

# PM 1 John 5:18-21

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[0:00] Let's turn now to the Word of God, and we have two readings. We're going to be looking at the final verses of 1 John 5, but first by way of background, John chapter 17.

1 John 5, verse 13.

1 John 5, verse 14.

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1 John 5, verse 14. 1 John 5, verse 14. 1 John 5, verse 14. 1 John 5, verse 15. 1 John 5, verse 14.

1 John 5, verse 14. 1 John 5, verse 14. 2 John 5, verse 15. Let me ask you to turn please to 1 John chapter 5 and those final few verses.

[7:29] Come now to the end of these studies in 1 John. And to this final great statement of Christian assurance.

We have been looking today at verses 13 through to 21. Repeatedly in these verses you will see that John is using this phrase, we know.

As he sums up all the great themes of this letter. As we saw this morning, we have here in verses 13 to 21, five great certainties in the Christian faith.

We could think of them as five pillars upholding the Christian faith. I hesitate to draw a comparison with Islam, but Islam has its five pillars.

Well here are five better pillars. Five pillars of Christianity. John speaks in verses 13 through to 21 of our certainty concerning eternal life.

[8:50] Verse 13. Answered prayer. Verses 14 to 17. The Christian character in verse 18. Our Christian identity.

Verse 19. And Christ himself. Verses 20 to 21. And we looked at the first two of those this morning. And now we're going to look at the rest this evening.

Now it has to be said that the modern world is very wary of certainty in matters of religion. Religion, they would say, is a matter of personal belief.

And no one can say that they know the truth. We're all feeling our way toward the truth, people would say. We've all caught different glimpses of the truth.

There are elements of the truth in all religions. And we must humbly listen to each other, so they would say. They might even talk of my truth and your truth.

[10:04] But not the truth. Many people today would feel that these final verses of 1 John are rather arrogant.

Especially perhaps verse 19. We are of God. And the whole world lies in the power of the devil.

That's a bit extreme, isn't it? We could get ourselves into trouble with verses like that. We could be accused of a hate crime. The world doesn't like these binary statements, as they call them.

Us and them. And even some Christians might feel uncomfortable with them. But there is no hatred in these verses.

Quite the opposite. John is the apostle of love. And although the word love doesn't occur in these verses, it saturates the whole letter.

[11:15] John is writing in love here, firstly toward us, as Christians. Wanting us to be sure of our faith.

Because a confident faith is a happy faith. And a faith full of doubts is also full of sadness. He wants us to have a strong foundation for our faith.

He wants to protect his little children, as he calls us, from the errors that were going around at that time. You may recall there was that sect of the Gnostics who claimed to have secret knowledge of God, but in reality didn't know him.

John wants us to know the real truth. And so far as the world is concerned, well, I would suggest that John is writing with love towards the world as well.

John is not closing the door on the world here. Far from it. Remember he has said already in this very letter, chapter 4, verse 14, the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

[ 12 : 40 ] So these final verses might appear at first sight to be rather harsh toward the world, but they are in reality an invitation to the world to come and share in this certainty that we have.

I once heard a preacher describe that phrase, we know, in a different setting, Romans 8, 28 as it happens, as a family secret.

And I thought it was a brilliant description with this qualification, that we're not trying to keep it secret. We want everyone to know.

And although John is writing here mainly for Christians, nothing would delight him more than for the whole world to know these things that we know.

So let's come now to these final verses. As I said, we looked at verses 13 to 17 this morning.

Tonight, we're going to look at verses 18 to 21.

[ 13 : 56 ] So we begin tonight with the third of those five great certainties. Our certainty concerning the Christian character in verse 18.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who was born of God protects him and the evil one does not touch him.

The connection with verses 16 to 18 is obvious. John has just suggested praying for brothers and sisters who may have strayed into sin.

Quite clearly, some do. And we know from bitter experience that some stray a very long way. But keep on praying for them, John has said.

That is a prayer that is certainly according to God's will. Having said that, however, John now wants to reassure us that most Christians do not go astray.

[ 15 : 11 ] Or at least not very far or not for very long. The authorised version is rather alarming here.

It says that whoever is born of God does not sin. Whereas obviously we do. John admits as much in chapter 1 where he speaks of confessing our sins and finding forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

The ESV, however, is quite correct to translate it does not keep on sinning. Because it is a present continuous sense tense in the Greek.

Christians do sin. We sin much more often than we would like to. But John is saying here that our general character is one of holiness.

John had been saying this all the way through this letter. True Christians walk in the light. They love God and they love his commandments.

[ 16 : 27 ] And that has to be so doesn't it when you consider who Christians are. As Christians we have been born again or born of God as he puts it here.

God is our father and we bear the family likeness and God is holy. we have eternal life as he has just said in verse 13 and that eternal life is the life of God within us a life of holiness it's the life of Christ within us and Christ is sinless.

there is a wonderful description of the new birth in Ezekiel chapter 36 and verse 26 I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

In other words God is at work in us making us holy. How can he possibly fail? If such a mighty work of God is going on within us we're sure to be holy.

Furthermore John says here we are being kept by the Lord himself he who was born of God in the context that must mean the Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ protects him and the evil one does not touch him.

[ 18 : 27 ] That's what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer isn't it? Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil or as some translate it from the evil one.

that again is a prayer that is certainly according to the will of God and God will answer that prayer. It's also what our Lord himself prayed as we read in John 17.

We've seen through these studies how often John echoes the teaching of the Last Supper. Here in these final verses he echoes the prayer that followed the Last Supper.

What did Jesus pray? He prayed Holy Father keep them in your name. Verse 11 and then again in verse 15 I do not pray I ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

And again verse 19 that they may be sanctified in truth. The Lord Jesus Christ himself has prayed these prayers. How can his prayer possibly be turned down?

[ 19 : 46 ] We have all the might of the triune God protecting us from evil keeping us in a path of holiness. Don't you find that in practice?

Yes the old nature nature is still there and often you feel that you want to go off into some worldly way but there is something restraining you isn't there?

You just can't. You can't bring yourself to leave the Lord you love and the reason is very simple because that Lord is holding on tight to you.

He is keeping you. The evil one, the devil, is certainly a great danger to us. The Bible never doubts the reality of the devil and he will certainly tempt us.

He will seek to terrify us. He will whisper enticements to us. He will come up close as it were and breathe threats over us.

[ 20 : 58 ] But ultimately he has no power. over God's people. Someone has described the devil as like a chained lion.

It's a very long chain. As Peter says he goes around seeking whom he may devour. And yes he is wandering around tonight looking to see whether he can pick off one here or one there.

If only he could. But he can't. Because even on that long chain he's under control. And he cannot destroy us.

In that sense he cannot touch us. John said in chapter four greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

God. It's as if Christ is there saying as the devil approaches you hands off. That one is mine.

[ 21 : 58 ] which leads us on to our second point tonight. Our certainty concerning our Christian identity.

In verse 19 we know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. God says now that again takes us back to John 17.

Remember how our Lord describes his disciples there as those whom the Father has given him. Those who belong to God. They are yours he says.

John 17 verse 9. They are not of the world he says in verse 14 just as I am not of the world. And John himself has echoed this earlier in the letter.

Chapter 4 verse 4. Little children you are from God. What does that mean to be from God? It means firstly to be elect of God.

[ 23 : 10 ] Chosen by God before the foundation of the world. What an astonishing thought that is. it means also to be born of God.

As John has just said in verse 18. We are born of the water and the spirit. It means also that we belong to God as his children, his servants, his soldiers, his people.

In olden times in Scotland people identified themselves by the clan that they belonged to. It was a matter of pride to be a Campbell or a Douglas or whatever.

I suppose to some extent it still is. Well Christians belong to the greatest clan of all. The people of God.

In contrast, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. He doesn't quite say notice that they belong to the devil, but they are under his power.

[ 24 : 28 ] They are in fact slaves of the devil, even though most of them are completely unaware of it and would vigorously deny it. The devil has deceived them.

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, the God of this world has blinded them to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. They have believed the devil's lies and they are walking in the devil's ways.

For this reason we can expect the world to hate us. Jesus said that in John 17. John has said it several times here in this letter.

There is a great divide here isn't there between us and them. That is inescapably true and we feel it every day don't we?

We are not like other people and they are not like us. We value things that are meaningless to them and they treasure things that are meaningless to us.

[ 25 : 31 ] There is no escaping that fact. But scathing though this verse appears to be. We mustn't imagine that John has simply written off the world.

After all we were like that once. Paul says in Titus 3 and verse 3 we ourselves were once foolish and disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared he saved us. Christ has come as the great liberator.

He set us free from the slavery of sin and Satan. And he can set others free. Remember how Jesus said in Nazareth in Luke 4 that he had come to set the captives free.

far from being a contemptuous dismissal of the world verse 19 is indirectly a call to us to preach to the world.

[ 26 : 49 ] You know when Abraham heard that his nephew Lot had been taken captive he gathered together an army of 318 men and he went off and he set him free.

When we hear that our fellow men and women have been taken captive by Satan shouldn't we be setting out to go and see if we can liberate them?

And what can we do to liberate them? Well an army of 318,000 won't help us. The only way we can liberate them is with the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The good news of salvation through the Son of God. Which brings us finally to the certainty that we have concerning Christ himself in verses 20 and 21.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true.

[ 28 : 00 ] In his Son, Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. This is the true climax of the whole letter.

John began with Christ back in chapter 1, verse 1, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and so on. He expressed there a desire that we might have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

He now ends the letter with Christ, and with that fellowship which we have with the Father and with the Son.

Once again, there are echoes of John 17. Jesus said there in verse 3, this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Which is exactly what John says here has actually happened. Now this is a wonderful verse, let's look at it in a little more detail.

[ 29 : 16 ] 1 John says, we know that the Son of God has come. We know firstly that Jesus is the Son of God. Obvious to us, but not everyone knows that.

Jesus once asked his disciples, who do men say that I am? And they gave him a whole variety of different answers, some of them quite weird answers.

Jesus then asked, who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus replied, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

That's the only way you could have known this, if God himself had revealed it to you. Likewise today, if you ask people, who do you think Jesus is?

You'll get a variety of answers. some will say that he was a great teacher, some might suggest that he was a revolutionary thinker, but we know that he is more than that.

[ 30 : 36 ] He is the Son of God. And we know that because God has revealed it to us. He has opened our eyes to see the evidence that he is the Son of God.

He has opened our hearts to believe his words and to recognize him for who he truly is.

Furthermore, we know why he has come.

We know that he has come to save us from our sins. He is the Messiah. We're not waiting for the Messiah like the Jews.

He has come and has died on the cross and risen again, just as the scriptures said he would. Secondly, John says he has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true. Him who is true could be equally the Father or the Son. I think in the context here that John is actually saying that Christ has revealed the Father to us.

[ 31 : 52 ] As Jesus said in John 14 verse 6, the Last Supper again, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. And then again in verse 9, whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Now that's something quite extraordinary when you think about it, that we actually know God. Knowing God is more than just knowing about God.

We actually know him personally. I was in a meeting the other day, a mention was made of a well-known Anglican evangelist who I knew in my younger years.

And it felt so strange to be hearing these people speaking with wonder and awe at this great man. Well, I was thinking, well, I know him. Much more so.

[ 33 : 01 ] When people speak of God, they speak of the unknowable entity out there in the universe. And we can say, yes, yes, we know him.

We know him personally. We were probably speaking to him only this morning. We know God. But something even more extraordinary than that follows.

Not only do we know him who is true, but we are in him who is true. In his son, Jesus Christ. Christ. Again, there are echoes there of John 17.

I think John must have spent his whole life meditating upon the words at the Last Supper. Jesus had said, in that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.

He prayed in John 17 that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and you in me, that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

[ 34 : 16 ] That isn't just a prayer for Christian unity. It's a prayer for unity in Christ. Two quite different things. We can strive for Christian unity, and it's good that we do.

We may not get very far because we meet with all kinds of differences that we can't overcome. But unity in Christ, that's different. That's something that God has established.

God has united us in Christ with every one of our brothers and sisters, wherever they are, whatever denomination they're in. How wonderful that is. And that unity exists because we are in him who is true.

It's interesting that right at the end of the Bible, in Revelation 19.11, Jesus appears on a white horse, and one of the titles he's given is faithful and true.

The father is true, the son is true, and we know both, and we are in both. finally, verse 20, John says, concerning Christ, he is the true God and eternal life.

[ 35 : 41 ] That's the clearest statement I know of the divinity of Christ. He is the true God. And it's the clearest statement I know about eternal life. Christ is eternal life.

And to know him is to have life. Just as Jesus said in John 17. which brings us around full circle with our studies today, doesn't it?

We began this morning with eternal life. We know that we have eternal life. And we end tonight with a definition of that eternal life.

And what a surprising definition it is. Ask people what they think eternal life is, and they might say it is living forever.

They might think of heaven, and palm trees, meeting up with loved ones. But the heart of it all is actually Christ himself.

[ 36 : 46 ] That is the heart of eternal life now. As Paul says, for me to live is Christ. Christ. And it's the heart of eternal life in heaven, where the glory of heaven will be to be with Christ forever.

In him was life, John says at the beginning of his gospel. And to know him is eternal life. We know him now.

We have that life already. And that life will be ours forever. John ends in verse 21 with a gentle warning, little children, keep yourselves from idols.

In the context he's saying, hold fast to this reality of life in Christ, and don't be satisfied with anything less. That includes, of course, pagan idolatry.

paganism was rife in the ancient world, and John obviously doesn't want them worshipping idols. But it's more than that. He wanted them to avoid false ideas about Christ, false ideas about

Christianity.

[ 38 : 02 ] He wanted them to have a real faith in the real God. And the same is true today. So let me ask you as we close, is all of this true for yourself.

Can you say as we read through these verses, all the way through from verse 13 to verse 21, yes, I know that. Yes, that's true of me.

Possible, maybe some of you can't say that. You know about Christ. Perhaps you know a lot about Christ. Christ. You've heard the gospel, you know what Christians believe, but you can't yet say it's real for you.

If so, then my prayer for you tonight is quite simply that God would make it real for you. That he would open your eyes to these wonderful truths, that you might know the only true God, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

And if you do know him, if you do have that amazing gift of eternal life, then my prayer is John's prayer that you would hold fast to him, hold fast to Christ and enjoy all the riches of eternal life.

[ 39 : 34 ] love. These are not easy times in which to be a Christian, but then I don't suppose there ever have been easy times. There are very few who believe in Christ today, here in Scotland at least, in spite of our great Christian heritage.

The world either hates us or ignores us. I'm not sure which is worse. we're tempted daily by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We're surrounded by false teaching. The Gnostics have vanished, true, though their teachings have been revived by the New Age movement, but there are plenty of other false ideas floating around.

In these difficult times, hold fast to these great certainties of the faith. Above all, hold fast to Christ, the Son of God, because in him you have eternal life.

And may his great name be glorified amongst us all. Amen.