

1 John 5:13

[1 John 5:13](#) says,

1Jn 5:13 **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.***

One critical point that must be initially addressed is that most all of the later translations do not actually include the phrase “**that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God**” which is included in the KJV and the NKJV. The Greek Interlinear which I utilize does not include it either. It was one of those phrases that was added similar to the text that was added in for a portion of v7-8, so I am not going to rehearse “why” it was included in the manuscript that the KJV was translated from, but the best manuscripts do not include that last phrase in v13.

As John closes out his letter to the various congregations that he is pastoring, he provides to them the primary reason why he has written this letter. It is so that his readers may “**know**” that they have eternal life. If we were to put a statement like that in perspective, it would really be very difficult to find one that had more significance to us relative to our Christian life. Every one of us is motivated and inclined to live out what we deeply believe, so the more deeply that we believe something, the deeper will be our resolve in that area. At a practical level, it is very difficult to be fully committed to something that we do not actually believe in or know anything about. There is no way that you could put me behind the cockpit of an airplane to try and fly it by myself. Why? It is because I know nothing about flying and am deeply convinced that any effort that I made to fly the plane would result in a complete disaster.

V13 is probably the most important verse in the entire letter simply because John completely understands that for a Christian to keep wondering whether or not they are actually saved creates nothing but tension, anxiety, apprehension, and depression in their life. It sets up a very debilitating conflict and uneasiness that literally paralyzes the individual spiritually. When someone is paralyzed they lose their ability to function normally, and in the same exact way it would be very difficult to function biblically or even practically if the believer’s life was constantly focused on the issue of whether or not they were actually saved. If a believer cannot trust God at the fundamental level of their salvation, it is more than obvious that they could never confidently trust Him in any other area as well.

It should be more than evident that it is virtually impossible to enjoy and live out the Christian life if we are uncertain about whether or not we are actually saved. John has given test after test after test to help a believer know for certain that they are saved. That has been one of his primary and overriding purposes throughout the entire letter – to provide a very objective basis in identifying both what it means to be saved and who actually is saved. None of the tests provided any wiggle room whatsoever – not one test. It was either yes you pass the test or no you do not pass the test. Either we are walking in the light or we are walking in darkness. Either we are keeping His commandments or we are not keeping His commandments. Either we are practicing righteousness or we are not practicing righteousness. John’s point has consistently been that those who are not consistently able to pass these tests are in fact not saved. He has been unwavering, fixed, and unyielding in his presentation of these truths. Why? It is simply because he did not want anyone to have any doubt about their salvation. Having a deep and abiding assurance about our salvation is probably the most strategic element necessary for ultimately

living out the Christian life effectively and victoriously. Paul personally reiterated this same truth in [2 Timothy 1:12](#) when he said,

^{2Ti 1:12} For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Notice that Paul uses the word “**know**” which is the same Greek word that John uses in [1 John 5:13](#). The word for “**persuaded**” is “*peitho*” and it means to have full confidence in something and to be fully convinced of something. It is the idea that the person’s confidence in something or someone is so full that they are willing to completely entrust their life to what they believe.¹ In fact, it is very often translated as “**trust**” in many other parts of the New Testament.

If we are going to be faithful to the Scriptures, and we should be, it seems very difficult to interpret biblical salvation and biblical faith as a kind of perpetual and ongoing insecurity and ambiguity. Just at a very personal level, I struggle with that kind of concept simply because of these vital truths that John and other authors have placed before us. John has just told us that we have the witness of God and the Holy Spirit’s witness within us concerning the reality of the son of God. Listen to how Paul states this truth in [Romans 8:15-16](#),

^{Ro 8:15} For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

In reading what John has stated in [1 John 5:9-10](#) and [Romans 8:16](#), it seems spiritually impossible that an individual could never know with certainty that they are saved. Obviously, there may be occasional doubts and struggles that face and perplex any Christian at various times in their life. However, to continually be denying the reality of God’s ability, willingness, and resolve to fully and clearly communicate to His children that they are His children seems to be a complete denial of and resistance to the truth that is provided in the Scriptures. To always be uncertain regarding salvation seems to be much more indicative of someone who is not saved as opposed to some who is saved. The goal that John has been addressing is that of a full and complete assurance regarding a believer’s salvation. Just at a very logical and practical level, why would we ever assume that it would be anything different? Why would God ever want to keep His children in the dark relative to their salvation and the most important decision that they have ever made?

Then to make matters actually worse, it seems that some people are constantly using what I want to term as an “exclusivity” excuse. In other words, they would simply say, “*Well, I am just not as spiritual as this other person who does not struggle with assurance.*” That may sound very humble, but in reality it is a rejection of God’s clearly defined truth. It diminishes the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, it devalues the truth of God’s Word, and it denies the full intention of God the Father to reveal to His children that they are in fact His children.² The person who is truly born again has received the Spirit of adoption and immediately cries out “**Abba, Father**”. When someone is saved, it has to be appreciated that at the moment of salvation that they have just as much of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as anyone else who has been saved. No one who is saved has some kind of exclusive and special attribute that allows them to be much more receptive to the Word of God than someone else who was just saved. At

the moment of salvation, every believer is fully indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they have the Word of God at their immediate disposal, and Christ begins to instantly work in their life. It is certainly true that God calls some believers into specific areas of ministry, but that calling does not negate the reality of His work in other believers that may not have a spiritual calling on their life at that particular moment of salvation.

I think that we can say with great confidence that everyone who is genuinely born again possesses the actual knowledge that they are a part of God's kingdom and one of His children. Every Christmas we receive gifts from different people, and generally the gift has our name on it. I love watching the children wrestle through the gifts to see how many they actually have. Once they spot their name on a gift, they immediately grab the gift and put it in their special place so they can open it. To be quite honest, generally they are not even concerned about someone else's gift. They have been given a gift and they know it is theirs. In the same way, salvation is a gift from God and for someone to receive the greatest gift possible, but not actually know it seems very demeaning to the Person who actually provided the gift. I was thinking about the deep levels of persecution and martyrdom that many believers have suffered in Pakistan. What stands out to me when I think about what they have gone through is that they could not have been able to experience such cruelty unless they truly knew that they had eternal life. Without sounding arrogant about all of this, it is quite dishonoring to God and to the work of Jesus Christ for someone who is truly a believer to always be uncertain, skeptical, and doubtful about God's gracious gift of eternal life to them.

If we are going to both understand and appreciate the depth of this particular verse, then it is critical that we understand what the word "**know**" actually means in this context. It is the Greek word "*oida*" and it is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense means that something happened in the past and is continuing to have an impact on the individual in the present. In other words, this knowledge that the individual has is ongoing as opposed to something that is haphazard, random, and occasional at best. The perfect tense means that it is a permanent knowledge – the believer has it. It is an intuitive knowledge, a beyond any shadow of a doubt knowledge that can only be given to the individual by the Holy Spirit.³ Dr. Wuest says the word is "*not speaking of experiential knowledge, but of absolute, beyond the peradventure of a doubt knowledge, a positive knowledge.*"⁴

Now, once again and without sounding presumptuous about these things, assurance is a biblical reality that should exist in the heart of every believer. It is an actual part of the salvific gift given to the believer by God. Obviously certain things like blatant sin, immorality, unfaithfulness, and any other negative attributes that may become a part of a believer's life can deeply impact and maybe even extinguish their assurance. If someone does not have a strong biblical assurance of their salvation, it probably means one of three things. First, it could mean that they simply have never been saved. My opinion is that this is often the case. Secondly, it could mean that they are living in known sin that they simply are not willing to address in their life. Then thirdly, it could mean that the individual has failed to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God's truth, and over a period of time they have simply lost confidence in His Word. There may be other reasons for a lack of assurance, but these three probably cover most of the difficulties that someone would experience.

I am sure that we have all met other professing Christians who never seem settled about the person of Christ. At times, He just does not seem that important to them, but is someone that they take very

casually and almost flippantly in their life. They are constantly questioning the validity and the truths of Scripture. They never seem satisfied with the demands of the Christian life as if they are overbearing and unnecessary. In my mind, these kinds of individuals simply are not saved. I am sure that many people will want to make exceptions for everybody relative to this issue, but if a person is never sure about Christ, His person, and His Word, there is no reason why it should be concluded that they are saved. Salvation is initiated at the point of genuine faith in the person of Christ. Salvation does not occur when someone is completely confused about Christ or when they are highly doubtful and skeptical about Christ - not at all. That scenario does not constitute salvation. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner's heart and life, a genuine believer is drawn by the Holy Spirit to Christ and they embrace the person of Christ into their life. This is exactly how salvation works. It is God who makes the deep and eternal impression on the believer's heart so that they can be saved. It is God's work for them and in them, and it is absolutely essential for salvation to occur.

How could a man ever face God apart from a genuine faith in Christ? How could someone stand before a holy God without a biblical faith the Son of God? In reality, they cannot, and that is exactly why it is so important for everyone who confesses Christ to know with absolute certainty that they are saved. I am absolutely sure that when I talk about this issue that there will always be someone who thinks that I have lost all spiritual sensibility. They want to make allowances for every conceivable aberration of the truth, for everyone's personal experiences, and for their continuing lack of confidence in the Word of God. The problem with all of that is simply that the Scriptures themselves are absolute, dogmatic, and fixed regarding the reality of what happens in a person's life when they are saved. The tendency of those who are not truly saved is that they are never settled with the absolute nature of biblical truth and they feel constrained to make everything relative to their personal experience and unbiblical notions about salvation. For some reason, they feel compelled that they can redefine the truth.

Now, you may be wondering to yourself "*Where in the world is all of this leading?*" Well the answer to that question is really very simple. It is designed to force us to ask the very simple question as to whether or not we know beyond any shadow of a doubt that we have eternal life and will spend eternity with God and Christ in their kingdom. Can you answer that question with absolute and total confidence in the Word of God and the person of Christ? Do you know beyond any question that Jesus Christ is utterly essential and indispensable to everything that concerns your personal life? Let me ask the question another way which may actually be more revealing. How do we respond to the very difficult moments of life when nothing seems to go right and everything seems to be falling apart? Do we immediately criticize God and question His sovereignty? Are we prone to become harsh and critical of Him in those moments? If we honestly answer those questions with an affirmative "Yes", chances are that we have never ever come to Christ, but are living under a tragic illusion about salvation. Someone is going to ask the question as to "*Did not someone like Peter have doubts, fears, and questions in his life?*" The answer to that question is that he did before he was given the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell his life. However, after that moment on the day of Pentecost, Peter was never the same. He had no doubts, no fears, and no questions related to the person of Christ. To the contrary, he was beaten, imprisoned, persecuted, and crucified upside down simply because he knew who he believed and he was not ashamed.

The attributes and qualities that John presents throughout this letter are undeniable in their description of what it really means to be a Christian. A true believer is completely settled in their belief in the Lord

Jesus Christ. They are people who truly love other believers. They are men and women who do not love the world or the things of the world, but rise above the world in their life. They are believers who even though at times they may sin against God, you will not find them practicing sin as a way of life. Their love for Christ is much too deep to allow that to happen in their life. Listen very carefully. Everyone's eternal destiny depends on how they answer these questions and whether or not these kinds of attributes are distinctive in their life. I am not asking what someone may believe about Jesus Christ, but whether or not they truly "**know**" Him. Just ask the personal question - do I want to be like Christ, and I willing to fully commit my life to Christ, and do I desire be righteous and godly in my behavior?

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, 1302.

² Lloyd-Jones, 639.

³ Precept Austin, *1 John 5:13, know*, electronic page.

⁴ Wuest, 179.

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