

1 John 5:18-21

“Confidence in Truth”

Pastor Bruce Zachary

Intro. Four times in this section we read, “we know.” John wants us to know and be confident that we have received the truth about God and rejected the false. John reveals three tests of transformed relationships that allow you to know:

Subject: The truth about God

Object: Receive the truth and reject the false

⁸ We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

1. Changed relationship with sin [18]

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin ... Those who have received Jesus experience a spiritual birth or regeneration. John has repeated the theme that true believers overcome a life dominated by sin [1 John 1:9, 2:1, 3:6, 3:9].

Granted, no one will be completely free from sin in either our actions or attitudes until we are with Jesus. But, a child of God resists sin, and experiences victory over sin. True believers have a sense of conviction, about sin, confess their sin, and repent of it. The false teachers of John's day were the Gnostics. The Gnostic philosophers expounded a doctrine that since the body was evil and your spirit inherently good that sin would not impact your relationship with God. This type of philosophy, like liberal theology that disregards sin, is attractive to our flesh, but contrary to the Bible. A true child of God has a changed relationship with sin, because they have a changed relationship with God. How have you experienced a changed relationship with sin?

2. Changed relationship with the wicked one and the world [18-19]

Jesus' followers are not controlled by the wicked one:

John wants believers to know that God protects them from Satan's control, *"but he who has been born of God keeps him, and the wicked one does not touch him"* [18]. Neither Satan or any demonic influence can attach itself to a follower of Jesus. Earlier in this letter, John encouraged us, *"Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world"* [1 John 4:4]. God's sovereign protection and His limitation on Satan's influence is seen in the lives of Job and Peter [Job 1-2, Luke 22:31-32]. Yet, Satan does continue to exert influence in this world. Satan

continues to tempt, and seek to neutralize believers from advancing the gospel and God's kingdom. But true believers are no longer kept from worshiping God, because the control of Satan has been broken.

Jesus' followers are not controlled by the world:

John wants believers to know that Jesus' followers are of God, and are no longer dominated by a world system influenced by the enemy of men's souls, "*We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*" [19].

When Adam and Eve rebel in the Garden of Eden, the unintended consequence was Satan's influence in this world [Genesis 3]. The world system apart from God, is a system of values or philosophies that are opposed to God.

These philosophies and values include: it makes no difference what you believe as long as you are sincere and don't hurt others, all roads lead to heaven, you can be like God, materialism, humanism, hedonism, atheism, he who dies with the most toys wins, and eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die. All of these values that we see in the world we live in are contrary to God; and ultimately are Satanic deception. Unfortunately, until you are of God, these values dominate your thinking and your life.

John previously warned us to stop loving the world, "**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever**" [1 John 2:15-17]. The love of this world is an obstacle

to experiencing God's love and life. But Jesus' followers have overcome the world through faith in Him [1 Jn. 5:4-5]. Once you've overcome the wicked one and the world, you are free to worship God. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" [John 8:31-32]. The word of God, by the Spirit of God, transforms our lives as we yield to God and change our values and thinking about God, sin, and this world. Paul observed that this was simply a reasonable response to all that God has done for us in Christ, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.* ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" [Romans 12:1-2].

How have you experienced a changed relationship with the world?

3. Changed relationship with God [20-21]

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Jesus reveals the truth about God:

Jesus came into our world and became flesh (the Incarnation) or took on humanity so that we can understand God, “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding*” [20, John 1:1,14]. Jesus perfectly reveals God to man [John 14:7-9]. Jesus’ words and works reveal the truth about God, and Jesus’ life reveals God’s nature and character. Jesus declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” [John 14:6].

Jesus offers relationship with God:

Jesus came so that we could understand God, and “*that we may know Him who is true*” [20]. In verses 18-20 we previously saw the word “know” three times, and in each instance, it is the Greek word *eido* referring to intellectual understanding. But here, the term translated “know” is the Greek *ginosko* which relates to an experiential knowledge. Jesus makes it possible to have a true relationship with the true God [1 John 1:3].

Jesus is the source of eternal life

Jesus is described as “*the true God and eternal life*” [20]. Jesus is not only the Son of God, but is also God. And Jesus is eternal life in the sense that eternal life flows from relationship with Him. Eternal life refers primarily to the nature of spiritual life with God that can be enjoyed in this life and the life to come, rather than duration of life. All humans are eternal beings, because unlike other animals, mankind has an eternal soul. When you receive Christ, you have a spiritual birth, and can experience spiritual life with God, or eternal life.

Eternal life is the greatest promise in the Bible. Earlier in this letter, John set it apart as *the* promise, “This is the promise that He has promised us - eternal life” [1 John 2:25]. John’s primary purpose for writing was for Jesus’ followers to know that they have eternal life [1 John 5:13]. The greatest obstacle to eternal life is embracing a false god, or a false idea of the true God which is why John concludes his letter with the tender but sober command, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*” [21]. An idol is anything that is the master passion of our lives other than the true God.

Jesus offers you a changed relationship with God - eternal life. Jesus came to manifest the truth about God so that we can experience life with God and His contentment. Jesus is full of grace and truth [John 1:14], is the truth [John 14:6], is the true light [John 1:9], true bread [John 6:32], and true vine [John 15:1]. Jesus declared, “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” [John 18:37-38].

Today we are reminded that there is truth about God, and we’re encouraged to receive the truth and reject the false. Today you can know that you have eternal life, because of a changed relationship with God that produces a changes relationship with sin and the world.

Study Guide Qs

Q1 How have you experienced a changed relationship with sin?

Q2 How have you experienced a changed relationship with the world?

Q3 How have you experienced a changed relationship with God?

Q4 How would you like to apply this lesson to your life

Digging Deeper

1. The evidence of the Christian faith is truly beyond a reasonable doubt. And a more detailed analysis is available in the “Reasons to Believe” series on our Calvary Nexus site:

2. John has repeated the theme that true believers overcome a life dominated by sin [1 John 1:9, 2:1, 3:6, 3:9, 5:18]. Read these passages, reflect, and consider what God is seeking to reveal to you.