does forgive the sins of Christians, but true Christians don’t want to sin. When they are born again, they become a new creation: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). They have new affections and new desires. They no longer love their lusts and the world; they love the things of God. When a person is saved, their old sin-dead heart is removed, and they are given a heart of flesh. God has said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

A Christian isn’t a person with a license to sin but a person who has been transformed by the gospel and transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. This means they live in a different way. If someone goes on sinning without fear or repentance, then there is little evidence that they are following Jesus, no matter what they say.

If you are following Jesus, how did Christ transform your life when you were saved? If you are not a follower of Jesus, what are some ways you might hope for your life to be transformed?

APPLICATION

What a glorious promise Christians have in this passage! All who are in Christ ought to treasure it, memorize it, sing it, and meditate upon it. And when the Enemy whispers lies into their heart, they ought to repeat this promise to themselves so they don't lose their way. Salvation is God's work, and He never fails to accomplish what He intends. God has intended to save many and if you have heard the gospel and believed upon Christ, you are His. Christian, hold on to this glorious truth: you are kept.

- **What obstacles threaten to prevent you from rejoicing and resting in the promises of God?**

- **If you are a Christian, how has your Father helped you in your daily life since you became a Christian? If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, how is God calling you to respond to Him today?**

- **How might you share the truths you've learned today in a gospel conversation with someone you know?**

PRAY

Give thanks to the Lord for His very great and precious promises to His children. Ask Him to lead you to these promises in His word day after day. Ask Him to help you to rejoice in them, memorize them, and believe them.

1 JOHN 5:11-13

5:11–12. So what is being testified to? That eternal life comes from God through his Son Jesus and through no other way. This statement is very likely directed at the antichrists who charged that the readers did not really have eternal life through Christ. Scripture makes it clear that we do have eternal life through Jesus. To deny this is to deny God’s testimony and to call God a liar.

Notes:

5:13. John clearly stated his purpose for writing the Gospel: “That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). The Gospel was written to non-Christians to lead them to become Christians. In a parallel way, toward the end of his first epistle, John stated his purpose for writing it: That you may know that you have eternal life. First John is written to those who are Christians to give them assurance that they are saved.²

REFERENCES

1. Thomas Watson, *How We May Read Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit* (Minneapolis, MN: Curiosmith, 2018).