

1 John 5:18-21

1. INTRODUCTION

- A. As we come to the conclusion of First John, we should be impressed with the words “we know” for there is a genuine certainty that comes from being a Christian. Christians are not “know-it-all”, but there is a hidden wisdom from God which is not available to the world in general, but which is imparted to those who are taught of the Spirit.
- B. Christians know spiritual secrets that other people do not know. Because they know them, they can react differently to what happens to them. Christians have a settled certainty about God.

I remember reading that one of the colleagues of England's great Christian prime minister, William Gladstone, once said of him, "I don't mind that Gladstone always seems to have an ace up his sleeve; what makes me angry is his maddening assurance that it was the Almighty who put it there."

- C. The Apostle John says that true Christianity creates three great certainties and with these three certainties he closes this little letter.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS 5:18

- A. **“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin;”** – The Christian, after having received a new spiritual birth from God, comes to a certain realization that he can no longer continue in sin as a habit of life as he did as an unsaved person. The new birth changes the Christians attitude about sin and this will result in an accompanying change in the life. There may be occasional failure in practice, as there is in each of our lives from time to time, but there cannot be a continual, habitual practicing of sin.

Billy Graham says, “Conversion is a revolution in the life of the individual.” If you are converted, you have changed your whole direction; you have turned around 180° and you are going another direction than you were before.

- B. **“The one who was born of God keeps him safe,”** -- This should be translated, “But He that is begotten of God is keeping him,” referring to Christ keeping the believer. The reason a person cannot habitually sin is that Christ is in him and he is kept by the power of Christ. A person may struggle, he may temporarily fall, he may resist the changes that the Spirit of God is attempting to make, but he cannot continually do so, for he is kept by the power of God as the Apostle Jude puts it.

- C. ***“And the evil one cannot harm him.”*** – The Devil can frighten us, harass us, threaten us, make us believe that we are in his power, lay temptations that will stir our desires and passions and make us think we have to sin. But this is a lie. We do not have to yield to the luring and deceiving of the Evil One. The great declaration of the Bible is that the Devil cannot make you sin and he can never possess you if you are a true child of God. That is very encouraging, is it not?
NOTE: The Apostle’s whole point is that you cannot be born again without there being a change, and a desire for obedience that is born in the heart. If you profess Christianity and have no desire to be obedient to God or to depart from wrongdoing, you probably have never been born of God.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF RELATIONSHIP 5:19

- A. ***“We know that we are children of God,”*** – The Christian has the absolute certainty that he has a spiritual relationship to God and that he belongs to God. This may cause people to say, “How smug and presumptuous Christians are. They think themselves so much better, so superior to others!” This simply is not true. Christians are not superior to anyone but they are separated to God; they are not better but they are blessed of God. Christians have been set aside as a chosen and peculiar people for God to glorify God on this earth.
- B. ***“And that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”*** – The Christian realizes that he belongs to God and has been separated from the world system and all of its philosophy of life, for the world is engulfed by the power of the Devil. The unsaved world and the Christian are going in opposite directions. What honest and objective person could doubt this statement if they would face the facts squarely. The marks of the Evil One are everywhere. Think of the violence and tensions that grip our cities – they are nothing but seething pools of human misery, ready to erupt in a moment into riot, violence and death. Think of the hate, horror and bitterness that are rampant in human life today – in unhappy families and in the high divorce rates. Think of the brutal wars and the even more brutal weapons of nuclear death that are hiding in the closets of the world today – the history of the human race is one unending story of brutality, violence, murder, war and death. Think of the deceit that is everywhere in public life: the lying the cheating, the twisting and distorting of truth, in homes and classrooms, in the Congress and our courts, and the highest offices of the land. The marks of the Evil One are all about us but most men fail to face the facts honestly and they go about in a glass tower, thinking that the world is getting better and better, and this, too, is the work of the Devil.

IV. THE CERTAINTY OF SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING 5:20

- A. ***“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding,”***
– The Christian knows he has been given spiritual understanding that the world knows nothing about and cannot know (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20-25).

- B. ***“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.”*** – We know God, His Son Jesus Christ, and this brings the true Christian knowledge of the fact that he possesses eternal life. Do you ever stop to give grateful thanks that God has saved you, taken you out of the world system, given you eternal life and granted you special spiritual understanding? What a privilege it really is to be a Christian. The goal and purpose of all men’s activity is to have abundant and continual life, but in the human realm this cannot be attained. However this can and is given to men in Christ, for Christ gives abundant and eternal life to all who receive him by faith.

V. THE FINAL EXHORTATION 5:21

- A. ***“Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.”*** – An idol is a substitute god. A god is whatever you give your time, your energy and your money to; it is what you live for, what you get excited about, what enthuses you. That is your god.

In Ephesus there were many stone images of gods and each god represented something special. Today we are too dignified to have literal idols but the representations of these stone images still remain even today in intangible but real idols. Narcissus, was the god who fell in love with himself – this is seen today in the worship of self, the worship of man, the exaltation of man. Bacchus, the god of pleasure, wine, materialism and riot – this is still the god of some today. Venus, the goddess of love and sex – this idol still looms high in the minds of men and is set forth in the false and this is the exaltation of the human body and Minerva, the goddess of science – men today have bowed their knees to the god of science, thinking that it will solve all social and spiritual problems. Little children, guard yourselves from these idols, for God has set you free that you may serve the Lord perverted viewpoint of love as set forth by Hollywood. Apollo, the god of physical beauty – Jesus Christ.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. Are you an idolater? You may not bow down to a wooden or stone image but you may have substituted something in your life for the true God – if so, you are a spiritual idolater.
- B. If you are to be a true child of God, you must turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. How do you turn to God? ***Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life, No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6). “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9).***