

Certainties Of The Christian Faith

1 John 5:18-21

Study #19

(Not entirely original with me)

INTRODUCTION:

One cannot count on very much in life having a "guarantee" or certainty as jobs are not secure, health is not secure, marriages today are not secure, children growing up and becoming mature, productive adults has no guarantee so most people go through life "living from day to day." However the Christian does have some things that are certain and guaranteed to happen in his/her life and future. John writes about some of those certainties in his first letter.

I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE BORN OF GOD AND SIN (18)

A. "WHOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN..."

1. This statement, like the one in **1 Jn 3:9**, can be somewhat troubling to the English reader
2. But as we noticed in the lesson on that portion of scripture...
 - a. John has already affirmed that Christians sin - cf. **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. To say we have no sin is to lie, and to make God a liar
 - c. So John is talking about one who does not "continuously practice sin" (in light of the present tense of the verb, this is an acceptable translation)
3. As stated by Plummer, "**A child of God may sin; but his normal condition is one of resistance to sin.**" (The Epistles of St. John, p.125)

B. "BUT HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD KEEPS HIMSELF..."

1. John explains why the one born of God does not continuously practice sin, but it is difficult to know exactly what he means...
 - a. Some translations have "keeps him" instead of "keeps himself"
 - b. This is because such translators believe "he who has been born of God" is a reference to Jesus
 - c. And yet in his epistle, the phrase "born of God" always has reference to the child of Christ, i.e., the Christian
2. Assuming that "himself" is the correct wording...
 - a. It becomes clear that the individual bears some responsibility in keeping oneself from sinning
 - b. While it is true that we have help from God (cf. **1 Jn 3:9**, "*for His seed remains in him*"), our faith must cooperate with God's power - e.g., **1 Pe 1:5**
 - c. Thus the charge to "keep yourselves..." - cf. **1 Jn 5:21; Ju 21**

C. "THE WICKED ONE DOES NOT TOUCH HIM..."

1. When we cooperate with God, Satan has no chance...
 - a. When we submit to God, and resist the devil, the devil flees! - cf. **Ja 4:7**

- b. For God who is in us is certainly greater than the devil! - **1 Jn 4:4**
- 2. Instrumental in our cooperation with God is allowing His word to abide in us - **1 Jn 2:14**
- 3. Even as the Word was instrumental in helping Jesus overcome the temptations of Satan - cf. "it is written..." **Mt 4:4,7,10**

(So the first **certainty** of the Christian faith is that one born of God does not treat sin lightly, and with God's help is able to win the conflict with "the wicked one".)

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND THE WORLD (19)

A. "WE ARE OF GOD..."

- 1. The Christian has been "born of God" - **1 Jn 5:1**
- 2. The Christian is privileged to be called the "child of God" - **1 Jn 3:1,2a**
-- Thus we are blessed to be "of God"!

B. "THE WHOLE WORLD LIES UNDER THE SWAY OF THE WICKED ONE..."

- 1. Sadly, those in the world are not "of God"
- 2. For when one rejects Jesus Christ, they demonstrate who their "father" truly is - cf. **Jn 8:42-47**
- 3. While they remain in their sins, they remain under the sway of Satan - cf. **1 Jn 3:8,10**

(Whose "child" are we? Those who are in Christ have the assurance that God is their father. Those not in Christ are still under the influences of Satan who has blinded them - cf. **2 Co 4:3-4**!)

III. THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE (20)

A. "THE SON OF GOD HAS COME AND HAS GIVEN US UNDERSTANDING..."

- 1. Jesus has come to give us true insight concerning God
- 2. As John declared in his gospel: "*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*" - **Jn 1:18**

B. "THAT WE MAY KNOW..."

- 1. "...Him who is true"
 - a. Or as expressed in other translations: "He is the true God"
 - b. "**By true God [John] does not mean one who tells the truth, but him who is really God.**"
 - c. By coming in the flesh, Jesus has manifested the true God to us - cf. **Jn 14:7-9**

2. “...and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ”

- a. Jesus has also given us understanding about how we can be in God
- b. It is through His Son, as we keep His words and His commandments, that we can abide in God - **Jn 14:21,23**

C. “THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE...”

1. Again, the expression “true God” is saying He who is “the real God”
2. With this declaration, John is also defining what “eternal life” truly is...
 - a. It is to “know” Him who is true
 - b. It is to be “in Him” who is true, and “in His Son Jesus Christ”
3. I.e., eternal life (as defined by John) is that abundant life...
 - a. Which comes from “knowing” the Father and the Son intimately
 - b. Which comes by having “fellowship” with the Father and the Son
4. So John intimated at the beginning of his epistle - cf. **1 Jn 1:2-3**
5. And so Jesus declared in His prayer in **Jn 17:1-3**

CONCLUSION:

1. Here then are the “**Certainties Of The Christian Faith**” as summarized by John...
 - a. “We know” the relationship between those born of God and sin
 - b. “We know” the difference between us and those of the world
 - c. “We know” the basis of fellowship with God and eternal life
2. May the First Epistle of John always serve to remind of these certainties, and may the last verse always remind us of the need for diligence “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*”
3. With his favorite term of endearment, John admonishes us to stay away from anything that would replace our devotion to the One True God
 - a. We may think that we are too sophisticated to succumb to idolatry
 - b. But as Paul pointed out time and again, anything that replaces God in our hearts is an idol -
Ep 5:5; Co 3:5

Note well: If there was no danger of being led astray, there would be no need for a warning!

(Material from Mark A. Copeland)