

Confidence

1 John 5:13-21

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Open your bibles with me to the book of Psalms, chapter 18.

What is the shortest chapter in the Bible?

- Psalms 117

What is the longest chapter in the Bible?

- Psalm 119

Which chapter is in the center of the Bible?

- Psalm 118

There are 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and there are 594 chapters after Psalm 118.

What is the center verse in the Bible?

- Psalm 118:8

Let's together read what that verse says: (NIV) Psalms 118:8 "It is better to take refuge in the LORD, than to trust in man."

I think the NKJV translates this verse more accurately when it says: Psalms 118:8, "*It is better to trust in the LORD, Than to put confidence in man.* "

594 chapters lead up to this spiritual truth, and then, 594 chapters reinforce this spiritual truth; Where do I place my confidence? My spouse? My pastor? My best friend? No...I place my confidence in the Lord. Do I place my confidence in my accomplishments, my education, my wits, or my problem solving abilities? No...I place my confidence in the Lord. Do I place my confidence in my cash flow, my health insurance, or my brand new four wheel drive truck? Of course not. Is there any person on this planet, is there any object in this whole world, is there and ideal, concept or philosophy, that I place my confidence in? No. Of all the aforementioned, only one will NOT fail us, that is, confidence in the Lord.

What is this confidence in the Lord? John gives us some insight into this in our Scripture today from 1 John 5:13-21. Here in these few short verses, John jam packs practical truth concerning our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; John teaches us about confidence in the Lord. The Apostle John wraps up his letter of 1 John by encouraging us to understand, encouraging us to grab a hold of the fact that behind everything we see and behind everything that we do, the Holy Spirit is there backing us up.

Look, verse 13, right up front here, John reminds us why he wrote this letter. What does he say there in verse 13? "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

John is writing specifically to believers here.

What is John assuming in this statement here in verse 13? John assumes that both you and I will have doubts about what? Eternal life. John assumes that just because we believe, just because we have given our lives over to Jesus Christ, John assumes that you and I do not have it all together. John assumes correctly, doesn't he?

If you have ever had concerns about the afterlife...you're normal. If you have, at times, worried or wondered if what the bible describes as the afterlife is real, you are not alone - most people have had difficulty relating to the afterlife, we have to die after all to have the experience of the after life don't we?.

However, all that be said, many Christians do have an absolute confidence in this area.

I have told you before that I have had the privilege to be at the deathbed of quite a few people over the years. After being at so many deaths, one thing has had a very profound impact upon me - Some people struggle and have a great sense of anxiety at the time of their death while other people, other people have absolute and complete peace in their death. I decided years ago what kind of a person I wanted to be at my, inevitable death - I want to be one of those people who are at peace when they die.

I remember the first woman I encountered who had this perfect peace during her death. It was astounding. I had been at a number of bedsides and seen a number of people die, but this woman, she was so, completely different. Yes, Helen was a Christian, but many of the people I had seen die were Christians also. Yet this woman, who was certainly not going to last the hour, had absolutely no concern nor anxiety about her approaching death, let me emphasize - absolutely. Now, Helen could not explain why she had this great peace beyond telling me that she knows, that she knows...she knows Jesus Christ is very real, she had talked with Him as far back as she could remember.

What did this Helen have that so many other people did not? Look right there in verse 13: "so that you may know that you have eternal life." In the Greek John says, "possess

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eternal life." Helen knew that she was not entering into eternal life, Helen had eternal life. It was like it was a tangible item she could hold onto. Hear this: you and I, we who have given our life over to Jesus Christ, we actually carry with us eternal life, by the fact that we possess the Holy Spirit, we concurrently possess eternal life. Do you see how that works? God gives eternal life to us upon our conversion...and remember we are sealed by the Holy Spirit upon our conversion - and so nothing, nothing, can take this away from us. If you are a Christian, you now at this very moment possess eternal life, you literally carry it with you as a possession. At your death you will not enter into eternal life as I mentioned earlier, because you have already entered into eternal life. You are living eternal life as we speak.

Helen, her faith was not philosophical, nor intellectual, nor idealistic - Helen had quite frankly experienced the power and presence of Jesus Christ in her life. Now, how did Helen achieve this peace? I have thought about this quite a lot over the years, and my conclusion is that Helen achieved this peace by a very active and interactive relationship with Jesus Christ. I think John confirms this in verses 14-15.

See, Helen was confident in death, because she was confident in life. Verses 14-15 here in 1 John chapter 5 are about confidence in approaching God. John tells us here that we can be confident in our approach to God, John specifically means prayer here. He says that if we ask anything God will hear us. To hear means to hear favorably. In other words, as a Christian you are in good standing with God and so when you talk to God He is very open to what you have to say to him.

Notice, in verse 14 the word 'anything'. Anything means, anything. If you complain to God about why things are the way they are in your life - He hears you favorably. If you are mad at God and ask him why - He hears you favorably. If you have committed a fairly bad sin and you talk to God about it, asking for forgiveness - He hears you favorably. See when John talks about prayer, it is not just about God I need this, and God I need that; this is about talking with God about - whatever.

Now notice the caveat in verse 14 that generally throws folks for a loop - 'according to his will'. Typically, people will respond with the question, "How do I know what is in God's will", they usually ask this like we are dealing with rocket science or something, like it is some sort of mystery only the brilliant can figure out. This caveat is not so difficult.

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John is speaking of submission to Jesus Christ here. See the point is that we must submit to God. This submission is ultimately our key in this verse. On one hand I am openly speaking my mind to God on the other hand, I am not demanding, insisting, or believing that my ideas and plans are the will of God. Do you see that? To start with I work on submission to God. This is not something that happens next week, this is something that happens over an extended period of time.

Now as a practical matter, we know the will of God by knowing the Word of God, the Bible. God has revealed his Word to us and the Bible is not going to tell you to act in a way that is against the will of God. It, in fact, is going to do just the opposite, it is going to show you how to act within the will of God. For example, this morning we are finding a very small piece of God's will; We are finding that it is God's will that we place our confidence in the Lord, over placing our confidence in other things, whatever they are that we encounter in life. That may seem like a very small thing, but when many many understandings about God add up, I have a very large piece of my life that I can if I am acting in God's will or not. So as a practical matter we have the Word of God which gives us very practical insight into what the will of God is, and it is not rocket science, but it is a life time of work.

Second, we have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help us understand the Word of God, AND the Holy Spirit will guide us in very specific circumstances in our life. The Holy Spirit helps us understand and apply Scripture so that we do honestly understand the will of God. AND as we know the voice of the Holy Spirit over time, we will know in specific circumstances, God's will in our life.

Look, it is actually fairly simple, the more time you spend interacting with God, the better you will understand the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life.....the more confidence in Jesus you will have in your life, and then you will also be like our sister Helen, absolutely at peace, even in death. God has not made this complicated.

Now here in verse 15 we see that whatever is asked (remember it is within His will), whatever we ask we have it. The structure of this sentence indicates that the answer God gives is immediate. You ask now, He answers now. I also want to point out that, yes the answer is immediate, but for the culmination of the answer - there is no time limit.

Basically, we will be able to look back and see that God did answer our prayer, but events had to unfold, things had to happen, for the fruition of that prayer to come to pass.

You see that? We talk with God and the interaction is immediate, but for the final outcome - there is no time given. See, don't be discouraged because you don't 'see' the answer to your request right now, be confident, the answer is given and you will know in time.

Understand, John is addressing confidence here. John is emphasizing how we can be confident that not only will our prayers be heard, and favorably at that, but that our prayers will be answered. John is not, is not, giving some kind of a voodoo formula on how to manipulate God to do our will. John is telling us what spiritual reality is, he is telling us how things work spiritually speaking, and that we should be confident in our interaction with God understanding that we are not just speaking to the wind.

John continues in verses 16-17 with an example of praying in confidence. Now don't get all hung up on the sin that leads to death and the sin that does not lead to death. What John is saying here when he talks about sin leading to death is, the sin that rejects Jesus Christ. Rejecting Jesus Christ, John tells us, leads to spiritual death.

John tells us not to pray about the sin that leads to death, that is, rejection of Jesus Christ, why is that? Well, if I am a Christian, I possess eternal life do I not? If I possess eternal life, something that cannot be taken from me, why pray for me about the sin that leads to death for I cannot spiritually die?

Remember, John, in this whole book, has been speaking of our faith within the church, our faith in interaction with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We saw a few Sunday's ago John tells us our salvation is permanent, it cannot be taken away. Once we are saved, we are always saved. Once we possess eternal life, that's it. That fact alone should give us great confidence before God.

So why would I pray about a true brother's or sister's salvation, when they are already saved? That's nuts. The sin that leads to death is the rejection of Jesus Christ, and once one accepts Jesus, they can never reject Jesus - so what is the point in praying for salvation for those who can never lose their salvation?

Remember, John told us that those who were members of the church and then rejected Jesus Christ, never were believers in the first place. One can never be a true believer and then not believe - the possession of the Holy Spirit makes such a thing an impossibility.

In verses 16 and 17 John continues his emphasis on confidence. Why pray for the salvation of the saved if we are confident in our salvation? Be confident in the Lord, not in your own actions.

John does recognize that we will sin, and we should pray for each other to overcome sin. But, this sin that comes into our lives will not remove our salvation - that is why it is sin that does not lead to death.

Verse 18. "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin." John has addressed this earlier. But again, let me remind you that the meaning in the Greek here is of one who lives a life ruled by sin. We saw earlier that such a person, by their behavior, is showing that they are not saved. Note that Christians do sin, but sin does not rule their lives. It is noteworthy that, 'to know' here is a state of knowledge. This is kind of a Christian community wide held fact. This is not a personal type of knowledge, but a, "we as a community of faith understand this - that God rules over us, not sin."

So again, we are confident in the Lord, for sin cannot ultimately, overtake us.

John then reassures us in verse 18 that we are out of the realm of evil. Remember we saw at the beginning of 1 John that we are literally moved from the dominion of the world to the dominion of Jesus Christ. It is some kind of new reality that we cannot fully perceive. Because we are in this new dominion, we are safe, our salvation, our eternal life cannot be taken away by evil - even though, as he says in verse 19, that the world is in control of the evil one. It doesn't matter that we are still in the world, we have been somehow moved to a different dimension, a new dominion, and we can be confident in our eternal life.

Take a look at verse 20. Do you see there that we have been given understanding. This understanding is a direct result of incarnation of Jesus Christ. What is this understanding for? It tells us there in verse 20, so that we may know that we are in Jesus.

We do not understand on our own. On my own I cannot, I cannot come to the conclusion that Jesus is the true God. The only way I can come to this knowledge is by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who brings this knowledge and he is the one who gives this knowledge. It is through Jesus Christ that we have knowledge of Jesus Christ and by extension have knowledge of eternal life.

Let me bring this all together for us.

At the beginning we spoke about Psalm 118:8. There we saw that we are to only place our confidence in the Lord. Here in John we see that we are to be confident in our eternal life, which we now possess, and even more than that, we saw that we have been given understanding.

The understanding that God has given us, instills in us that Jesus Christ is the true God - like Helen said, "I know, that I know." John understands that this is difficult for us, he knows that we will have concerns and doubts, so he tells us that we should be confident in our approach to God - that when we speak to God He will hear us favorably. See, since we possess eternal life, we are confident that God will see us favorably, whatever the circumstances. When we practice our approach to God we will over time gain a stronger confidence, simply because we know Jesus better than we did before.