

# Certain?

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Date: 13 September 2015

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     so we're going to put one John to bed hopefully he's going to be a friend for life and I think John has some really important things to say to us as we conclude today but this week a lot of very significant things happened particularly on Wednesday can anyone tell me one significant thing that happened on Wednesday the queen the queen became the longest serving British monarch although I discovered also that she's actually only the 49th longest reigning monarch of all time pretty exciting there's a guy in Swaziland who ruled for 72 years 279 days so she's got some way to go about 13 as it happens something else big happened on Wednesday yeah no that wasn't what I was thinking I was thinking there was an Apple launch event and we saw the biggest iPad launched the most powerful iPhone launched we saw that television is going to totally be revolutionized and that the Apple watch is a an accessory that all of us will be running our lives from very very soon something else big happened on Wednesday it was the sixth anniversary of me becoming pastor of this church which is a testimony to your patience and God's grace and I dare say sense of humor it also this week was the 13th anniversary of me a boy born in the south of England moving to Scotland it was this week in 2002 that I moved up to Aberdeen so not just Scotland but real real Scotland and I have to say after 13 years I really like it

Aberdeen was cool literally Glasgow was fun Airdrie was interesting and Edinburgh is proving quite exciting I like Scotland I even married a Scot that's how much of a fan I am I thought I'd get one for myself but one thing I didn't get and I still don't get is the question that Scottish people normally ask third when you meet them what is your name what do you do and the third question where do you stay I don't understand what you mean by where do you stay people used to ask me in Aberdeen where do you stay and I'd say things like no I live here permanently or no I have a room in the hall of residence I don't stay I live I live here where do you stay and actually as we've gone through 1 John we've seen that staying remaining abiding keeping on has been a major theme in the book he's trying to say that you can have real confidence that you're a real Christian if you stay in three places if you stay in the apostolic gospel if you stay in the truth about Jesus passed down and relayed by the apostles to us if you stay believing the right things about Jesus he says you can have confidence that you're a real Christian if on top of that you stay obeying Jesus's commands and he says you can be really confident that you're really a Christian if you stay loving the brothers and sisters if you stay in those three places believing the right stuff about Jesus obeying what he says and loving his people you can be very confident that you really do know God so even here if you turn to 1 John chapter 5 you'll see in the first three verses they're all put together everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well this is how that we know this is how we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands in fact this is love for God to keep his commands and his commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God overcomes the world you see they're all three there believing that Jesus is the Christ obeying Jesus's commands which he says aren't burdensome and particularly the command to love the brothers he says if you have these three markers you can be really confident that you really know God but what he's going to go on to say is that if these are the three things that mark that you're a Christian now is there any way that we can have certainty that that counts for anything in the end can we have certainty about all the parts of Christianity that we can't see and we don't necessarily experience the things that Jesus tells us that we have can we have certainty about things like victory over the world can we have certainty that we really do have eternal life can we have certainty that when we pray we're not just filling silence but God really hears us and he really answers our prayers and so I think what John is doing at the end of his letter he's saying to this group of believers that remain he's giving them confidence and says no you really do know God those people that have left that have caused uncertainty they don't know

God you know God you're the real deal and then he's finishing with one great crescendo saying you can actually have certainty that everything Jesus says that you have because of him you really do have you can have real certainty so look with me at um 1 John chapter 5 verses 4b and 5 John writes this this is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith who is it that overcomes the world only the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God what he's saying is that faith in Jesus gives victory in the end the language of overcoming is throughout 1 John he's constantly telling us that these people through faith have overcome the world so chapter 2 verse 13 I am writing to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning I am writing to you young men because you have overcome the evil one or chapter 4 verse 4 you dear children are from God and have overcome them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world he talks about overcoming all the time and here he lays it absolutely explicitly down this is the victory that overcomes the world what is the victory our faith our faith overcomes the world our faith in Jesus gives us victory in the end it is faith in Jesus and only faith in Jesus that means in the end we'll stand long after this world has passed away using John's language how do we know that to be so well what he says in 6 to 10 is that that Jesus has shown us and God has testified to it how do we know that's really true because God has told us and Jesus has shown us so in verses 6 to 10 this is not easy but let me read it this is the one who came through water and blood Jesus Christ he did not come by water only but by water and blood and it is the spirit who testifies because the spirit is the truth for there are three that testify the spirit the water and the blood and the three are in agreement we accept human testimony but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which he has given about his son whoever believes in the son of God accepts this testimony whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his son interesting there are three that testify and they all agree but John doesn't really tell us what they're testifying about and what they agree about but I think he he really does help us he's trying to say that these three testify that Jesus is really the son of God and that by believing in him we can overcome and are welcomed into his victory so the fact that he came through water speaking about his baptism and what happens at his baptism well there's really good testimony from God himself when he says you are my son whom I love with you I am well pleased how do we know that Jesus is God's son because God told us and he is the one who went through blood he is the one who died on a cross but that wasn't the end he went through it and raised to life giving us evidence giving us verifiable testimony that he truly is all that he said he is that he's truly done all that he said he's done and then the spirit the spirit in John's gospel is always testifying to who Jesus is

John 15 when the advocate the Holy Spirit comes whom I will send to you from the Father the spirit of truth who goes out from the Father he will testify about me spirit is the one constantly shining light on Jesus and so how can we have confidence that we've overcome the world through our faith in Jesus the son of God how do we know that Jesus is the son of God because at his baptism it was said to be so through his death it was shown to be so and by his spirit it's relayed to us that this is the truth about Jesus and so in verse 9 it talks about the judicial system of the day where he needed two or three witnesses who agree and then that was put in to corroborate evidence and here John is saying these aren't human witnesses who agree this is God himself testifying to the truth of who his son is

John ramps up the logic that if we believe human testimony how much more should we believe God's testimony about who his son is and the victory we've got because of who he is and so he finishes God is either telling the truth or God is a liar and because God never lies we can have absolute confidence because of his unfailing unchanging word that through faith in his son we have victory whoever believes in Jesus has victory over the world whoever does not believe in Jesus does not have victory over the world and has made God out to be a liar faith in Jesus gives victory but in the end why is John having to say this to these troubled individuals because they don't feel very victorious they feel like a very small boat on a very big sea and they look at the people that have left and the gathering they have and they look far more victorious they look far more impressive they look like winners and actually in our own lives we don't particularly feel like winners nobody looked at all of us streaming into church this morning and went there's a bunch of winners they thought pity them but that's the truth of faith isn't it that it's the believing in things is yet unseen but it's not faith in the dark it's not mindless faith it's not leave your brain at the door and come into church it's actually believing that what Jesus has said about his son is true and what God has shown us through his son is true and therefore our faith will lead to victory in the end the cross didn't look very victorious at all and yet it's God's profound means of saving people that they might be welcomed into his victory so there was a Sunday school teacher who started their lesson like this class what is grey and lives in trees nobody answered so the teacher said it's got a bushy tail and it jumps between branches still no one answered the teacher said again it collects nuts and hibernates in a dray during winter to which point one boy tentatively put his hand up and goes

[ 13 : 06 ] I know the answer is Jesus but it sure sounds like you're talking about a squirrel how do we ultimately know that we have victory in the end because of Jesus that's the answer that God told us who he is he showed us what he's done and therefore we have victory in the end and if we knew this with certainty the certainty that John is trying to give us what a relief what a relief and what an encouragement to live life differently that actually because I will win in the end through Jesus I don't have to spend all my energy winning now I don't need to get to the top I can sink right to the bottom and be a servant of all I don't have to spend my life making myself look like a winner because in Jesus I will win and get that victor's crown that he's won and fought and was victorious in for me how can we be certain of victory in the end because of Jesus point number two faith in Jesus gives life now and forevermore verse 11 and this is the testimony

God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son whoever has the son has life whoever does not have the son does not have 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 again see it revolves around what Jesus what God has said about his son I have given you eternal life and this life is in my son Jesus he has given it to us because he's given us his son the two are inextricably linked you cannot have eternal life without Jesus Jesus has an absolute monopoly on eternal life there's nowhere else you will find it except Jesus verse 12 is binary isn't it whoever has the son has life whoever does not have the son does not have life you plus faith in Jesus equals eternal life you minus faith in Jesus does not equal eternal life how do you know you have eternal life?

by continuing to believe that Jesus is who he says he is has done what he says he's done and we are because of all that he's done for us Jesus is the dividing line of eternal life it separates all of humanity it separates children from parents siblings from each other it separates couples it separates neighbours and it separates eternally whoever has Jesus has life whoever does not have Jesus does not have life it is that stark and that serious I've done a few funerals in the last six months all of them for really marvellous godly women and every time I go to a funeral do a funeral I'm reminded of one thing there is nothing more important than eternal life there is nothing more important than eternal life if what John says is true and John is saying what God says is true then death is the terminus of all life and Jesus is the only antidote to that death those who have the son have life those who do not have the son do not have eternal life but see this is not just pie in the sky when you die it is steak on the plate well you wait because see it's not when you die

God will give you eternal life it's not if you have the son you will have eternal life it's a reality for right now whoever has the son has life has life now John 17 and this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent that you experientially know God that eternal life is not just a quantity of life that goes on forever it is a quality of life lived in a relationship with God as his adopted children through the good news of Jesus Christ who makes it all possible living a life in relationship with God knowing his love his forgiveness his closeness his care his protection as an adopted child all by his grace now and forever and again if we had certainty about that how differently we would live we would risk more we would risk more we would be a lot less anxious if God you really have taken care of eternity

I think I can trust you with tomorrow I can even trust you with that really difficult meeting we would be far more generous knowing that it's not about what I make of my life and accumulate for myself in this life because in Jesus I've already got everything and it would make us far more bold in our evangelism if it is that stark that those who have the son have life and those that don't have the son do not have life how can we be certain we have eternal life because God has said we do and shown us that we do in his son and then lastly verses 14 to 17 again this is not easy but we will get it or at least try 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 if you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death you should pray and God will give them life

[ 19 : 33 ] I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death there is a sin that leads to death I am not saying that you should pray about that all wrongdoing is sin and there is a sin that does not lead to death I read so many commentaries this week trying to work out what that was saying but again John is basing his confidence not on how he feels not on what he sees but on what God has said and in the positive he said great things he says that if we ask according to his will he hears and answers what a great encouragement to pray that if we his children ask and our request is in accordance with his will then he hears and he answers I don't know if you're ever like me that you pray and you pray and God answers and what an encouragement it is because you think I just spoke to God

I am so small so insignificant I am one of over six billion people in the world and God heard what I said and he answered if we ask and our request is in accordance with his will he answers but the question behind the question how do we know if it's in accordance with God's will that's what we all want to know and the beautiful thing is that God has told us this week I went through quite a lot of my Bible looking up all the prayers that God promises to answer and instructs us to pray here's a list God wants us to pray that he would be glorified above all things he tells us to pray for wisdom when we don't have any he tells us to pray for our enemies he tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest for more laborers he tells us to pray for governments and authorities he prays he tells us to pray that people would know him better he tells us to pray for healing when we see sickness and illness he tells us to pray for opportunities to witness to pray for boldness in witness to pray for right motivations in service for strength and persecution that we would not fall into temptation he tells us to pray that people would be conformed to his image more he tells us to pray with thanksgiving he tells us to pray for greater faith for more fruitfulness and to come to him for grace in times of need and there are countless countless others that God has told us what his will is and he says if you pray in accordance to what I've revealed

I will hear and I will answer what a privilege we've got a week of prayer starting a week on Monday and an opportunity for all of us together to pray together in accordance with God's will trusting that he can do impossible things in our lives in our church amongst our friends in our city in our world that was an encouragement to pray if that wasn't an encouragement to pray I don't know what will now this whole sin that leads to death thing here's my take on it and I think it's right but we can chat at the door afterwards and fight if we need to he then gives us a worked example he says if you see a brother or sister commit a sin you should pray and I will give them life if you see a brother or sister sin you should pray and I will give them life a sin that doesn't lead to death a sin that can be forgiven what is the only sin that cannot be forgiven it is apostasy it is rejecting the truth about Jesus which is the only means by which we can be forgiven so if we see a brother or sister commit a sin we can pray for them and it is according to

God's will that he will forgive them and give them life the only prayer that's not worth praying is for somebody who's rejected Jesus because they've forsaken the only means by which they can be forgiven the forgiveness is in Jesus and if they've rejected Jesus there's no hope of forgiveness there's lots of other things we can pray for them that God would open their eyes to the gospel that he would bring them to faith in the Lord Jesus that he would surround them with Christians that he would bring dissatisfaction to their life so like the prodigal son they would turn around and come to him but forgiveness is only available in Jesus so if we see a brother or sister sin who knows and loves the Lord Jesus we can pray and they will be forgiven I've never really thought of this before of praying for forgiveness for others but I think Jesus gives us an example as he's nailed to a cross father forgive them for they do not know what they do Job at the beginning of the story gives sacrifices and praise for forgiveness for his children in case they might have sinned what a thing it would be as if we saw people stumble and fall and we prayed for them instead of saying oh do you know what I saw them do you'll never guess what they've gone and done now but we prayed and took it to the Lord sin that leads to death the sin of apostasy but anything else let's pray for each other that

God would forgive what John has been telling us in this part of the letter he's giving us real certainty about things even though they're unseen certain of victory that we have in Jesus certain we have eternal life through Jesus and certainty we can come before God because of Jesus because God has said it and he always tells the truth I'll tell you a true story of Jimmy James what he was born he's remarkably unremarkable true story he lived in Kokodi he didn't finish school and he lived at home until he was 40 years old he was a very small man the only job he ever had was to be a street cleaner in Kokodi which if you've ever been to Kokodi is a really big job he lived at home with his mum but when he was 40 his mum died and his world fell apart and in fact he took to drink and became homeless on the streets of Edinburgh his life started falling apart dramatically until one day he was met by a street team from

[ 26 : 21 ] YWAM who gave him time who gave him attention who shared the gospel of the Lord Jesus with him and he was wonderfully converted following that he started putting his life back together slowly slowly although until the day he died he never kicked the drink eventually he was rehoused back in Kokodi and as my friend Neil was doing visitation around the local area of Kokodi Free Church they knocked on Jimmy's house and he said he believed in Jesus but he'd never been to church he'd never been disciplined and so he started attending Kokodi and he was pretty rough and pretty small he didn't really speak by this point he more just grunted and yet he was loved by them a few years after attending Kokodi Free Church he was diagnosed with terminal throat and mouth cancer and Neil went to see him the day after the diagnosis and said

Jimmy how do you feel the other side of that diagnosis and Jimmy in his own way said I am a conqueror I'm in Jesus' hands he attended church all the time until he finally died of cancer in fact he was at church the day before he died and as the cancer grew and took hold of his life he could no longer speak at all and so all people would say to him is Jimmy how are you and he would just do this I'm a conqueror I'm in Jesus' hands here's the truth you looked at Jimmy you did not think he was a conqueror you thought he had absolutely nothing to be confident about but the reason that he had certainty that he was a conqueror and that his life was in Jesus' hands because he believed what God had said and what God had shown in his son Jesus Christ 1 John is written to give us real confidence and it gives us real confidence that what

God says God means what Jesus has done is for us and we can have absolute certainty about all of these things and live life differently through our faith in Jesus there's some interesting bits at the end of that chapter we can always speak about them at the door if you're interested let's pray father help those who know you to trust you live for you and have certainty about all they have in your son that they really do have victory that they do really have life that they have access to you and confidence before you father God help those who don't know you father may they meet you know you trust your son and receive from him everything that you've said you've done and everything that you know you've done because you've said it and you always tell the truth father we pray this in Jesus name amen he i 10 know you good 22

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