

Do You Have Eternal Life?

Evidences from First John

John Hepp, Jr., www.kingdominbible.com

“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)

John’s main purpose. John mentions several purposes in writing this epistle. For example, “so that you will not sin” (2:1) and to warn “about those who are trying to lead you astray” (2:26). These contribute to his main purpose: “so that you may know that you have eternal life.” He wants believers in Jesus to have assurance that they are God’s children and will live eternally as such. Here in four categories are expressions John uses as equivalent to possessing eternal life. A chart and summary will follow, quoting evidence in 1 John for and against that blessing.

1. Have eternal life
 - live forever, 2:17
 - get/have (eternal) life, 2:25; 3:15; 5:11-12, 13
 - pass from death to life, 3:14
2. Have assurance about the future
 - be unashamed at His coming, 2:28
 - shall be like God, 3:2-3
3. Have a relationship with God
 - have fellowship (participation) with the Son and the Father, 1:6, 7
 - know God, 2:3; 4:6, 7, 8
 - be from God, 4:6b
 - be/remain in the Son and/or Father, 2:5, 6, 24; 3:5, 6, 24a; 4:13, 15, 16
4. Have a relationship to the truth and the light
 - have the Father, 2:23
 - be born of God, 2:29 (contra born of the devil, 3:8); 3:9-10; 4:7; 5:1a, 4, 18
 - have confidence before God, 3:21
 - have love of the Father/God, 2:15; 5:1b-2
 - have God live/remain in us, 3:24a, 24b; 4:12, 13, 15, 16
4. Have a relationship to the truth and the light
 - walk/remain in the light, 2:9, 10
 - belong to the truth, (contra be a liar, 2:4, 22); 3:18-19

“Fellowship” & “Abide.” These represent two Greek terms important to John’s argument. The noun often translated *fellowship* is *koinonia* (1:3a, 3b, 6, 7), a translation which has become misleading. Nowadays *fellowship* may refer to a trivial association; whereas *koinonia* implies a much deeper relationship, sharing in essentials. Here I represent it as “participation” (category 3 above).¹

The verb *meno* is used in 1 John twenty-four times, where the King James Version usually translates it as “abide.” However, it is not a technical term; it simply means “continue, remain.” The New International Version 1984 (NIV) so translates it, also as “live.”²

Quotations in the following chart are from the NIV. Bolded expressions are not necessarily evidences but expressions John re-used from His Gospel.³ Notice the summary after the chart.

Evidences of Eternal Life, 1 John (Bolded expressions came from John's Gospel.)		
Ref.	Evidence of Having Life	Evidence of Not Having Life
1:6		If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, ⁴ we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁵
1:7	But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, ⁶	
1:8		If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁷
1:9	If we confess our sins, ⁸ he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.	
1:10		If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. ⁹
2:3	We know that we have come to know him ¹⁰ if we obey his commands. ¹¹	
2:4		The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ¹²
2:5	But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:	
2:6	Whoever claims to live in him ¹³ must walk as Jesus did.	
2:9,11		9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him. ¹⁴
2:10	Whoever loves his brother lives in the light,	

Evidences of Eternal Life, 1 John (Bolded expressions came from John's Gospel.)		
Ref.	Evidence of Having Life	Evidence of Not Having Life
2:15		If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
2:17	The man who does the will of God lives forever	
2:19a	For if they had belonged to us , they would have remained with us;	
2:19b		But their going showed that none of them belonged to us.
2:22-23a		Who is the liar ? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist —he denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father;
2:23b	Whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.	
2:24-25	See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.	
2:28	Continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.	
2:29b	You know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.	
3:6a	No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.	
3:6b		No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.
3:7	He who does what is right is righteous , just as he is righteous.	
3:8a		He who does what is sinful is of the devil,

Evidences of Eternal Life, 1 John (Bolded expressions came from John's Gospel.)		
Ref.	Evidence of Having Life	Evidence of Not Having Life
3:9-10a	No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God . 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are:	
3:10b		Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God ; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.
3:14	We know that we have passed from death to life , because we love our brothers.	
3:15		Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him .
3:17-18		If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.
3:18-19	Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth , and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence.	
3:23-24a	And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them .	
3:24b	And this is how we know that he lives in us : We know it by the Spirit he gave us. ¹⁵	
4:3		Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God . This is the spirit of the antichrist,

Evidences of Eternal Life, 1 John (Bolded expressions came from John's Gospel.)		
Ref.	Evidence of Having Life	Evidence of Not Having Life
4:5		They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.
4:6	We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us....This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth....	
4:6b		But whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize ...the spirit of falsehood.
4:7	Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.	
4:8		Whoever does not love does not know God , because God is love.
?4:11	Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.	
4:12	If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.	
4:13	We know that we live in him and he in us , because he has given us of his Spirit.	
4:15	If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.	
4:16	God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.	
4:20-21		If anyone says, " I love God ," yet hates his brother, he is a liar . For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God , whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.
5:1a	Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ,	

Evidences of Eternal Life, 1 John (Bolded expressions came from John's Gospel.)		
Ref.	Evidence of Having Life	Evidence of Not Having Life
5:1b-2	Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ¹⁶	
?5:10	Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.	
5:12a	He who has the Son has life;	
5:12b		he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
5:13	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.	

Summary of Evidence of Eternal Life

1. Belief

- confess our sin(s), 1:9, 10
- believe that Jesus is the Son, the Christ, 2:23; 3:24b to 4:3; 4:14, 15; 5:1a, 5, 13
- what we heard remains in us, 2:24; 4:5-6a
- believe God's testimony that eternal life is in His Son, 5:10-12

2. Obedience

- walk/live in the light, 1:7; 2:10
- walk as Jesus walked, 2:6
- obey His commands/word, 2:3, 5, 17 (do His will); 3:24a
- continue in Him, 2:28
- do what is right, 2:29; 3:7
- purify oneself, 3:3
- not go on sinning, 3:9-10; 5:18

3. Love for the brethren

- 3:10, 14, 18-21 (with actions and in truth); 4:7, 8, 12, 16, 20-21; 5:1b-2

NOTES

¹ *Koinonia* is from the adjective *koinos*, which describes something shared in common. For example, Acts 2:44 (cf. 4:32) says that the early believers “had all things *in common*” (NASB). In Titus 1:4 the apostle calls Titus “my true child in a *common* faith” (NASB). As in English, some things common to the world thereby become “unholy” to believers (see Acts 10:14, 28; 11:8). The cognate verb *koinoneo* is used eight times (once by John), all in the sense of *share* or *participate*. In Hebrews 2:14 “the children *share* in flesh and blood” (NIV). In 2 John the apostle warns not to welcome a teacher who denies that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh. “Anyone who welcomes him *shares* in his wicked work” (2 John 11). A cognate noun, *koinonos*, used ten times (but not by John), always means a participant, one who shares.

² For *meno* see Key 7 in my “[Keys to Understand John’s First Epistle](#),” and especially Appendix B in “[The Gospel of John: Messiah’s Signs & Men’s Responses](#).” Only John uses *meno* in a non-literal, moral sense.

³ See my writing “[Some Expressions & Key Words Used Both in John’s Epistles & Gospel](#).”

⁴ 1:6 walk in darkness. See also 2:9, 11. This is impossible for a follower of Jesus (John 8:12 and 12:46; see also 12:35-36).

⁵ 1:6 we lie and do not live by the truth. See John 3:20-21 and especially John 8:44 (the devil is a liar with no truth in him; his children are like him).

⁶ 1:7 we have fellowship with one another. According to 1:1-3, this fellowship is the purpose of apostolic preaching, not the purpose of 1 John. “Have fellowship” here means “participate in the eternal life that was revealed.”

⁷ 1:8 the truth is not in us. See the second note on 1:6.

⁸ 1:9 confess our sins. This is not an optional activity for special believers but is true of all believers. Believers confess sin in contrast to those whom “the truth is not in,” who “claim to be without sin” (v. 8).

⁹ 1:10 his word has no place. This is virtually the same description Jesus gave of unbelievers in John 5:38 (see also 15:7).

¹⁰ 2:3 We know him. This is true of all believers. See 2:13-14, where it is affirmed in three out of the six statements. In John’s Gospel it is a common description of God’s Son and believers but not true of unbelievers: John 1:10; 8:55; 14:7, 17; 16:3; 17:3, 25.

¹¹ 2:3 obey his commands. Compare 3:22-23; 5:3.

¹² 2:4 is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Reiterates the description of unbelievers in 1:6, 8.

¹³ 2:6 to live in him. KJV has “he abideth in him.” The Greek verb (*meno*) literally means “continue” or “remain”—and is often so translated. See discussion of *meno*/abide in the introduction, note, and links.

¹⁴ 2:9,11 in the darkness. See 1:6 and the first note on 1:6.

¹⁵ 3:24b by the Spirit he gave us. This proof is Christological, because God’s Spirit is known by confessing Jesus as Christ (Messiah), 4:2.

¹⁶ 5:2 “This is how we know that we love the children of God: **by loving God and carrying out** his commands.” This NIV translation of 5:2 affirms that loving and obeying God is evidence that we love His children. Instead, John here finishes proving just the reverse: Loving God’s children is evidence that we love Him. Consider the following. (1) The Greek word *hotan*, here translated “by,” instead means “when”: “By this we know that we love the children of God, **when** we love God...” (KJV). *Hotan* introduces a time factor rather than proof, as seen in its seventeen occurrences in John’s Gospel (e.g., 4:25; 9:5; 21:18b). There the NIV always translates it as “when” or an equivalent. (2) Verse 2 concludes an argument begun in 4:20. There John said that loving God is more difficult than loving a brother—and easy to claim falsely. He then gave two reasons why we will love our brothers if we love and obey God: (1) Obedience. God commanded us to love them (4:21). (2) Love. They are God’s children (5:1a)—and we love the children of people we love (5:1b). Verse 2 sums it up.