

Introduction

This week the British Open is being played. Scottie Scheffler, the number one ranked player in the world, was asked about his thoughts about his legacy and place in history. Scottie answered, *"To be completely honest, not really. I don't really play, like, for a place in history," he said. "I'm not playing for anything like that because, this is going to sound a little morbid, at the end of the day, I'm going to live my life, and it's going to end. When it ends, I'm going somewhere else, and I'm not going to be here anymore."* Scottie is a Christian, and he knows that he has eternal life. Scottie knows that he will be in heaven, spending an eternity with God.

Rory McIlroy, the world's number two ranked player, was asked the same question. He answered, *"I don't really care," he said. I would like to think that the people that love and care about me think a certain way of me, but yeah, I'll be long gone. I'll be dead. I don't think I'll be seeing what people say about me. I'll be six feet under. I don't think I'll be a ghost. I don't think I'll be, you know, like...yeah, I don't care."*

Scottie knows where he will be after his life on earth has ended. Rory, on the other hand, didn't seem to care, and he did not know where he would spend eternity. Much of the world is like Rory, not knowing where they will spend eternity, and even if there is an eternity.

Our passage today is 1 John 5:12-21, and in our passage today, the word, "know," is used seven times. John repeatedly says, "we know..." What is it that John said that believers know or should know? There are essentially three things that John wants believers to know. First, he says that believers know that they have eternal life. God wants all of us to be like Scottie, knowing that we have eternal life. Second, God wants us to know that He hears our prayers, and He answers our prayers. God also lets us know one of the key conditions to having our prayers answered, and he shares that so we can pray confidently. The third thing God wants us to know is that we are protected in Christ. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one, but those in Christ are protected from the evil one.

Three Truths Believers Should Know

1. They have eternal life
2. Their Prayers are heard and answered
3. They are protected from the evil one

(1 Jn 5:12–15) "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} 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. {14} This is the confidence which we have before 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 which we have asked from Him."

(1 Jn 5:16-17) "If 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. {17} All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death."

(1 Jn 5:18-20) "We 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. {19} We know that we are of God, and that 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. This is the true God and eternal life.”

(1 Jn 5:21) “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

1. They have eternal life

In verse thirteen, John wrote, “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.” The first thing in our passage that God wants believers to know is that they have eternal life. Those who believe in the name of the Son of God will have eternal life. The key is believing in the name of the Son of God. To believe in Jesus means to entrust your life to Him. To believe in Jesus means that you are going to yield your life to Him and follow Him. Belief is not an intellectual assent; it is placing your faith in Christ. The Greek word for believe is *pisteuo* (Strong’s G4100), and the root word is *pistis* (Strong’s G4102), which means faith. One who believes places his faith in Christ. One who believes commits his life to Christ.

(1 Jn 5:12–13) “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} 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.”

When a person believes in Christ, Jesus comes into their life. That is why John wrote, “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” Jesus comes into his life, and he now has the Son in his life. Jesus does not come physically into your life; it is the Spirit of Christ that comes into us. In Romans 8:9, Paul wrote that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. The Spirit of Christ comes into a person when they place their faith in Christ. A believer has the Son of God living in him.

(Ro 8:9) “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

It is not just the Spirit of Christ that comes into the person. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all One. In John 14:23, Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. The Father and the Son live, dwell, and abide inside of believers. I had always thought that Jesus came in me when I became a believer, and did not realize that the Father and the Son made Their abode in me.

(Jn 14:23) “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he told them twice that they were temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in them. He was encouraging them to live holy lives, because the temple of God is holy. A believer has the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit in them.

(1 Co 3:16) “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul tells us what happens when we believe in Christ. He said, “after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in

Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” When a person responds to the gospel, the Holy Spirit comes into their life and seals them.

(Eph 1:13) “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,”

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel prophesied of this new birth. He wrote, “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.” That is repentance. When a person comes to Christ, they repent and turn to Christ. Ezekiel continued, “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.” When a person turns to Christ, God puts His Spirit in the person, and gives them a new heart, a soft heart, so that they can obey Him. Notice that when a person comes to Christ, he becomes part of the family of God. God said, “They will be My people, and I shall be their God.” We enter into a covenant with God through Christ and become His people, and he becomes our God. A believer not only has Christ, but he is in Christ.

(Eze 11:18–20) “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. {19} And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, {20} that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.”

2. Their Prayers are heard and answered

The second thing that John wrote that believers should know is that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.” If we know that God hears and answers our prayers, we should have confidence in our prayers.

(1 Jn 5:14–15) “This is the confidence which we have before 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 which we have asked from Him.”

The word for confidence is *parresia* (Strong’s G3954), and it means to have boldness or confidence. It is used thirty-one times in the New Testament, and is translated as confidence thirteen times, and confidently one time. The second most translation is boldness. In Acts 4, Peter and John had been arrested because of preaching Jesus after the healing of the lame man at the temple. When they had been released, they reported everything to their companions, and the church lifted up their voices to God with one accord. In verse twenty-nine, they asked the Lord that He would grant them to speak with all confidence (*parresia*), while He extended His hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Jesus. After they had prayed, the place was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness (*parresia*). God wants believers to pray with confidence and boldness.

(Ac 4:23–31) “When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. {24} And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them... {29} And now, Lord, take note

of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence (parresia), {30} while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness (parresia).”

What is the key to praying with this confidence? The key is knowing that you are praying according to the will of God. When we pray according to the will of God we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, and we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. God hears all prayers, so when John said that God hears us; it means that he pays attention to those prayers. We know that when we regard wickedness in our heart, the Lord will not hear or pay attention to those prayers. We also know that when we ask with wrong or selfish motives, God does not answer those prayers, even though He hears them.

(Ps 66:18) “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;”

(Jas 4:3) “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

When Jesus prayed to the Father for Lazarus to come forth, He raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me...” God always hears our prayers, but He does not always pay heed to them. If we pray according to His will, we know that He will hear, listen, and pay attention to those prayers.

(Jn 11:41–42) “So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. {42} I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”

We are encouraged to pray about everything, and at all times. We are to continually devote ourselves to prayer. We are to live in communion with God, and talk to Him about everything, but there are some conditions to our prayers being answered. When we pray within the parameters that God sets, we can pray with confidence.

(1 Th 5:17) “pray without ceasing;”

(Col 4:2) “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;”

What are some of those conditions? One of those conditions is our faith; we must pray in faith, believing that we will receive what we ask for. In Mark 11, after Jesus had cursed the fig tree, the disciples passed that way again, and Peter said, “Rabbi, look the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” Jesus answered him, “Have faith in God.” Then He told them that if they said to the mountain to be cast into the sea and do not doubt it, but believes, it will be granted to him. Jesus concluded, saying, “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.”

(Mk 11:21-24) “Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” {22} And Jesus *answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. {23} “Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be

granted him. {24} "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you."

There are many today that take this one passage about praying with faith, and ignore all the other conditions that God gives about prayer, like praying according to the will of God. We cannot take one Scripture and build a doctrine around it that is not supported by the balance of Scripture. We must believe that we will receive the things we pray about, and we must also believe that this is God's will in the matter.

Another condition is asking in Jesus' name. In John 14, Jesus said, "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." Jesus repeated this promise in John 16, saying, "If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

(Jn 14:13-14) "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

(Jn 16:23-24) "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. {24} "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

So, many people add the phrase, "in Jesus' name I pray" at the end of their requests and think that God is obligated to answer their prayers. God is not a genie that we rub and tell Him what we want Him to do for us. God is God. He is the Creator of the heavens and earth. He is the highest authority. He has all power and authority. He is the King of kings. We are His people and His servants. Jesus came to earth as a servant, and set an example for us to follow, but He is not our servant; we are His servants. Our prayers are not about getting Him to do what we want, but it is about praying according to His will.

When we pray in the name of Jesus, we are praying on behalf of Jesus. It means that we are His representatives doing His business here on earth. Some of you may have a corporate business card, which is to be used to buy things needed for your business. You can put hotel bills and plane fares on the corporate card, but you cannot use it for your own personal purchases. When you make a purchase using the corporate card, you are doing business in the name of the business. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we are carrying out His will and His plans and purposes. When we ask things that are according to His will and for His purposes, we can be assured that we will have those prayers answered.

Another scripture that is misused is Matthew 18:19, where Jesus said, "If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven." This is not a blank check good for anything we want, as long as we find someone to join with us in praying for it. I cannot just ask someone to agree with me in prayer that I win the lottery this week. I believe this means that two or more agree that this is the will of God in this matter. This is particularly helpful if we are not sure about God's will in a matter. We can ask one or two brothers for their counsel on the matter to make sure that you are praying according to God's will.

(Mt 18:19) "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

How do we know if we are praying according to God's will? How do you find God's will? We find God's will primarily in the Scriptures. We need to read, study, and know the scriptures so that we can quickly identify God's will. When we talk about God's will, there is a General Will of God, which many call the moral will of God, and then there is a specific will of God, which some define as the sovereign will of God. I prefer to use the terms General Will and Specific Will. God's General Will applies to everyone, and this is found in God's word.

When God tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 that His will is for us to be sanctified, and to abstain from sexual immorality, that applies to all of us. When God tells us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in everything, this is God's General Will for everyone.

(1 Th 4:3-4) "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; {4} that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,"

(1 Th 5:16-18) "Rejoice always; {17} pray without ceasing; {18} in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

However, God's Specific Will does not apply to everyone. For example, in Jeremiah 1, God tells Jeremiah that He has appointed him to be a prophet to the nations. He has not appointed all of us to be a prophet to the nations. There are not many Jeremiahs in the world. When God told Paul that He has appointed him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, this is not God's Specific Will for everyone. We are not all apostles, and we have not all been sent out as apostles to the Gentiles. It was God's will, but not His General Will, that would have applied to everyone.

(Je 1:5) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

(Col 1:1) "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,"

When John wrote that when we pray according to God's will, He hears us and we can know with certainty and confidence that we have the requests which we have asked from Him, this applies to both His General Will and His Specific Will. What is different is that we learn of God's will differently, and what may be God's Specific Will for you may not be God's Specific Will for me. Therefore, a specific prayer that you pray may be according to God's Specific Will in your life, but not according to God's Specific Will in my life.

God uses His Word to communicate His General Will. God may use many different ways to communicate His specific will for us. He used a dream with Joseph, when sending him to Egypt to escape Herod, and He used another dream when bringing him back. God used a vision to send Paul to Macedonia, and it is referred to as the Macedonian Vision. God is not limited in the ways that He can communicate His specific will in matters. His specific will cannot violate His moral will, which is contained in the Scriptures. The scriptures are always the ultimate test.

God wants us to pray about everything, and He wants us to pray confidently. We can also look at these various conditions as keys to praying confidently. When we ask anything according to His will, and in His name, and with right motives, we can be assured that God has heard us, and we will receive what we have asked for.

Many years ago, Karen and I were praying about moving to Georgia. I spoke with the pastor at the church we were attending, and shared with him why I sensed that we were to move to Georgia. I told him that I did not have a prophetic word, but I did have many other signs. He said to me that he was confident that it was God's Specific Will for us to move, and if we did not move, we would not be doing His will; so we moved.

Next, John gives two examples to illustrate his point of praying according to God's will. In the first example, someone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, and he shall ask and God will give life to those who are not committing sin leading to death. In the second example, a brother commits a sin leading to death, and John says that we should not make a request for this. John's point is that we need to always pray according to God's will.

(1 Jn 5:16) "If 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."

This illustration by John has raised many questions and debates about what is a sin leading to death. Scholars differ on almost every aspect of the example. Some believe that the sin leading to death refers to a crime committed, where the civil authorities have sentenced the person to death.

A few scholars believe the sins leading to death and those not leading to death come from the understanding of Old Testament laws. In the Law, certain sins, like idolatry, blasphemy, incest, and murder carried the sentence of death. Other sins were not punishable by death, but restitution had to be made for the crime.

Some believe the death in this case is a temporal death. Others believe this is a spiritual death, and it is an eternal death and separation from God. One of the more common views is that it refers to a grievous sin that a brother has committed where it brings shame and dishonor to the Lord and to the church, and where God decides to bring judgment upon the person. We have an example of this in Acts 5, where God struck down Ananias and Sapphira for lying about the value of the land that they gave.

(Ac 5:3–6) "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? {4} While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." {5} And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. {6} The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him."

We have another example in 1 Corinthians 11, where some of the saints were sick, and others had died because they had not taken the Lord's Supper properly. Some had plenty to eat in their love feasts, while others had nothing to eat. This dishonored the poor and God disciplined some in the church for doing this.

(1 Co 11:28–31) "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. {29} For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. {30} For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. {31} But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged."

Another view, although not by most scholars, is that John was referring to the unpardonable sin, which is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. For those holding an Arminian view, they believe a brother can lose his salvation, so the only unpardonable sin is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Since John mentions “a brother committing a sin” most scholars, particularly those who do not believe a Christian can lose his salvation, do not believe the brother has committed an unpardonable sin, and do not accept this interpretation.

Since the issue is praying for our brother in sin, I lean on the side of always praying for all men. I may not pray for his life, but I will pray for repentance, conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. I will pray for godly sorrow. I will pray for contriteness of heart. I will pray and ask God if there is anything He wants me to do besides pray. Sometimes, God will have me go to the brother and confront him of the sin. There are many things to pray for those in sin, and the key for me is to ask the Lord what His will is in the matter, and to always pray according to His will.

I have told this example before, but in one church that I pastored, over the course of a few years, we had two different men diagnosed with colon cancer. As I was praying in my bedroom for the first man, the Lord told me it was a sickness unto death. Then the Lord gave me a message out of Hebrews 11 on faith that I was to preach at his funeral. That was God’s will in the matter, and the man died three days later, and I preached the message in Hebrews 11 at his service.

The second man who was diagnosed with colon cancer had just had eighteen of his lymph nodes taken out, and all of them were cancerous. The cancer had spread from his colon throughout his body, and the diagnosis was not good. He did not have many months to live. As I prayed and asked the Lord what His will was, He told me to go pray for the man, and to pray a very specific way. I was to rebuke the cancer in the name of Jesus, and to pronounce healing in the man. The next day, at the end of our worship service, I prayed for the man exactly like the Lord had told me. I was praying according to the will of God. I prayed with confidence, and I told my wife that this man was going to be healed. On the next day, the man went in for a PET Scan, and they could not find a trace of cancer anywhere on his body. That was about ten years ago, and the man is still alive and well. We can pray with confidence when we pray according to the will of God.

John ends this section by saying that “all unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.” All of us have sinned. If God were to punish all of our sins as sins unto death, we would all be dead. Fortunately, God is a God of mercy, grace, and forgiveness. When we sin, we just need to confess our sins and repent, and God will forgive us and cleanse us from the sin. Since all of us sin, we should be humble and should bear the sins of others. We should pray for them and do everything we can to win our brother. We should do everything we can to restore our brother, and this certainly includes praying for our brother.

(1 Jn 5:17) “All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.”

3. They are protected from the evil one

The first thing that John wants believers to know is that they have eternal life. The second truth that believers should know is that their prayers are heard and answered. God wants us to pray with confidence, and when we pray according to the will of God, we will have the requests that we have asked for. The third thing that God wants believers to know is that they are protected from the evil one. In this last section, John mentions “we know” three times. Believers need to know with certainty that they are protected from the evil one.

John begins by saying 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.” In chapter three, John wrote that “no one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen him or knows Him.” He was talking about a person who has a lifestyle of sin. In verse nine, he wrote that no one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” John did not say that believers would not sin, but that they would not practice sin because the seed of Christ was in them.

(1 Jn 5:18) “We 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.”

(1 Jn 3:6) “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.”

(1 Jn 3:9) “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

He said that “He who was born of God keeps him.” The one who was born of God is Jesus. Jesus is the One that keeps us. While Jesus was here in the flesh, He kept His disciples from the evil one. In the High Priestly Prayer in John 17, Jesus asked the Father to keep them while He was going to the cross and the grave, and then He made the comment about how He had kept them and guarded them.

(Jn 17:11–12) “I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*. {12} While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.”

Jesus was only in the grave for three days, and then He was with the disciples for forty days (Acts 1:3). Then, Jesus returned to the Father, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Ro 8:34, Mk 16:19, Col 3:1). After returning to the Father, He resumed His role of keeping those who believed in Him. Jesus is interceding for believers, and is upholding all things by the word of His power. Jesus keeps believers from the evil one.

(Heb 1:3) “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

Jesus keeps us from the temptations of the evil one. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we find that God does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. He is watching over us and keeping us. Then, in our temptations, He gives us a way of escape, so that we can endure the temptation. Jesus is our keeper at all times, and He keeps us from the evil one. Because He keeps us, the evil one does not touch him.

(1 Co 10:13) “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

(1 Jn 5:18) “We 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.”

Next, John said, “we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” It is important for believers to know that they have Christ in them, that they have been born again, and are of God. That confidence in their relationship with Christ also gives them confidence in the protection from the enemy. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one, but those in Christ have been taken out of the world system, and are no longer controlled and ruled by the evil one. They have overcome the world by placing their faith in Christ.

(1 Jn 5:19) “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*.”

When I was a chaplain at Cobb County Adult Detention Center, I mentored a man named Ricky. I really liked Ricky; he had a gentle and humble spirit. He was a big man, and I am guessing that he was about six foot four and probably weighed over three hundred pounds. One day when I was meeting with Rickie, he told me that during the Super Bowl the Lord had prompted him to begin preaching on Psalm 91. So, right in the middle of the game, with most of the sixty-five men in the O-6 pod glued to the game, he stood up and began preaching on the other side of the room. The inmates stopped watching the game and started listening to him preach. Ten men committed their lives to Christ during the Super Bowl.

What was Rickie preaching about? He was preaching about getting under God’s protection. God tells us that those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. How do we get into His shelter? We enter His refuge and fortress by placing our trust in Him. When we do that, He delivers us from the snare of the trapper and from deadly pestilence. We will not be afraid of the terror by night or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that lays waste at noon. Those who are in Christ are kept from the evil one. The key is that we must place our trust in Christ, and seek shelter in Him; and that is what Rickie preached that day.

(Ps 91:1–10) “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. {2} I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!” {3} For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. {4} He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. {5} You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; {6} of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. {7} A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, *but* it shall not approach you. {8} You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. {9} For you have made the Lord, my refuge, *even* the Most High, your dwelling place. {10} No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent.”

Conclusion and Applications

John wrote this letter to let believers know that they have eternal life and also to protect them from the false teachings of Gnosticism, Docetism, and others. These antichrists denied that Jesus had come in the flesh. They denied the deity of Christ. They denied that Jesus had died on the cross to atone for our sins. They taught that sin did not matter, because all flesh was sinful, and that it did not affect your eternal life. They taught that Jesus came to give revelation, not atonement. They said that they had this special revelation, and were seeking to draw believers into their false teaching and revelation.

John began the letter talking about how they had seen with their eyes, heard, and touched with their hands concerning the Word of life. He was proclaiming to them so that they could have fellowship with them. He was driving home the point that Jesus, the Son of God, had come in the flesh, and they personally witnessed Him and fellowshiped with Him. John was refuting the false teaching that Christ had not come in the flesh.

John talked about sin, and made the distinction that believers do not deny their sins, but confess their sins and are forgiven. He said that believers do not practice sin, but walk in the light. John was refuting the false teaching about sin.

Now, as he ends the letter, he said, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has give 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.” He is reaffirming the things that He has been saying throughout the book. He reaffirms that Jesus is the Son of God and had come. He is letting them know that they have understanding and know Jesus who is true. He is letting believers know that they are in Jesus Christ, who is true. This is the true God and eternal life.

(1 Jn 5:20) “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. This is the true God and eternal life.”

John closes the book with an exhortation to us to guard ourselves from idols. An idol is anything that we place before God. An idol does not have to be a gold statue of Buddha, or the worship of Diana, the goddess of Ephesus. An idol can be greed, pleasures of the world, sports, recreation, or anything else that we prioritize over God.

(1 Jn 5:21) “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

The first application comes from this verse, and it is very relevant and applicable today. We need to guard ourselves from idols. We have to monitor and examine our lives and priorities. We must sanctify Christ as Lord and give Him pre-imminence in our lives. He must be first in our priorities. He must be first in our time. He must be first in our finances. We must make sure that He is on the throne of our lives in every area. We cannot love the world or the things of the world, because we will not have the love of the Father in us if we do. We must love God with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

Our second application is to love our brother. We cannot love God, who we cannot see, if we do not love our brother who we can see. John emphasized loving our brother throughout the book. We must be committed to fellowship and to our local church. We must be committed to laying down our lives for one another. It is the primary way for the world to see that we are believers.

Our third application is to walk in the light. John emphasized that we cannot fellowship with God or with one another if we walk in darkness. God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, and we need to walk in the light. Another key way to identify disciples is whether they practice righteousness. Believers do not practice sin; they practice righteousness. Are you walking in the light? Is every area of your life in the light, or are there some dark closets that need to be addressed? Believers confess their sins, and God promises to forgive and to cleanse us when we do. If God has shown you an area of darkness in your life, I encourage you to confess that this morning, and ask God to forgive and to cleanse you.

Closing Prayer

Father, the book of 1 John is so relevant to us today. Thank You for inspiring John to write this for us. Father, thank You for loving us and calling us to be Your children, to be in Your family. Jesus, thank You for laying down Your life and demonstrating Your love to us. Jesus, thank You for being our Keeper, and for keeping us from the evil one. Thank You for Your protection. Father, I pray that the truths that we have looked at while studying this book would continue to speak to our hearts and minds, and Your word would perform its work in us. I pray that it will be obvious to those around us that we are Your disciples. Help us to walk in the light. Help us to love You and to love our brothers. Help us to be confident in our prayers and to pray according to the will of God. I pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- John has given many different ways to know if you have eternal life. Of all of the different ways, which has resonated the most in your life?
- Are you confident that God hears and answers your prayers?
- What are some prayers that God has answered recently?
- How do we know if we are praying according to the will of God? What are some ways to ascertain His will?
- John's examples of prayer pertained to brothers in sin. Are most of our prayers about ourselves and our needs, or are they more focused on righteousness in the church?
- What are some times in your life that you were keenly aware that God was keeping you and protecting you from the evil one?
- What are some ways that we can guard ourselves from idols?

Three Truths Believers Should Know

Introduction (1 Jn 5:12–21)

- 1. They have eternal life** (1 Jn 5:12–13, Ro 8:9, Jn 14:23, 1 Co 3:16, Eph 1:13, Eze 11:18–20)

- 2. Their Prayers are heard and answered** (1 Jn 5:14–17, Ac 4:23–31, Ps 66:18, Jas 4:3, Jn 11:41–42, 1 Th 5:17, Col 4:2, Mk 11:21–24, Jn 14:13–14, 16:23–24, Mt 18:19, 1 Th 4:3–4, 5:16–18, Je 1:5, Col 1:1, Ac 5:3–6, 1 Co 11:28–31)

- 3. They are protected from the evil one** (1 Jn 5:18–19, 1 Jn 3:6, 3:9, Jn 17:11–12, Ac 1:3, Ro 8:34, Mk 16:19, Col 3:1, He 1:3, 1 Co 10:13, Ps 91:1–10)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Jn 5:20–21)