

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

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No: 71

1 John Chapter 5 (13-21)

Open:

Knowing Jesus and being transformed into His likeness are the essentials of Christianity. How have the studies in John helped you in this regard?

Introduction

As we come to the concluding segment of 1 John, we engage with the key verse in the entire book. "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" (1 John 5:13, NIV). I realize there are a lot of things in life we cannot be sure of, that we cannot know with certainty. We are told here very plainly that we can be sure that we have eternal life and that we will go to heaven. Someone once said, "I had rather know a few things for sure than to be sure of a lot of things that aren't so." God's word says that we can be sure that we have eternal life.

This is where Christianity is so radically different from so many of these cults and other religions that come knocking on your doorstep. You ask these people sometimes, if you get into a conversation with them, "Do you know for sure if you were to die today you would go to heaven?" They will quickly tell you they don't know and you can't know either. The world thinks salvation is performance driven and they just hope that when they die, if they are living just right and doing the right things, they will go to heaven. But, going to heaven is not a matter of timing, it is a matter of truth, and it is a matter of trust and the only basis for that assurance is God's word.

Read 1 John 5: 13-15

Study Questions.

1. What is your understanding of the term "eternal life"?

2. How do we know we have eternal life and why is it necessary for a believer to know (be assured) that he has eternal life?

3. How is the assurance of eternal life (v.13) the key to answered prayer (v.14-15)?

Comment

The word for eternal (*aionios*) means far more than simply *lasting forever* and the only one person to whom this word can be properly applied is God. Therefore eternal life is nothing short of the life of God and what we are promised here and now is a share in this life.

In God, there is peace; and therefore, eternal life means serenity. It means a life liberated from the fears which haunt the human situation. In God, there is power; and, therefore, eternal life means the defeat of frustration. It means a life filled with the power of God and, therefore, victorious over circumstances. In God, there is holiness; and therefore, eternal life means the defeat of sin. It means a life clothed with the purity of God and armed against contamination from a wicked world. In God there is love; and therefore, eternal life means the end of bitterness and hatred. It means a life which has the love of God in its heart and the undefeatable love of men and women in all its feelings and in all its actions. In God, there is life; and , therefore, eternal life means the defeat of death. It means a life which is indestructible because it has in it the indestructibility of God himself. (W. Barclay)

4. Does verse 15 imply that whatever we ask God, He is obliged to give it to us? Explain.

What is the relationship between verse 15 and verse 14?

5. What does it mean to "pray according to God's will"?

6. Does "praying according to God's will" mean being insincere or sanctimonious in our petitions to the Lord? _____

Comments

Verses 14 and 15 set down for us the basis of prayer- that God listens when we pray. With God we have freedom of speech and He is more ready to hear than we are to pray. However, the emphasis is on God's will. When we communicate with God, we don't demand what we want, rather we discuss with him what he wants for us. The goal should be: "Your will be done," not "Your will be changed." Prayer must never be selfish and not concentrated entirely upon our own selves and our own problems and our own needs. It must be an outgoing activity.

Read 1 John 5:16-21

7. We are going to examine a statement that has occupied the attention of Christian thinkers down the centuries. But before we explore what John has to say on "the sin that leads to death", let us examine the following examples and describe the wrongdoing involved in each case and observe whether the death described is physical or spiritual:

1 Corinth.11:27-30 _____

Acts 5:1-11 _____

Mark 3:29 _____

Heb. 6:4-6 _____

8. What and who do you think John is talking about in this letter when he referred to "committing a sin that leads to death?" _____

Comment

John was probably referring to people who had left the Christian fellowship and joined the antichrists- those who appeared to be 'brothers' but in fact were false prophets because they systematically denied the deity of Christ and His eternal relationship to the Father. By rejecting the only way of salvation, these people were putting themselves out of reach of prayer.

The sin unto death can be described as the state of those who have listened to sin and refused to listen to God so often that they love sin and regard it as the most profitable thing in the world.

9. What is the threefold certainty we are told in verses 18-20?

Verse 18: we know _____

Verse 19: we know _____

Verse 20: we know _____

10. Describe in contemporary usage what an idol is and how can we as Christians be in danger of worshipping it?

Conclusion

We have come to the end of our studies in 1 John and John's parting word is a real challenge to us: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." An idol is anything or anyone who takes the place of God in our lives. An idol misrepresents God whereas Jesus represents God and makes Him approachable and comprehensible. John has offered you all sorts of arguments and lots of evidence. Check it out. Ask your questions. But as the saying goes... the proof of the pudding is in the eating ... You have to step out in faith. Put all of your weight onto that rope, and trust that Jesus Christ the Son of God will never let you fall, and it is only when you experience the victory that Jesus brings in overcoming the world, and the confidence of that unique Christian assurance based on all that evidence, and you enjoy the love of the Christian community, the church in prayer and care that you will know how good it is to know Jesus. And even when things couldn't get worse on this earth, and you face the spectre of death, the best is still yet to come! You've taken John at his word and you know that because you believe, trust, put your faith in the name of the Son of God, you know you have eternal life.

Can it get any better than that? A lump of wood or supposed financial security cannot give you that, and neither can a realised ambition. Can a Jesus who is anything other than the Son of God and eternal life give you eternal life? No! Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. It's either them or Jesus Christ the Son of God. You choose.