



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 5:18-21 – “WE KNOW...”

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John was the last living Apostle of Jesus Christ, unwavering in his faith with an abiding concern for the church. John writes his authoritative Epistle with simple words and clear certainties regarding the truth to assure believers in their faith. As we bring our five-year study of this portion of Scripture to a close, may this time spent in 1 John have an abiding impact with our thoughts, in our hearts and on our lives.

I. 1 JOHN 5:18-21 – “WE KNOW...”

(18) “We know that no one who is born of God sins, but He Who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.” (19) “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” (20) “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” (21) “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”
1 John 5:18-21

John will conclude his Epistle by affirming three certainties of the Christian life, emphasized throughout his letter.

A. 1 JOHN 5:18- “WE KNOW...GOD KEEPS US”!

“We know that no one who is born of God sins, but He Who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.” 1 John 5:18

At first, what John writes in this verse seems impossible. Of course, John couldn't mean that Christians don't sin, because we do. The fact of our sin plagues the life of any believer. This is the conflict, which marks the Christian life. In the life of the believer, there is a tension produced by sin, not wanting to. But, the *“one who is born of God”*, no longer has a prevailing pattern of sin. Sin no longer dominates our lives because of our new birth. John has taught that sins' guilt and power has been broken with sanctification as a progressive reality. Little by little, we become more like Christ as the Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out. And, this transformation is the evidence of a real and genuine faith. (2 Corinthians 3:18) A child of God may sin, but there is a resistance to that sin.¹

John then writes, *“but He Who was born of God keeps him”*. Though the believer sins, Christ *“keeps him.”* (John 17:12, 1 Peter 1:5) This marks the difference between what Christ does and what the *“evil one”* does. John, writing about Jesus in his Gospel, and calls Him the Good Shepherd Who protects His sheep. (John 10) The verb *“keeps”* refers to watching, guarding. It describes Christ's continuous action of preserving the believer. We are well aware of our weaknesses and failures. We can be assured that our safekeeping does not depend on our

own efforts. Christ is our assurance Himself that He will guard and watch over us so that we can never fall away or be lost. Philippians 2:13 reminds us that it is God at work in us to will and to work for His good pleasure.

This verse places the two supernatural realms contending for the control of the believer side by side. First mentioned is God, Jesus Christ. And the second is the realm of the *“evil one”*, Satan. John points to the evil-minded nature of Satan. He is the active enemy of the believer and is relentless in his attempts to harm and deceive all believers. John says *“the evil one does not touch him.”* That word *“touch”* refers to lay hold of or fasten to. This would picture Satan seeking to fasten his grip on the believer. The present tense word suggests the evil one's persistent, ongoing effort with hostile intentions. Even though Satan will persist in his hostile efforts, the assurance John gives is that Satan will never be able to regain his grip on the *“one who is born of God.”* Though Satan's attacks may be vicious, the true child of God is secure, even when tempted and we sin. Our security rests with Jesus Christ. (Luke 22:31-32)²

B. 1 JOHN 5:19 – “WE KNOW...WE BELONG TO GOD”!

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” 1 John 5:19

Scripture makes clear there are only two realms, two camps; those who belong to God and those who don't. MacArthur says that it is the comforting privilege of believers to be assured and confident that we belong to God and not to this world.³ This is a declared certainty if we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (1 John 5:1)

By contrast, the second realm is the world in its rebellion against God and is under the power and dominion of Satan. The world is hostile to God, His believers and His church. It takes its cue from its ruler Satan who is the enemy of God and His people. (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 6:12) He is a powerful enemy and is described as a roaring lion who seeks those he can devour. (1 Peter 5:8) John says, *“the whole world”* which implies all who are estranged from God. When John writes that *“the whole world lies in the power of the evil one”*, to *“lie”* means to recline or be nonresistant to the power which controls them, which is the power of the *“evil one”*.⁴

There is no third choice or middle ground. Everyone is a part of God's kingdom or Satan's. (Luke 11:23) Only Jesus Christ sets us free from captivity to Satan's rule. (1 Corinthians 4:4-6)

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

1 JOHN 5:18-21 – “WE KNOW...”

C.1 JOHN 5:20 “WE KNOW...WE ARE IN HIM WHO IS TRUE”

“And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20

John continues to reinforce the incredible certainties we have in our relationship with Christ as our Lord and Savior. John begins with *“we know that the Son of God has come...”*. With *“and”* John implies something further to be added. This third assurance is the longest and most involved. John again confirms the Christian security we have in Christ with the certainty that Jesus as the Son of God has indeed come and then adds, *“and has given us understanding that we might know Him Who is true.”* It is incredibly significant that John again uses the name, *“Son of God”* affirming the true identity of Jesus Christ as Deity, the One in Whom our Christian faith is established.

To use the verb *“has come”*, John is referencing a Greek word used to describe the solemn appearance of a god. John references this in his Gospel, John 1:14 and refers to the finality of Christ’s coming in His incarnation to redeem the lost. And Jesus Christ has come and *“has given us understanding that we know Him Who is true.”* By nature, our minds have been darkened by sin and Satan. But by God’s great mercy to us, He has opened our eyes to the truth of His Son. He enables us to understand the gospel and our desperate need for a Savior and that Christ is that great Savior! The only way to be saved is by believing in the Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, for there is salvation in no other than Him. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12)

John marks the abiding reality of this gift of understanding with *“has given”*. The word *“understanding”* is used only here in John’s writings. It’s a noun that refers to the ability to pass beyond the external and superficial of a thing to understand the true reality. That is, to understand the true significance of the Person of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as John further stated in 1 John 2:27. Are we not so grateful for this understanding??⁵

John says it clearly, *“that we might know Him Who is true,”*. The world broadcasts the opposite, that which is false. This clearly designates Jesus Christ as the God Who is true, genuine or real as opposed to the many false gods. We live in a world filled with Satan’s lies. But John’s last use of the word *“true”* points to the greatest truth of all, that Jesus Christ is *“the true God and eternal life.”*⁶ As believers, God has brought us into fellowship with Him and this is what it means to know Him Who is truly real!

So not only do we know Jesus Christ, but John goes on to spell out this spiritual intimacy with Christ by saying, *“and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.”* We know Christ and we are in Christ. These two realities are at the heart of the Christian life. We have a union with God in Christ and we have communion with God in Christ! (1 John 1:3) Ponder this truth, this certainty which is ours in Christ! May it bring us to our knees in worship and thanksgiving. Never forget these truths.⁷

D. 1 JOHN 5:21 – A FINAL REMINDER!

“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.” 1 John 5:21

John concludes by reminding every believer to constantly resist and refuse the temptations to embrace anything that would take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ in our life. This world lives in darkness, reaching for what will never satisfy or last and no believer is immune from the deceptive pull of the evil one. We must be alert like armed guards ready to withstand any attack. And, God will continue to work on our behalf. But, Jesus Christ must always remain the chief delight of our hearts.⁸

And so, we must grow in our love for Christ. May John’s words from this great Epistle have an abiding impact on our lives. May the blending of John’s gentle love, his deep content, the great truths of Jesus Christ and great exhortations to love God and love one another more only inspire us to *“present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...”* (Romans 12:1)

¹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.84.

² Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.267.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.208.

⁴ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.268.

⁵ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.269.

⁶ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.210.

⁷ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.86.

⁸ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.87.