

Introduction

- John finishes his letter by encouraging his readers with some certainties on which their faith may be secure:
 - five times in these verses he uses a very definite "we know" about some aspect of the faith
 - as we finish off in 1 John we'll work through these certainties...
 - and the one area that is more of a confusion...
 - and hopefully have our confidence in our faith increased as we do!

You Know... you have eternal life!

- 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. (v13)

- What John wants is that his "dear children" will be secure and confident in who they are:
 - family break-up has been increasing dramatically over the past decades;
 - one of the most tragic consequences is the insecurity that so many children are left with
 - the lack of confidence that the future will be a predictable place, where they will be loved and cared for
 - and without that security something of their development is often hindered
- John doesn't want us to grow up stunted Christians, but rather those who know that their future is secure:
 - who can try things out for God, because there is a safety net!

You Know... our prayers are heard!

- This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him. (v.14-15)

- Confidence of relationship, of coming to someone we know, whose character and reactions we trust:
 - someone we know will listen, hear what we've got to say
 - who will share the concerns we bring, not just hearing and ignoring!
- This is the reality of the situation as we come to God!
 - he loves us
 - he desires that we ask of him!
 - he is more eager to respond than we are to ask!
- *Story of the child who learned to write because someone wrote to them, was concerned for them...*
 - sometimes we forget how valuable, how precious we are to God
 - and in thinking ourselves unimportant, we don't come to him in prayer
 - John reminds us of the confidence with which we can come!

Confusion!!

- If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. (v.16-17)

- "brother" here generic term for "fellow human"
 - both are "dead", to be made alive
- Distinction rather is being made between those who "sin against the Holy Spirit" as Jesus put it in Matthew 12:31
 - and those who are "merely" sinners, whose sin does not ultimately lead them to

death.

- Point is:
 - all sin leads to death
 - the ones we pray for come to point of repentance...
 - not harden hearts and sin in defiance of Holy Spirit...
- Our praying is so effectual that, contra NIV, the way John writes it we, as the ones who pray, are described as giving life to the one who turns to God!!

You Know... sin is defeated!

- *We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. (v. 18)*

- Don't you despair when you find yourself committing the same sins again?
 - tempting to beat yourself over the head, "what an awful Christian I am!"
 - sin is conquered through Jesus' death on the Cross!
 - we are protected from the power and ultimate consequences of sin by Jesus, "the one who was born of God"
- Confidence comes from that knowledge that sin is defeated:
 - our struggles are not in vain!
 - *(nothing more despair-inducing than impression that your efforts are pointless!)*
 - moreover, we are protected by God, and the evil one cannot do any eternal damage to us!

You Know... we are children of God!

- *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. (v. 19)*

- Our status as beloved children is secure!
 - we touched on this earlier, but here it is absolutely explicit

You Know... the Son!

- *We know also 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 - even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (v.20)*

- At the foundation of all our confidence is our **relationship with Christ**:
 - it is through him that **we become children of God**
 - it is through him that **sin is defeated**
 - it is through him that **our prayers are heard**
 - it is through him that **we have eternal life**
- As we acknowledge him as Saviour & Lord:
 - as we understand who he is and what he has done...
 - so we can be confident in our faith!

Conclusion

- *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. (v21)*

- We are not quite sure to what John was referring here:
 - most likely is the heresy that this church has faced, which ultimately set itself up as worthy of people's ultimate loyalty - in other words, a false God, an idol;
 - as John Stott puts it in his commentary, "all 'God-substitutes' are properly idols"
- **Go confident, loyal to him alone** - confiding in him, living in the family of God, trusting him to help us defeat sin, trusting him for our futures and our significance...

