

With Morgan
The Three Things We Know
1 John 5: 18 - 21

19/07/26 pm



As John draws his first letter to a close, he wants his children, to remember what they know, implying that they have been taught these things. These reminders will help the Christians as they live life in a fallen world while awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus. John covers a lot in these final verses, and each one could easily be a sermon in itself. He discusses the Christian's relationship with sin and the security we have in Jesus, the work of Satan in the world, our union with Christ, our understanding of the truth, and the Christian's relationship with idols.

Our Relationship with sin. In 1:6 John says, "if we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and the truth is not in us". He says that the Christian life is incompatible with sin. "If we are born of God, we do not continue to sin". Every Christian has two birthdays: the day we took our first breath, and the moment we trusted in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. "To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, not a husband's will, but born of God." (Jn1 :12-13) So Christian, know that when you are born of God, you have a new nature. But we might hear that and think to ourselves, 'well I told a lie this morning...' or 'I still have a persistent struggle with lust and adultery and as much as it pains me and frustrates me, I can't defeat it.' John isn't saying here that Christians are perfect. In the opening verses he said that if we claim to be sinless, we deceive ourselves. (1:8) The reality is we are not going to be perfectly sin-free until the day we reach heaven. There is not a secret level of Christian maturity where some people just don't sin anymore, and temptation just isn't a thing that bothers us anymore. We battle until the day we are glorified. And so, to continue in sin isn't the times where we slip up in a moment of weakness or panic. To continue in sin means to live in sin and to be a slave to it, or maybe that we have made peace with it in our lives and it doesn't bother us anymore. One of the marks of new birth is our response to conviction of sin. John Stott puts it like this, "The new birth results in new behaviour. Sin and the child of God are incompatible. They may occasionally meet; they cannot live together in harmony." Although we do have a responsibility for our own actions and sins, John brings out a great encouragement at the end of this verse where he talks about 'the One born of God.' That is Jesus Christ, who keeps us safe from the evil one. This isn't physical safety. Many Christians across the world are persecuted. Satan may tempt us and get the better of us and cause us to backslide but if we are born of God, Jesus, 'the One born of God', our elder brother, is protecting us. Satan cannot drag us back into the kingdom of darkness. "No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand."

The world is under Satan's control, (v19) but we belong to the kingdom of heaven, not to Satan's world. The signs that the world belongs to Satan are in the horrifying footage of wars which rage across the globe. Biblical values are being undermined by societies, governments and schools, and sadly even in some churches. Psalm 11 speaks about the wicked bending their bows aiming them at the upright in heart and the foundations being destroyed. We read of the persecution of God's children in many countries. Even here in Mold we see that Satan is at work. We are often full on a Sunday morning but in comparison with the population of Mold, we are few in number, even when we include those who go to other churches. The god of this world, "has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God". (2Cor 4:4) The anti-Christ's and false teachers have distorted the gospel; another sign that the world is under the control of the evil one. And in the middle of all of that, we the church, God's children, the redeemed people of Christ, do not belong to it! We are citizens of heaven. We stand as those who point people to Jesus, and the kingdom of heaven.

The world is under the control of the devil, but he is not sovereign or fully in control of all things. Absolute, and ultimate sovereignty belongs to God and God alone. It is impossible to

have two different persons with ultimate and complete control of all things. That doesn't work logically or practically. Because the Bible says so, Satan's control is limited by the sovereign hand of God. Before Satan could inflict all that dreadful suffering on Job, he had to come before God and ask, and even then, God limited him. Although God permits him to exercise real influence and dominion over this fallen world, God always overrules and restrains him, I'm sure we know that the world isn't as bad as it could be. The reality is that Satan was defeated at the cross where Jesus by his death released the captives and crushed Satan's head. And when he does return Satan will face his final doom and suffer the full consequences for all the damage he has done. Remember that God is good and his purposes are good. He works all things for the good of those who love him, even in the middle of all the evil that we see taking place. We are children of God, with a message of hope, kept safe in Jesus.

John points us back to the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Our faith is grounded in all that God did in and through his Son. The eternal Son of God was born into this world as a real human being, with flesh and blood as real as mine. He died on a cross to rescue us from our sin. By his coming he has given his people intellectual and spiritual understanding, which only his people have. Intellectually we accept the historical facts of the Christian faith. Many people can do that, and many do. We also have a spiritual understanding, because we believe not just facts about Jesus, but we trust Jesus. It's an understanding which leads us to saving faith which in turn means that we know God personally as our heavenly Father. Friends, tonight if you are trusting Jesus then God is your Father, and if we know him, we are in him. Jesus has brought us into the closest possible relationship with God the Father himself. We are in God, he in us, in a union which can never be severed. John writes, "And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ" This really is incredible. We have circled back to what John writes at the very start of this letter. (1 John 1 :3). Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And here in 5:20, if we have fellowship with Jesus, the Son, we are in God the Father. You cannot separate the man Jesus from God. If you know Jesus, you know God. That is the grand theme of 1 John. John very bluntly says right at the end of verse 20: Jesus is the true God, and so eternal life is found in him alone which is why John closes the way he does, in verse 21.

In the Bible letters are usually signed off with a blessing 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' But 1 John closes with, "Dear children, keep yourself from idols". Strange, because John hasn't explicitly said anything about idolatry yet. An idol is anything which takes the place of God in our hearts. John has literally just told us who Jesus is. One of the main reasons John wrote this letter was to combat those who were presenting a distorted view of Jesus and to warn his dear children about them. They were creating a Jesus in their own image, a lesser-Jesus, an anti-Christ, a false god, an idol. So, to believe in a Jesus who is less than the one the apostles taught about (1 :1 , 4:14), that God testifies about (5:9) is idolatry. In other words, keep yourself from false-Christes or 'continue worshipping the real Jesus!' John pointed us constantly to the real Jesus! He is the one true Son. The one true God. In him we have one true fellowship and the one true life; the only one in whom we have forgiveness of sin.

Conclusion John has given us three great certainties that we can know. We know that if we are born of God, Christ keeps us safe. We still battle with sin, but sin no longer reigns over us, and Satan cannot snatch us from our Saviour's hand. We know that although this world lies under the influence of the evil one, we belong to God. We are strangers and pilgrims here, citizens of another kingdom, awaiting the return of our King. And we know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding. He has opened our blind eyes to know the true God. More than that, he has united us to himself, so that in knowing the Son we know the Father. Jesus Christ is the one true God and eternal life. That is why John's final command is so fitting: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." Don't settle for a lesser Jesus. Don't believe a Jesus of your own imagination. Don't exchange the true Christ for one fashioned by our culture, by false teachers, or even by our own hearts. Hold fast to the Jesus the apostles proclaimed, the eternal Son who came in the flesh, died for our sins, rose again, and now keeps his people safe. Know these things, and they will help us until the end, when Jesus comes again!

Amen