

Certainties of the Christian Faith

Text: [1 John 5:18-21 HCSB](#) We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true One. We are in the true One--that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Introduction

1. In this last section of John's epistle, we find him summarizing three facts or "certainties" that his readers should have learned.

2. These "Certainties of the Christian Faith" relate to sin, the evil one, and the truth concerning fellowship with God and Jesus Christ.

3. Each of these "certainties" is introduced by the words "we know", and as we consider these three facts we shall begin each section in the same way

First of all, then, "we know"...

I. We know 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 John 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 –

- [1 John 1:8, 10 HCSB](#) If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ¹⁰ If we say, "We have not sinned," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

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 most 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 John 3:9](#), "for His seed remains in him"), our faith must cooperate with God's power.

- [1 Peter 1:5 HCSB](#) who are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

- c. Thus the charge to "keep yourselves..."
- [1 John 5:21 HCSB](#) Little children, guard yourselves from idols.
- [Jude 1:21 HCSB](#) keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.

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!
 - [James 4:7 HCSB](#) Therefore, submit to God. But resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.
 - b. For God who is in us is certainly greater than the devil!
 - [1 John 4:4 HCSB](#) You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
2. Instrumental in our cooperation with God is allowing His word to abide in us
 - [1 John 2:14 HCSB](#) I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God's word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one.
3. Even as the Word was instrumental in helping Jesus overcome the temptations of Satan - cf. "it is written..." (Matthew 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".

Now for the second "certainty" summarized by John:

II. We know the difference between us and the world (19)

A. "We are of God"

1. The Christian has been "born of God"
 - [1 John 5:1 HCSB](#) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent also loves his child.
 2. The Christian is privileged to be called the "child of God"
 - [1 John 3:1 HCSB](#) Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know Him.
- 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
 - [John 8:42-47 HCSB](#) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on My own, but He sent Me. 43 Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don't you believe Me? 47 The one who is from God listens to God's words. This is why you don't listen, because you are not from God."
3. While they remain in their sins, they remain under the sway of Satan

- **1 John 3:8, 10 HCSB** The one who commits sin is of the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil's works. **10** This is how God's children--and the Devil's children--are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother.

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!

- **2 Corinthians 4:3-4 HCSB** But if, in fact, our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** Regarding them: the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

III. We know 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:
 - **John 1:18 HCSB** No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son--the One who is at the Father's side--He has revealed Him.

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." (Calvin, The First Epistle of John, p. 273)
 - c. By coming in the flesh, Jesus has manifested the true God to us
 - **John 14:7-9 HCSB** "If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him." **8** "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us." **9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
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
 - **John 14:21-23 HCSB** The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him." **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it You're going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?" **23** Jesus answered, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

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
 - [1 John 1:2-3 HCSB](#) that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us-- **3** what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 5. And so Jesus declared in His prayer in John 17:1-3
 - [John 17:1-3 HCSB](#) Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said: **Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You, 2 for You gave Him authority over all flesh; so He may give eternal life to all You have given Him. 3 This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent--Jesus Christ.**

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 –
 - [Ephesians 5:5 HCSB](#) For know and recognize this: no sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God.
 - [Colossians 3:5 HCSB](#) Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

Don't be satisfied with second best. Don't look for your peace and joy in the things of this world. Make the Lord Jesus Christ, your only source of hope. Worship Him. Abide in Him. Be confident in Him.