
3 Things are Certain in Faith (1 John 5:13-15)

A Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



We all live very different lives. The differences can be so dramatic that it has been said that there are only 2 things that are certain in life: death and taxes. Well today, in our lesson from 1st John, we hear that 3 Things are Certain in Faith. We can *know* that we have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. We can *know* that God hears every request we make according to his will. We can *know* that we have what we ask God for. Today we will take a closer look at those 3 certainties we have and we will examine 3 lessons from God's Word to dispel our doubts.

The 1st certainty of our faith is that we have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Perhaps you know someone who knows very little and yet believes he knows everything. It is wise for us to be humble and not to assume that we know everything. But this is not true about our salvation in Christ Jesus. Many Christians talk like they aren't sure about heaven. Many of us will talk like, "I hope I'm going to heaven." But God wants us to be sure about our eternal life.

And we can be sure that we are going to heaven because our salvation depends 100% on what Jesus has done for us. On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished." He did not say, "My part is finished, now it's your turn." He said, "It is finished," and we therefore have eternal life through Jesus' work.

Again, look to that cross. The thief who died on the cross next to Jesus was certainly a sinner. His sin was so obvious that even his fellowman condemned him to death, but Jesus looked at him and said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." That man did not have to doubt. He did not have to worry if he was sincere enough. He only needed to believe that Jesus was telling the truth. Today our God tells us that because of Jesus, our sins are forgiven, we have eternal life in Jesus Christ. That is a certainty. Believe it.

The 2nd certainty of our faith is that God hears every request we make according to his will. How often have you prayed to God only to be haunted by God's seeming silence? Sometimes, we think of prayer as leaving a voicemail with God. We kind of wait around wondering when God is going to check his answering machine. Did he get my message?

But in God's Word, he commands us to pray. God promises to answer our prayers! God even scolds his people when we fail to pray. Why would God do that if he wasn't even going to hear our prayers? No, we can be certain that he hears every prayer we make according to his will!

The 3rd certainty of our faith is that we have what we ask God for. Does that give you pause? When we pray to our God, he wants us to be certain that he will answer our prayers. But how often do we pray to God, doubting that we will actually get what we ask of him? God's Word gives us 3 lessons about prayer that dispel our doubts.

The first lesson teaches us what takes away our certainty: sin. God's Word is very clear that our sins rob us of certainty when we pray to our God. If I try to pray to God while I am keeping unrepentant sin in my heart, that hinders my prayers. If I do not love and respect my spouse, that hurts my relationship with God. If I knowingly indulge in habits which God says are sinful, then I will always have doubts.

Any time we sin, that is really a first commandment issue. When we sin, we are not fearing, loving, and trusting God above all things. If we are fearing, loving, and trusting things other than God, then of course we are going to doubt God's promises to us. Therefore, for example, when we pray the Lord's prayer, the first thing we should ask from our God is that God's name be hallowed in *my* life, that God's kingdom come and that he rule in *my* heart, and that God's will be done in *my* life.

The second lesson teaches us where our certainty comes from: Jesus Christ. We have eternal life because Jesus has fully paid for and won our salvation. In the same way, we have access to God our Father, only through Jesus' intercession on our behalf. Jesus is our go-between, our mediator between us and God almighty.

Therefore, when we ask anything of God, it is as though God is receiving that request from his dear Son Jesus Christ as well. God does graciously hear us, and he loves to give us what we ask for! When we pray anything, "in Jesus' name," that is not just some pious cliché that we tack onto the end of our prayers. That is the very real and only way that we even can pray! And that is what gives us confidence that God does hear us and does want to grant our requests!

Finally, the last lesson for today helps us to pray according to God's will. What does it mean to pray according to God's will? For many of our prayers, we recognize that God may answer "yes," may answer "no," and may answer "later."

I think of my son this week. He was very clear with me this week that he did not want to go to bed at bedtime. He wanted to stay up later. And he cried and moaned and did all he could to try and stay up late. As his father, I love to do what my son wants, but I also recognize that, for example, it is good for my son to go to bed at a regular time, and though I can't really explain that to him, I know it is good for him. God answers many of our prayers in that same way.

But when we pray for something that we know is God's will, we can have total confidence that the answer will be "Yes!" How do we know what God's will is? We need to get into our Bibles! The Bible is the only sure way that God speaks to us. Hebrews tells us that in the past God spoke to the prophets at different times and in various ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

God speaks to us through Jesus in the words of Scripture, the Bible. God's will is only clear through the Word. In the Bible, we find that there are things God commands us to do, things he forbids us from doing, things he recommends that we do or don't do, and there are a lot of things that he does not speak to us about.

This last category God mostly leaves up to our freedom as his children. Some Christians torment themselves with "seeking the Lord's will" about career decisions, dating decisions, and house purchase decisions. But, since there is no specific answer in Scripture about those decisions and since only the prophets and apostles received information directly from the Lord, God does not want us to try and find his will outside of his Word. Many believers strain their eyes trying to find signs and clues in nature or in what just happens to occur. God does not want our lives to be this big awkward game of "guess the Father's will."

Think about it. If God decided what each of us were to do for our job, what about those who work in the porn industry, or what about those who make their money through crime? Did God decide that is what he wanted them to do? Absolutely not!

God has laid down some sound and basic principles in his Word about money management, choosing friends and spouses, building up others in love, listening to the wisdom of others, and serving him with our lives. The rest he leaves to our judgment and freedom. In this way he matures us into being more like him and growing in our own ability to discern and choose.

In the Word, God also directs us to what our priorities ought to be. Perhaps we pray to our God more for those career and dating decisions, but notice the way in which our God truly seeks to bless us. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says, "*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given you as well.*" God wants us first and foremost to pursue spiritual blessings from our God.

Look at the Lord's Prayer, which we will soon pray. There are 7 petitions we ask of our God in that prayer. How many of those petitions ask our God for physical blessings? Just 1. The other 6 all ask God for spiritual blessings. This should be our priority over those physical things. When we pray for these things, which God clearly tells us that he wants to give us, then we can have absolute certainty that we have these things that we ask for!

2 things may be certain in life, but 3 Things are Certain in Faith. We have eternal life through faith in Jesus, the Son of God. God hears all we ask according to his will. And we have all that we ask of our God. These three are certain because our God clearly tells us in his Word, and our God cannot lie. Amen.