

God So Wants You to Know Him

1 John 5:13-21

Grace Church - 01-30-11

Introduction:

Knowledge is power. What can we do with knowledge? "If I had only known someone will say."

"If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." - Yogi Berra, New York Yankees Hall of Fame baseball player

Karen Cross in her book Family & Relationships wrote
If I had known you would grow in the blink of an eye, we would have painted more pictures, and I would have smiled when you asked a thousand whys.

Comedienne Lily Tomlin, who came to fame in the "Laugh In" comedy series, said "If I had known what it would be like to have it all - I might have been willing to settle for less".

If I Had Known: Love's Memories A Short Sad Love Poem by Injete Chesoni

If I had known that one day you would be gone,
I would have savored every moment spent in your arms.
I would have treasured every second of time spent with you,
To remind me that once upon a time our love was true.
I would have frozen every moment when your eyes met mine,
I would have captured every caress, in the hourglass of time.
I would have stocked up on memories for that future day,
When you would be gone to shores far away.
But while we were together I was deceived,
That love was forever and not a passing breeze.

There is a day coming when all of us will stand before our Creator. The last thing you want to say is "if I had only known".

John's objective in this short letter is to keep that from happening to as many people as possible. He has used the word "know" thirty seven times in these five chapters.

He begins in chapter one with a proclamation of who Jesus Christ is.

1 John 1:2-3 (ESV)

2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The goal is that all would come to a place of knowing God on a personal basis. That is what fellowship is all about.

So when we get to the end of the book John reiterates what he is so desirous of us knowing. I have titled our worship in the Word this morning "**God So Wants to You Know Him!**" There are three things in our chosen section of scripture which God wants us to know about Him. Let's take a look and see what they are.

Would you stand with me please as I read 1 John 5:13-21. It is page 1023 in the pew bible.

Here is the first thing God wants you to know about Him.

1. God is the provider of eternal life and He wants you to know that you possess eternal life.

1 John 5:13 (ESV)

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

We are told numerous times where this eternal life comes from and how it is that we can come to possess it. Look in verse twenty with me please.

1 John 5:20 (ESV)

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. He is the true God and eternal life.

A question that you should ask, "what is the meaning of eternal life"? In its simplest meaning it means life that never ends. It is the word *αιωνιος* (aionios). We would say eons. It has the meaning of; eternal, perpetual, to time in its duration, constant, abiding. When referring to eternal life, it means the life which is God's and hence it is not affected by the limitations of time.¹

Life is the word *ζωη* (zoe). It has to do with the human experience of life in this world. It has to do with physical life and existence as opposed to death and non-existence. When we put the two together it is generally supposed that "eternal life" is that which a Christian experiences after crossing the threshold of death. However, is that all it means. Is eternal life something I am looking forward to at future time or is it something which I have already entered into?

It seems to me that the consequence of viewing it only as something we obtain after death, it can become nebulous and intangible. But if eternal life is something which I already possess because of having placed saving faith in Jesus Christ then it has everything to do with the life which I am now experiencing.

There was a young and very rich man who came to Jesus one day and asked how it was that he could have eternal life. Today he would be Mark Elliot Zuckerberg who created Facebook and is worth at least 6 billion. He 27 years old. It is interesting that Zuckerberg created a social network. Movie critic Robert Ebert says that Zuckergerg has a touch of Asperger's syndrome.

¹ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

Asperger Syndrome is an Autism Spectrum Disorder (or Pervasive Developmental Disorder) characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviors and interests. Those with Asperger Syndrome, or AS, may exhibit a lack of empathy for their peers, clumsiness, and atypical use of language, though none of these symptoms are required for a diagnosis.

Well, let's get back to the rich young ruler. This man had it all but he was concerned about what was in store after death. He came to Jesus with the understanding there was something to come after this world and so he asks the question;

Mark 10:17 (ESV)

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus' response reveals to us that eternal life was not only some pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. First Jesus asks if the rich guy had kept the commandments of God. To which the response is "I have kept all these from my youth". This is not what leads to eternal life. So why does Jesus ask him if he had kept the commandments? To point out to us today that there is no amount of work that will give you eternal life. Then how on earth can one obtain eternal life in heaven?

After asking if he had kept all of the commandments Jesus tells him to sell all of his possessions and come follow him. Is Jesus saying that my generosity will grant me eternal life? No, that is not the case. What Jesus is saying is, loving my neighbor as myself is part and parcel to being a follower of Him. What Jesus is leading mister rich guy to is the place in which everyone receives the eternal life which John talks about in our text today.

Jesus says in essence "after keeping all of the commandments and helping the poor you will have treasure in heaven. However, there is one thing you are lacking. You must "follow me" Jesus tells the yuppie. What does follow me mean? I take the command to "come follow me" to mean place saving faith in who I am and what I want to do for you. It means to stop trusting in everything else which supposedly brings meaning to life and put all your trust in me.

"Come follow me" is the same as John saying in verse thirteen "believe in the Son of God". This belief is not mental assent to historical facts such as "I believe President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas". Rather it is an absolute trusting Jesus to be the one who has provided the means by which you and I receive forgiveness of sin, sin which separates us from God.

If you do not know this morning that you have eternal life through Christ, this is a great opportunity for you to express to God your desire of repentance and willingness to follow him. I call that saving faith.

What I would like to impress upon us this morning is that this eternal life is a present possession. It is not something that I hope for when I die. If "come follow me" and "saving faith" which brings eternal life is synonymous, then "come follow me" is present day living. Eternal life begins the moment you trust Christ for forgiveness of sins and salvation. That is what John has been discussing throughout this letter. Knowing Christ brings eternal life and eternal life affects the way you live. As a matter of fact, the way you live is a good indication of whether you have eternal life. Does that make sense? Oh I so want us to understand that what we say and do must be the same thing. No wonder the world laughs at us. We say we are one thing but then we live totally disconnected from the truth. Here is the truth; Christ brings radical life change to all who follow him.

For each of these things God wants us to know from this section of Scripture we could spend several weeks studying. As a matter of fact, it ought to be a lifelong study. Let's take a look at the second thing God so wants you to know and that which you do not want to stand before Him some day and say "if I had only known".

2. God wants you to know that He hears your prayers. (v. 14)

1 John 5:14-15 (ESV)

14 And this is the confidence that we have toward 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 that we have asked of him.

There are key words John has used throughout this letter. Confidence is one of them. We can live confidently because of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

1 John 3:21 (ESV)

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

1 John 2:28 (ESV)

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

Here we are exhorted to walk in obedience to Christ so that when he returns we will not have to cower in shame but rather we can be confident. Here in chapter five we find we do not have to wait until Christ returns to approach God but that even now we can have a presence with God through prayer. Not just mouthing words or repeating phrases but a time of conversing with God. We can do this confidently, knowing that God hears us. What brings this confidence? First, it is implied through verse fourteen that it is eternal life which brings us assurance of God's interest in us.

In Hebrews 4:16 we are given another reason for our confidence.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Here the confidence is based on who Jesus is and what he has done. In this case it is because Jesus, even though he is the great high priest, is able to sympathize with us as we are challenged by life's issues. Specifically issues of weakness, yet he has done so without succumbing to sin. It seems evident that at least one of the things prayer does for us is to help overcome sin that so easily wants to trip us up.

What is the specific confidence we have here in verse fourteen? It is that if we ask anything according to God's will he hears us. Does that mean when our prayers are not answered we are not praying according to God's will? No, not necessarily so. It could be the answer has not come because it is not God's sovereign timing, or that the answer is no.

As we pray, how is it we can pray according the will of God? What do we know about his will? Let's list a few things.

1. We know God wants us to love each other.
2. We know God is to be glorified. "our father who is in heaven hallowed be your name".
3. We know God is in the process of bringing his kingdom to bear in the world. "Thy kingdom come".
4. We know God has supplied the ability to overcome any type of sin or temptation.
1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)
13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
5. We know God desires for us to be intentional and engaging with our oikos.
Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)
37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."
6. God's will is for parents to be honored.
7. God's will is for parents not to frustrate their children unduly.
8. We know it is God's will that we give an honest day's work even if the pay grade is below us.
9. We know it is God's will that we take time to pray.
10. We are to pray for believers who have fallen into sin.

Whatever else we could say about the "will of God" we can at least say this; "the fundamental characteristic of all truly Christian intercession is that the will of the person who offers prayer should coincide with the will of God." (Stephen Smally commentary p. 295)

It is the prayer of faith which accepts that in the end God's answer to our prayer will be good and right because His will always is geared to my absolute best interest.

How is your prayer life? Do you find it challenging to spend time in prayer on a regular basis? Prayer is the most powerful tool we have in our belt. Why is it we allow so many things to rush in and crowd out this absolute necessity if we are going to live a life of radical difference, a life which is the sweet smelling aroma of Jesus Christ?

What is that one or two things that hinder you in spending time to pray?

John goes on to mention sin in chapter five. We are to pray for those who are involved in sin. We are told that as believers we do not continue to live in sin but that God has provided for us the power by which we are able to overcome.

3. God wants you to know He protects you from sin. (vv. 18-19)

1 John 5:18 (ESV)

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

How many of God's children do not keep on sinning? All of them. It tells us here, everyone who is born of God will not continue to practice sin. Reminiscent of what Jesus told the teacher Nicodemus "you must be born again" if one is going to see the kingdom of God.

Earlier in chapter three verse nine we read;

1 John 3:9 (ESV)

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Do Christians sin? Yes we do. Do we make it a practice to keep on living in sin? No we don't. But what if we do? It could mean one of two things. First it could mean you are only a professor of the truth but not a possessor.

1 John 2:19 (ESV)

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

In other words you could be just talking, giving lip service to the idea of who Christ is. That is likely the sin that leads to death, unbelief in who Jesus really is.

Secondly, it could be you are born again and are living in total disregard for what God has done for you. We do know Christians sin, however they do not continue to live in a lifestyle of sin. God wants to restore you to full fellowship with Him and your fellow believers.

Who is the "he who was born of God" in this sentence?

So What?

As we come to the close of our study in First John we must ask the question "So What"? What difference does all of this make? It makes all the difference in this world and the next. Look with me in verse twenty-one.

1 John 5:20-21 (ESV)

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. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

You do not want to stand before God one day and blurt out "**If only I had known**". As a matter of fact you will not be able to honestly make that statement ever again concerning who Jesus Christ is. Now you know the truth. What you do with it is entirely up to you. You can reject it or you can embrace it and receive eternal life with all of its amazing benefits. That is

what I encourage you to do this morning. Embrace it, live it and share it with others. It is absolutely life changing.

So how should you embrace it? With total confidence that God, your creator, has heard your prayer request to know all there is to know about this Christian life that only He can give to us.