

“FINAL AFFIRMATIONS.”

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Scripture Texts: I John 5:18-21

Introduction.

We are in the postscript or PS of John’s letter where he gives some final affirmations or exhortations, each marked with “we know” and these are followed by a final warning. Since the warning stands by itself and seems like a very strange way to end a letter, we will take it up separately.

So this evening let’s consider these three “we knows.”

It’s one of John’s favorite words, he repeats it a lot, over thirty times in I John and over 100 times in his Gospel.

The Christian faith is not a mystery religion, not a religion over which hangs a heavy cloud of unknowing, of cosmic uncertainty, of endless speculation.

There are great truths in our faith that stand as absolutes, as things about which you need not doubt. John lays down three great truths here.

I John 5:18

I John 5:18 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.

This one verse has three statements which each need some explanation to understand properly.

First, we know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning.

We ran into this back in chapter 3:9:

I John 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

As we said then so we are reminded and say again, John is not talking about perfectionism. No Christian is perfect, no Christian completely stops sinning.

We have only to look elsewhere within this short letter to find proof of that.

I John 1:8-9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Just two weeks ago we looked at the previous text where John urged us to pray for those Christians who have sinned. He would not have urged us to pray for those who sin if he believed that Christians don't sin.

John's point is one born of God does not make a practice to continue sinning. Those born of God have removed themselves from the realm of sin, they have left the realm of darkness and now live in the light.

A person with a very bad temper, when he becomes a Christian may still lose his temper, but the difference is now it grieves him, he hates it, he fights it, he confesses it, he asks forgiveness for when he does it. He doesn't continue in it, he doesn't excuse it, doesn't blame others for it.

A Christian is one who hates sin and loves and fears God and he doesn't continue in sin, meaning giving in to it and staying there and allow himself to just surrender completely to the world, the flesh and the devil. We groan under the burden of our sin and sinfulness and unrelenting temptations.

Are you defeating sin, having more and more victory over sin, making progress in the Gospel.

Second, we come to this statement, and ask who is "he who was born of God protects him"?

Do we keep ourselves or is someone else keeping us?

Other translations make the meaning clearer than the ESV. The one begotten of God, He who was of God, the One who was. We do not keep ourselves, we are kept by Jesus.

This is a great word of comfort and assurance to us. It means He watches over us, He keeps His eye on us, He takes care of us.

Older saints love the old hymn about he who keeps His eye on the sparrow.

John 17:12-15 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. . . . 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

I Peter 1:5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Jude 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

This tells us two things. *First*, the battle within us is never won in this life. The flame of sin ever burns. Besetting sin always has a grip.

Second, we cannot fight this battle and quench the flame on our own. We need help. Jesus is the one *begotten* of the Father who protects us from the evil one. Only the weapons of God can defeat the enemy. Jesus never fails to watch over us always.

The third statement underscores the real spiritual battle that is waged for our souls.

I John 5:18 He who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

We have commented many times about John's great repetition of words. This word "touch" is interesting because this is the only time he has used it and he uses it only once in his gospel.

If we understand this to mean Satan can't lay a finger on us, or he can't tempt us then we will misunderstand the meaning of this word. The one other place it is used will open up its meaning to us.

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

Yes, Satan can tempt us and torment us and influence us, but he can never lay hold of us and grab us back to himself again. Our redemption cannot be overturned. We are God's adopted children and we can't be unadopted.

Jesus did not die in vain, His death is powerful and effective. He keeps us, He maintains our salvation.

I John 5:19

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

Is that true? Do you believe that? Does the whole world lie in the power of Satan? What about when we sing “This is my Father’s world” or “He’s got the whole world in His hands”?

The word “world” here is not referring to the planet earth, to this physical, geographical sphere. World here refers to that which neglects, resists, rejects or denies God. John means that which is under the dominion of the devil, what is fallen, what is in contempt of God and given over to bondage to Satan.

Scripture calls Satan the god of this world, the prince of the power of air, the enemy of God and of our souls who has plunged our world into sin and darkness. There is an absolutely evil and wicked being influencing our world and the world lies under his power.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Remember in the temptation of Jesus, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would bow down and worship him.

Scripture teaches there are two spiritual realities that divide the world, the children of God and the children of the devil, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, light and darkness, good and evil, life and death. Heaven and hell.

You know if you say this out loud in our culture you could be laughed at. In the world’s eyes it is laughable that there is a Satan and demons, that our world is in slavery and bondage to the evil one.

Maybe people believed that 2000 years ago, maybe even a 100 years ago, but we are way too smart and sophisticated and enlightened to think that today.

Do you get it that we believe something that is completely contrary to what the world believes? Our worldview and the world’s worldview are completely opposite.

Look what is happening to the Furs Camp and Conference Center in Bellingham. They are suddenly in a battle with the world. We need to pray for them, that they will not cave in to the pressure the world is putting on them.

Do you know when the church has its greatest trouble? When the line between the church and the world gets blurred or fuzzy. When the church tries to accommodate herself to the world, thinking that by doing that she might win the world over, it never works. When we become like the world, there is no reason for the world to leave the world.

We must constantly remind ourselves of the true nature of all the pleasing temptations that are around us, they are wicked, they lead to folly, they are idols, they seem good but are evil and belong to the evil one. They are not of God and don't lead to God.

We are at war, we are locked in a global conflict, not with flesh and blood, but with the cosmic powers and influences in the heavenly realms. There is an evil empire, but it's not Iran or North Korea. It is the world under the sway of Satan.

And he is so because God allows it for His own self glorifying, wise and holy purposes.

We are living in enemy territory and we battle invisible enemies, kept safe only by the power of Jesus in us. Jesus has our back. He is praying for us.

Satan may be the ruler, but God is the creator and Jesus is the conqueror. Satan is a temporary creature, his power is limited and his days are numbered.

I John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

I John 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Satan is unable to snatch us out of our Savior's hands. We are His and He protects His own.

But the war is not yet over. We are still in a great war, and we must keep a warfare mentality. We must fight, we must resist, we must flee, we must pray against all temptation.

I John 5:20

I John 5:20 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, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

John ends as he began, affirming the truth and reality of Jesus. In fact this is how he began and ended his Gospel. So he does the same in this letter.

Jesus is the true God. And in Jesus we have eternal life.

I John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

John 17:3 This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

In the light of verse 19, this verse is our great hope. Jesus has broken into this world and is invading Satan's turf and running a covert operation to destroy the devil's works.

We are not victims, we are not defeated, our cause is not hopeless. That's the whole point of the whole letter, to give Christians living in difficult times in the enemies territory, confidence, assurance, affirmation, encouragement.

Notice John isn't just speaking of knowing the truth, but knowing the one who is true. John is not promoting knowing facts or abstract wisdom, but know the One who is true, Him who is the truth, the only true God.

We know the true God because we know the true Son of God. God is revealed in the Son. Jesus is the only true interpreter of God, the only true translator of the Father. God shines more fully and clearly in Christ. By faith in Him we have sure knowledge of the true God. We need have no doubt or wavering uncertainty.

II Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When we have Christ, we have God, when we are in Christ, we are in God. And when we are in Christ we have eternal life.

Implications and application.

This is a letter for those who are discouraged, defeated, depressed, stressed, worried, in doubt, anxious about all that is going on in the world.

This is an invitation to come in from the dark and cold, into the light and warmth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the one true and living Son of God.

Lay hold of these bedrock truths, these things we know. Remember them this week.