

**Wednesday 25 November**

**Our passage for this week is 1 John 5: 1 - 21**

The Apostle John gives us some wonderful help as we study this passage by stating clearly what he wants us to understand and know through the passage. The key verse in this passage is verse 13: **"I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life"**. It implies that we can start our study of the passage with this question: "How do we know that we have eternal life?"

It is very interesting that in the Epistles of John, the word "know" is used a total of 42 times, and in our passage this week, a total of 7 times. This leaves us in no doubt that the letter was written so that we may **know** certain things as opposed to just 'thinking' or 'hoping' them. There are two different words for "know" used by the Apostle in this passage. These are 'ginosko' which means 'to know someone intimately' and "eido" which means 'to see and experience something'. The word for 'know' that John uses most, is 'eido'. This word certainly seeks to convey a meaning that something is 'real', in the sense that you can see it and experience it. There are also two different words used for 'believe' in the passage. The first is 'pisteuo' which is a **verb** meaning 'to place your trust in'. The other is 'pistis' which is a **noun** and is translated as 'faith'. We looked at a beautiful verse in 2 Timothy 1: 10 -12 where Paul writes: "...I **know** whom I have **believed**, and am persuaded..." which links beautifully with the meanings expressed in our passage.

Let us now turn to our passage and see what John sets forth as the reasons why we may **'know'** that we have eternal life:

In verse 1 we are faced once again, as elsewhere in the Epistles of John, with the issue of being born of God, being born again. It is simply stated that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. This statement requires deeper investigation, as it can be misinterpreted. First of all it is clear from **James 2:19** and **Acts 19:13-15** that even the demons know exactly who Jesus is. Secondly, the word 'believe' here is 'pisteuo' (to place your trust in). Thirdly, from the following references, it is clear that the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ comes by revelation to each one personally. Read **Matthew 16:14-17** and **Acts 9:3-5** as well as **1 John 5:20**. So, being born of God involves Christ being revealed to us and entrusting ourselves, our lives to Him and not just acknowledging His existence.

Next, the subject of love for the children of God is explained in an extraordinary way - that love for the children of God is an outflow of loving God and carrying out His commands. Clearly, the focus is not on the horizontal relationship, but on the vertical one. Put differently, John is saying "take care of your relationship with God, and your relationship with others will be 100%". So often, Christians are instructed to love each other, without addressing the very relationship from where that is supposed to flow.

John then establishes a very interesting link between loving God and keeping His commandments. We might even have heard it said to us that we are 'supposed to obey God because we love Him'. We see examples of this in Genesis **29:18 -20** (Jacob and Rachel) and **John 12:42-43**. These references show that love is indeed the strongest motivating factor in obedience. We also looked at **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**, **Mark 10:17-22** and **Matthew 22: 36-40**. In the latter reading we find Jesus stating: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments". In the parable of the rich young man (the reading from Mark 10) it is particularly striking that the young man mentions all the other commandments but fails to mention this greatest one. As it turns out, Jesus guides him in a very gentle way to show him that he actually loves money and security more than God, and that this was the problem. This example proves that what we love is what we will obey...However, John goes further and states that, God's commands are not burdensome. This refers not only to obeying out of love, but speaks of God's

Spirit living in us empowering us to obey His commands. Read **John 1:12**. Also read **Matthew 11:25-30** and **Matthew 23:4** as regards 'burdens'.

The next section of the passage deals with the testimony that God has given regarding His Son, and the trustworthiness of this testimony. But it also reminds us of something mentioned elsewhere in Scripture - the testimony that the born-again believer has in his/her heart. In **Mark 14:35-36** Jesus cries out: "Abba, Father..." and that same Spirit, living within us, cries out 'Abba, Father...' - see **Romans 8:14-17** and **Galatians 4:4-7**. God's Spirit living in us, witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God. It is a spiritual communication, confirming that we are His children. In verse 11 we get more detail about this 'Testimony' "...And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Jesus Christ living in us is our assurance that we have eternal life, for this life is in Him. And how do we know that the Son is living in us? verse 18 emphasises again, as elsewhere in the Epistles of John that we know this by the fact that we do not wilfully and habitually (continuous tense) go on sinning, repeating the same sin over and over again. Jesus Christ in us also influences how we pray, because Jesus yielded completely to the Father's will - "...Not my will, but yours be done..." (also in our Lord's prayer) and He now lives in us. In verse 18 we are presented with yet more evidence that we have eternal life - that we are shielded against the evil one (1 John 5:18). We also took note of a reading in **John 8:23-24** as regards the sin that leads to death.

Finally, the passage is summed up in the last verse (21) which is especially beautiful in the Amplified Bible: "**Little children, keep yourselves from idols (false gods)--[from anything and everything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life]. Amen (so let it be).**"

Dear friends, this letter would not be fulfilling its purpose, if it did not lead us to ask ourselves: "Do I truly know that I have eternal life?" here and now, this side of the grave. Death is not magically going to endow us with eternal life. We have to have it before we die.