

Certainties of Fellowship!
1 John 5:18-21

This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:21).

John ends his little letter on fellowship with some summary statements of certainty to strengthen the heart of every believer abiding in Christ.

Carefully dedicating the same portion of the closing as the opening (four verses, cf. the prologue, 1:1-4), he offers a series of declarations beginning with “We know” plus a concluding exhortation. He has taken his readers from reporting “what we have seen” in the prologue to reminding them now of “what we know” in the epilogue.

What we know from reading this book will brace us against the pressures and lies that could steal our joy of fellowship—especially idolatry:

We know the _____ God and eternal life—Jesus Christ our Lord!

The strength to walk the path to joy is the same for every generation—guided by His truth, we follow Him closely.

- I. First John ends with a reminder of fortifying truths (5:18-20).
 - A. We know that the new life we received from Christ cannot be touched by sin or the devil (18).
 1. What the Apostles understood (*what we have seen*, vv 1-4), we now know for sure after reading this book: We know that we do not have to sin and that the devil has no power over us!
 - a. Contrary to the teaching of the false teachers, the new person, the regenerate person, as such, is incapable of sin. The new life we received when we believed and were *born of God does not sin*. The regenerate inward person we are in Christ never sins (Romans 7:22).
 - b. Though our inner self cannot keep us from every sin because of the weakness of the flesh (Romans 7:23; 1 John 1:5-10), those *born of God* have the capacity to *keep* themselves from sin—we do not *have* to sin.
 - c. Not only can Satan not defeat this regenerate, new person in Christ, but he cannot even *touch him*.
 2. This harkens back to a truth already taught in 3:9-10. The regenerate person’s inner man that is born of God has the inborn capacity to resist all evil—sin and Satan.
 3. Strengthening Impact: In our most sinful moments and during Satan’s most severe attacks, we know that these failures and His lies have not and cannot change who we are in Christ (John 14:20).
 - B. We know that we are on the winning side in the universal battle between good and evil (19).
 1. What the Apostles understood (*what we have seen*, vv 1-4), we now know for sure after reading this book: We know that we are different—we belong to God but everyone else belongs to Satan!
 - a. We are *of God*—the preposition here (*ek*) indicates both source and possession. We are from God, we belong to God, and consequently, in contrast to the rest of the world, we are on His side. We are distinct in our source of life and our Possessor. We are, in effect, on God’s team.

- b. *The whole world lies under the sway of the evil one.* The original Greek sentence pictures the entire world passively resting within the operative sphere of God’s enemy—Satan.
 - c. But Satan cannot touch us without our Father’s permission (v 18).
 - 2. This harkens back to 2:15-18. The regenerate person’s destiny is with Christ, not this world that is passing away.
 - 3. Strengthening Impact: In our most discouraging and pressured moments, we know that the world’s evil is doomed and we will live with Christ forever (John 16:33).
 - C. We know that we know the true God—the Lord Jesus— who is our eternal life (20).
 - 1. What the Apostles understood (what we have seen, vv 1-4), we now know for sure after reading this book: Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life!
 - a. As the Son of God who has come He gave us spiritual understanding (*understanding*=the capacity to reason correctly or the faculty of knowing or understanding) through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (2:20, *given*—He sent the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:15-16).
 - b. The reason He came to give us this understanding (*that*, purpose) is that we may know the One who is *true* or genuine, and that we are in Him (John 14:20), the Son of God.
 - c. *This one* (pronoun emphatically referring to Jesus Christ), the One we know intimately through fellowship with Him is the true God and eternal life (John 14:6).
 - d. “Eternal life, for John, is a relationship with the Father and the Son. It begins in the present when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, but it continues uninterrupted into the age to come” (Hall Harris, note from John 17:3).
 - 2. This harkens back to 5:11-13. The regenerate person’s relationship is with the true God and He desires relationship that is growing.
 - 3. Strengthening Impact: In our most desperate and doubtful moments, we know that Jesus is always pressing for intimacy (John 17:3; Revelation 3:20).
- II. The strength of fellowship will keep us from bowing to idols! (5:21)
- A. These were mature Christians! Idolatry is always probing, always wanting us.
 - 1. This verse is a restatement for Christians of the first commandment God gave to the Israelites (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7).
 - 2. Though the original readers of this letter were surrounded by idols, it seems John is referring to the idolatry of departing from the true God and His teaching (apostolic teaching) by following the false teachers who did not confess Jesus as the Son of God and His Christ. “False teaching is ultimately ‘apostasy from the true faith.’ To follow after it is to become nothing better than an idol worshiper, especially if it is the matter of the truth of one’s conception of God. The author is blunt. The false teachers propose not the worship of the true God, made known in His Son Jesus, but a false god—an idol they have invented” (Barker).
 - C. What idols are after your heart today? An idol is anything that takes God’s place, good or bad—false teaching, church leader, financial security, materialism, relationships, pornography, recreation, entertainment, food, family, and even church! Your only reliable defense is *fellowship* with Christ!