

## How Can You Know that You Have Eternal Life

1 John 5:11-13

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**Text:** <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

**Introduction:** The death of baseball legend Ted Williams in 2002 brought to light an unorthodox scientific process called cryonics. Bizarre indeed—cryonics is the process of freezing the remains of a deceased person in order to prevent the decaying of the body. The idea is that medical advancements will allow these bodies to be brought back to life one day and live forever. One such institute is the ALCOR facility in Arizona. As of last week, 156 bodies had been frozen. Isn't it amazing the extremes that some will go to live forever? The Bible says there is a much easier way to live forever. The Bible says that there is eternal life in Jesus Christ. The question of the day is how can we be certain that we can have eternal life. Our text says that we can know that we have eternal life.

John wrote to us that he had written “these things” to us so that we can know that we have eternal life. What are these things? If we are going to understand “these things,” we must consider the whole letter of John. I want to show you six questions to help you understand how you can know that you have eternal life.

### Question #1: Are you trusting solely in Jesus Christ for eternal life?

Look again at verse 11-12.

Consider as well 1 John 2:1-2. “My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one. <sup>2</sup> He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.”

These words are in keeping with the whole counsel of the Word of God. Acts 4:12 indicates, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

Or, even in Jesus' own words as recorded by John 14:6, Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

But, someone might protest that the good go to Heaven. That is, they may say that if a person is good enough, that person will go to Heaven. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— <sup>9</sup> not from works, so that no one can boast.”

So, the first question is “Are you trusting solely in Jesus for your eternal life?”

**Question #2: Are you sensitive to sin?**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor, who stood against Hitler’s Nazism, wrote a classic work, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In this book he wrote about “cheap grace.” He used that phrase to describe the unbiblical position of so many who claim to have faith in Jesus Christ. That person might claim to be a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ for eternal life, but his or her lifestyle does not reflect a genuine relationship of commitment.

John points to very specific evidence of a genuine believer. Remember this entire book was written so that we may know that we have eternal life. How do we test the genuine nature of what we have professed with our mouths? That’s why we have this question, “Are you sensitive to sin?”

Consider 1 John 1:8. If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

If we truly belong to Christ, we are going to be sensitive to sin. Sin is going to bother us. We are going to be convicted of sin. A genuine believer is going to begin a life of obedience simply because of being sensitive to sin.

**Question #3: Are you willingly submissive to God’s commands?**

1 John 2:3-6 says, “This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands.<sup>4</sup> The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup>But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup>The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.”

Can anything be more clear? The easiest way to “test” the reality of your commitment to Christ is to consider the degree to which you find yourself being obedient to the commands of Christ. Don’t misunderstand that we must keep God’s commands to be saved, but rather we will keep His commands because we are saved. Obedience to His commands is not the requirement for eternal life, but rather the result of eternal life.

I hear all the time as a pastor, “I know what God’s word says, but I can’t help it.” Or, “I know what I am doing is wrong, but ...” Whatever follows that word “but” is not important. It is sin! If you truly belong to Christ, you willingly be submissive to God’s commands.

You say, “Wait a minute! All have sinned. All will sin. God does not expect perfection—that we would not sin.” You are correct, but there is a great difference in striving to be obedient to God’s commands and knowingly and willingly sinning against God. Are you willingly submissive to God’s commands?

**Question #4: Do I genuinely love other people?**

The letter of 1 John is filled with this principle of the relationship between genuine commitment to Christ and love for one another.

1 John 3:14—“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death.

1 John 4:7—“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

And finally, 1 John 4:20-21, “If anyone says, “I love God,” and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.<sup>21</sup> And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

### **Question #5: Am I filled with the Spirit?**

The fifth question is “Am I filled with the Spirit?” The reason that this is such a good question to help us to determine how we can know for certain that we have eternal life is simple. God gives us the Spirit at the moment of salvation. To have Jesus is to have the Spirit.

Consider 1 John 3:24, “The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him. And the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us.

And, 1 John 4:13, This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

So, how can we be sure that we are filled with the Spirit? The answer is easy. You know that you are filled with the Spirit if...

1. You have trusted solely in Jesus for eternal life.
2. You are sensitive to sin.
3. You are willingly submissive to God’s commands.
4. You genuinely love other people.

Does that list sound familiar? You see, the only way to do these things is by the Holy Spirit.

**But, I said there are 6 questions. It may come down to this for you.**

### **Question #6: Do you believe the Scriptures?**

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

In order to know that you have eternal life you must accept God’s Word. You must receive His offer that eternal life is only through Jesus. Just because eternal life is offered does not mean that eternal life is received. You must by faith receive His grace—His free gift of eternal life.

Finals are coming for college students. You remember what it was like to take a final exam. Suppose as you left the room from just taking the final, and the professor asked, "How did you do?" There could be a variety of responses.

- One could say, "I did poorly," but actually do well.
- One could say, "I did poorly," and be correct.
- One could say, "I did well," and the student would have been correct. That is a true assurance.
- One could say, "I did well," but do poorly. That is a false assurance.

You can know today how you will do on the final exam of life. You can have assurance. You can know.