

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time***

### **Christian Certainties, Part 3**

Scripture: 1 John 5:18-21

Code: 62-42

Let's open our Bibles really for final time to 1 John...1 John chapter 5. I hate to say goodbye to this precious epistle, this treasured source of truth, but that's where we are in our process of instruction. We have learned so much. We have covered so many great themes here and John wraps it all up with a summary of things we've already discussed, so we don't need to belabor these final truths, but only to commend them to you as a final statement of John's concerns.

Now I've entitled this final section, actually beginning in verse 13 down to verse 21, as "Christian Certainties...Christian Certainties." We live in a world of opinions, but we live with facts. We live in a world of relative ideas, but we live on absolutes. We live in a world of uncertainty but we are fixed on certainties. We live in a world of lies, but we live by the truth. We live in a world dominated by Satan, but we live with the presence and power of God.

To put all that together, we base our lives on what God has said in Scripture as absolutely true. Divine truth revealed from God to us. The Bible then is to provide for us certainties, absolutes. In this epistle in particular the purpose of the writer is to create certainty in the minds of true Christians, to waylay those unnecessary fears and doubts and uncertainties. That is why the word "know" is used 39 times in this letter, seven times in this last section. And in particular the verses that we're going to look at, verses 18 through 21, verse 18 begins, "We know..." verse 19, "We know..." verse 20, "And we know." John ends really with a summation of why he wrote that we might know. Of course we remember the theme verse is verse 13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." John wants us as God does to live in certainty of our salvation. So throughout this epistle he has given doctrinal tests and moral tests to determine the genuineness of anyone's salvation so that if we pass the tests, we know. And when we know, as he said in chapter 1 verse 4, our joy is made full. We can live with full joy knowing we are saved, living in that certainty.

So consistent with the purpose for writing, he sums up his epistle with a review of certainties. The first one we already addressed in verse 13. We know we have eternal life. Verse 13 says, "These things I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." The Lord wants us to be certain about that.

Secondly, we not only know we have eternal life, that is a certainty, we know we have our prayers answered so that until we get to eternal glory, in the meantime we have direct access to the throne of God. Verse 14 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us and if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him." We are certain that we possess eternal life if we pass the tests. We are certain that we have the resources of God at our disposal by merely asking.

And then in verse 16 he says, of course, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death, I do not say he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin and there is a sin not leading to death." And as I pointed out last time, John gives this little caveat, yes you have an access to all of God's resources through prayer, yes God will hear your prayer and answer your prayer unless you're praying for someone to be restored or to be healed and it is a sin that they have committed unto death. And God will not answer that prayer.

Why is that even introduced here? Well I told you that last time. It just illustrates that when you pray according to God's will, and if He hears you, and He does, you know that He'll answer and give you what you request if it's consistent with His will unless it falls into the category of divine judgment where God really is unable to answer. But that's just the exception, that's not the main point. That's the sub-point. The main point is He hears, He answers, and we have what we ask in His will. And here's an illustration of something that's not in His will, and that is it's not in His will to deliver someone from death who has committed a sin that in God's judgment leads to death. Only God knows what that sin is, it's not a specific sin, it could be different in any case and every case. It could be the straw that broke the camel's back in the continuing disobedient believer. Certainly could be applied to a non-believer who commits a sin of apostasy and you're praying for their salvation and it's too late. But apart from that extremity, apart from that thing which is outside His will, such as illustrated here, we know for certain that we have eternal life and that we have answered prayer.

Then we come to the last three certainties. The last three certainties. We know, we know, we know...verses 18 through 20. And the first one, verse 18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins. But he who is born of God keeps Him and the evil one does not touch him."

What does this mean? It means we know we have eternal life, we know we have answered prayer and here we know we have victory over sin. We know we have victory over sin. No one who is born of God sins. We have already gone into that in detail...in detail. But here it is in review. No one born again, no one given a new nature, no one transformed, regenerated goes on in the same unbroken pattern of sin. The unconverted do nothing but sin. They are dead, Ephesians 2:1 says, in

trespasses and sins. They walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience. They walk in the lusts of their flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind and are by nature children of wrath even as all the rest, everybody. There is nothing good in them. They can't do anything good, they're of their father the devil. Not one of them is profitable. Not one of them is righteous. Not even one, Romans 3 says. They are the servants of unrighteousness. They incessantly trample God's Law, trample God's love, trample Christ's gospel. They are defiant, haters of God. The Hebrew word for sin, *pasha*, is rebellion. They are in constant rebellion against the Law and the love and the lordship of God. By nature then they are children of wrath, headed for wrath. They are, of course, under the direct control of the one who is designated as their father, the devil. Jesus said that in John 8. Also in Acts 26 it says, the Lord said to Paul that He was going to send him to open the eyes of sinners so they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God. Men are slaves to sin and slaves to Satan until they're born of God. And we know, verse 18, that no one who is born of God sins.

So we've come back to the same issue. How do you tell if someone's a believer? You look at their life. And if there is in their life a constant pattern of sin virtually unbroken, you know that that slavery has not been eliminated. The one born of God does not continue in that same pattern.

Go back to chapter 3 and let me remind you of what he says and you can sort of pick it up at verse 4. "Everyone who practices sin," we're talking about this constant unbroken pattern, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness." So, first of all, sin is incompatible with the Law of God. Sin is incompatible with the Law of God. When a person becomes a Christian, they say with Paul in Romans 7, "O how I love Your Law," what David said in Psalm 119, "Your Law is holy, just and good and there's something in me that loves the Law, that longs to obey the Law." The Christian does not, cannot habitually live in violation of God's Law. Sin is incompatible with the Law of God, that's what verse 4 is saying.

Secondly, sin is incompatible with the work of Christ. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins. I mean, Jesus came, died, rose again to take away sins so therefore if He's done His work in the heart of a person, then sin is to some degree taken away. Ongoing, unbroken pattern of sin no matter whether a person professed to believe, professed to be a Christian, had an experience, got baptized, or whatever, that's not how you judge someone's spiritual condition. You look at their life and if there is an ongoing pattern of sin in their life, if that's the dominant character of their life, they have not been born of God because sin is incompatible with the Law of God, it's incompatible with the work of Christ who appeared in order to take away sin.

In fact, he goes on to say, verse 6, "No one who abides in Him sins and no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." He's not saying you never sin, he's talking here about the pattern. "Little children, let no one deceive you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." You look at the life. Again this isn't saying you never sin. Back in chapter 1 he said, verse 8, "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us." It isn't that we never sin, it is that the unbroken pattern of sin no longer exists. And so, verse 1 of chapter 2, "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, if the pattern of righteousness now established in the new birth is broken by sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, the sins of believers. Not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

So it isn't perfection we're talking about, it's direction. It's not the complete absence of sin we're talking about, it's the pattern of righteousness, it replaces the unbroken pattern of sin. The one who practices sin, verse 8 says, is of the devil. And the Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil. So both ways, verse 5, He appeared to take away sin; verse 8, He appeared to destroy the works of the devil which is sin. So sin is incompatible with the work of Christ.

Sin thirdly is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. No one...verse 9 says...is born of God, it is the Spirit who gives the new birth. We're born of the Spirit. "And no one born of God's Spirit practices sin." Why? "His seed abides in him." The new life, the righteous seed of life abides in him, he cannot sin because he's born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. It's that simple.

This is so important for us because if we're dealing with certainties here and we want to be certain about our spiritual condition, the question is not something about, "What did you do in the past? Did you pray a prayer? Did you do this or that?" It is look at your life now and what is the pattern? If you have truly been converted, the power of sin has been broken.

Another way to look at that important truth, just regripping what we've studied in the past, is to turn to the sixth chapter of Romans for a moment. Romans chapter 6 and we'll just pick it up at verse 17. He says, "Thanks be to God," Romans 6:17, "that though you were slaves of sin," that's the way to define it, you had one master, one dominant master and all you ever did was precisely what that master dictated. You were slaves of sin. "But thanks be to God, you became obedient from the heart internally to that form of teaching to which you were committed. And having been freed from sin, sin's dominion, sin's mastery as indicated in verse 14, having been freed from that you became slaves of righteousness." And then in verse 19 he says, "I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." I'm trying to use a human analogy here about slavery to describe what has happened to you spiritually. There was a time, verse 19, when you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness, it was just unbroken,

uninterrupted lawlessness and impurity. Now present your members as slaves to righteousness, 4:20, when you were slaves of sin you were free in regard to righteousness. When you were a slave to sin, there was no righteousness there. And all you got out of that in verse 21 was death. Verse 22, you've now been set free from sin and enslaved to God. The outcome of that is eternal life. Complete distinction, complete distinction.

It's described in chapter 7 in another analogy. Verse 2, here's the analogy. A married woman is bound by Law to her husband while he's living, but if her husband dies, she's released from the Law concerning the husband. If you're widowed or become a widower, you're no longer bound to the spouse who died. You're released from the obligation, the legal obligation concerning your spouse. So then if while her husband is living she's joined to another man, she should be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she's free from the Law so that she's not an adulteress though she's joined to another man. You can go marry somebody else. And then he applies that analogy in verse 4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit for God." It's as if your old spouse, sin, died and your new spouse is righteousness in Christ.

Verse 5 then goes on to say, "We were in the flesh and the sinful passions were aroused by the Law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." You could take the Law of God, put the Law of God into the life of an unconverted person and all the Law of God would do would arouse more passion, more sin and bear more fruit unto death because rebellion is the nature of the unconverted. And the more they know about the Law of God, the more they rebel against it. But verse 6 says, "Now it's as if we have died in Christ and we have been released from the obligation of the Law, having died to that which we were bound so that we might serve in the newness of the Spirit and not the oldness of the letter." Again the analogy is very clear there. We have new life characterized by slavery to righteousness, obedience to the Law. Satan no longer has hold on us. Sin no longer is our master.

And with that thought, go back to 1 John where we left in the fifth chapter there. We know, verse 18, that no one who is born of God sins in the sense of the continual pattern so described. But he who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. It might help if we translated verse 18, "He who was begotten of God keeps him." That's whom? Who was the only begotten of God? Christ. We don't sin because we've been born again and given new life that's characterized by righteousness.

Furthermore, we are kept from that old pattern by the very one born of God so that the evil one does not touch us, fasten on to us, lay hold of us...stronger than touch. Satan has no grip, no hold on us. So we are certain, not only certain that we have eternal life, not only certain that we have answered

prayer, we are certain that we have victory over sin. Satan can't hold us. We've died to that former bondage. We now live with a new master, a new life principle. And the one born of God keeps us and the evil one does not touch us. What a tremendous promise that is when you think about the fact that you can never fall back into that former life again, can't happen. Why? Look at this, "He who was born of God keeps him." This is the work of Christ who holds on to us, who keeps us. He keeps us from ever falling back into sin's dominion, ever falling back into Satan's kingdom. He can turn Satan loose in our lives like he did with Peter in Luke 22 and allowed Satan to go and sift Peter. And He said when it's all over and you're converted and you come out of it, you'll be able to strengthen the brethren. He can let Satan have at Job and know that Job's faith will not fail. He can send to the apostle Paul a messenger from Satan, a thorn in the flesh, and know that in the midst of it all Paul will only be humbled which is good for Paul and good for the service that Paul renders to Christ and that he will find spiritual power in his own weakness.

Jesus, of course, Himself in John 17 in that really amazing prayer expresses in the first couple of verses this confidence, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind and to all whom Thou hast given Him He may give eternal life." Down in verse 6 He says, "Thou gavest Me them, Thine they were, Thou gavest them to Me. They have kept Thy word." God's given to the Son those who believe. The Son receives them. The Son keeps them. John 6 says the same thing. "All that the Father gives shall come to Me. Whoever comes to Me I'll never turn away, but to receive him and raise him on the last day." Nobody falls through the proverbial cracks.

That's why Jude says, and you might look at the end of Jude, verse 24. This is a doxology. This is a tribute of praise to the Lord. "Now to Him who is able to keep you." We just read 1 John 5. "He who was begotten of God keeps him," that is the one born of God. And here's the same thing, "Now to Him who is able to keep you." He not only wills to do it, He's able to do it. He keeps you from stumbling and will make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy. And who is this? Verse 25, "The only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so to Him be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time now and forever. Amen."

He is the one committed to keeping us. So we know that no one who is born of God will fall back into the pattern of sin. What about if somebody does appear to be born of God, they're in the church, they're involved but they fall back in an unbroken pattern of sin, later deny the faith? Chapter 2 verse 19, remember we were there, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. They went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not all of us." If you have been born of God, you do not fall or live in a pattern of sin because the One begotten of God, the only begotten of God, Christ Himself, keeps you and the evil one never again can lay hold on you. He can come after you but he can't succeed. He couldn't succeed with

Job or Peter or Paul or anyone else because the Lord Himself is able and willing to keep us.

We noted last time from Hebrews 6 also this same great emphasis where it tells us that we have security. Verse 19, "An anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil." It's the picture of having your soul and chain running to an anchor inside the veil in the heavenly Holy of Holies where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us. It's as if you're tied by an unbreakable chain to Christ right in the Holy of Holies in heaven and nothing can ever break that chain. It's a glorious magnificent picture.

Preservation is as guaranteed as justification. When He justifies someone, He gives to them eternal life, He preserves them. Faithful, 1 Thessalonian 5:24, "Faithful is He who calls you and He also will bring it to pass." If He called you in the beginning, you'll be there at the end. It's just that simple. And there are many verses that say the same thing. Second Timothy 4:18 comes to mind. "The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom." Isn't that a wonderful confidence? The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His glorious heaven. What a promise. Now, as I said earlier, there's going to be sin but it's not the unbroken pattern.

Let me just kind of sum this idea up. I'm going to be kept if I'm a true believer, and so are you. Why? The Word of God promises it. "He that began a good work in you will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ." This life is eternal. The Word of God promises it. The power of God makes it possible. We were saved by His power and if He could save us when we were enemies, He can keep us now that we're friends. In Romans 5 chapter 5 and verse 10, that very important verse and basically says this by referring to the greater and then the lesser. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled we'll be saved by His life." In other words, if He could...if He could do the great work in saving us by His death, He can do the lesser work in keeping us by His ever living to make intercession for us.

So the Word of God secures us forever. The power of God secures us forever. And I think we could add the purpose of God, that God predetermined before the foundation of the world who He would save. Wrote their names down and He will bring all of them to glory. You could add as well the prayer of Christ secures us. Again it's back in that seventeenth chapter of John where Jesus, I think it's verse 11, says, yes, "I'm no more in the world yet they themselves are in the world. I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me that they may be one even as we are." Jesus says, "Father, keep them, keep them, keep them. There was a little time in there, a brief window when Jesus was going to be bearing sin separated from God. He was the keeper of the redeemed, but for that period of time He says, "Father, keep them till I can come back and keep them Myself." The Word of God, the power of God, the purpose of God, the prayer of

Christ, all of these things work to our perseverance.

And you could even add our union with Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." If we go, He goes because we're inextricably linked to Him. And then you have...and I need to draw your attention to this, just for a brief moment, the eighth chapter of Romans. And in the eighth chapter of Romans everything is pulled together to affirm our ultimate triumph over sin. Verse 31, Romans 8, "If God is for us, who is against us?" If this is God's determined plan, if this is what He says in His Word, if this is what He promises, if this is what He purposes, if this is what the Son prays for, if this is what He intercedes for, if this is the effect of His elective purpose, if this is the effect of the new birth, regeneration, if this is the effect of our union with Christ, if this is what God has determined and He is for us...then who could successfully be against us since there is no power equal to His? And again, somewhat similar to Romans 5:10, "If He didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us, if He would give His Son in death to save us, how would He not also with Him freely give us everything?" In other words, if He would give up His Son to save us, the greater...wouldn't He do less to keep us? Of course.

You say, "Well somebody might bring a charge against us. Somebody might come to God like Satan tried to do with Job and convince God that we're not worthy." Verse 33 says, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. God already declared that we were righteous, imputed the righteousness of Christ to us. There's no higher court, no indictment against us could stand. God has already declared us just. Who is the one who would condemn us? Would Christ who died for us, who was raised for us, who's at the right hand of God interceding for us? Is there anything that could separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, anything? No, verse 37, "All these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

And then he just sums it up in that great conclusion, "I'm convinced neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing..." He's just scanning the universe of options. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So this we're certain, we are certain we have eternal life. We are certain we have answered prayer. And we are certain that we have victory over sin. Fourthly in the list of five, second in the list of three tonight, we know we belong to God, we know we belong to God. And this really says the same thing another way. Verse 19, "We know that we are of God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." There are two realms...there's the world, and there are the people of God. We are God's, the whole world belongs to Satan. We belong to God. He bought us with a price. We are His. We've really been His since He purposed to redeem us before the foundations of the world.

On the other hand, the whole world belongs to the evil one, *ha poneros*, Satan. The world lies in the lap of the evil one, like a baby cradled asleep in the arms of Satan. This is a very dramatic picture. We're not in the embrace of Satan. We're in the embrace of God, two distinct realms and only two. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And by that he means the whole human system. There's nothing in it. There's nothing about it that is not under Satan's control. Its economics, its politics, its religion, its education, it's everything, its entertainment, its athletics, it's everything, everything, everything. There are elements of the world that we can enjoy because of God's creation and we can see the image of God and we can see the creative glory of God manifest in the world, but the system that functions within His creation is a system that is completely contaminated. That's why in chapter 2 verses 15 to 17, again remember, we are reviewing, John says do not love the world, nor 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, the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father but is of the world. The world is passing away, also its lusts. On the other hand, the one who does the will of God abides forever. We have eternal life. We have divine access to the throne of God. We have triumph over sin. We belong to God. That's opposite everything in the world around us. They do not have eternal life. They have no access to God through any prayer. God is not bound to hear a thing they ask for. They are dominated by evil and they belong to Satan. Clear distinctions.

Be certain of this. You are God's. You are His beloved child to whom He has given life. John 1:12, "As many as received Him, Christ, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God." Well, so much more to say on that.

We know we have eternal life. We know we have answered prayer. We know we have victory over sin. We know we belong to God. One final thought, and we know that Christ is the true God. We know that Christ is the true God. And he ends where he began.

He began what was from the beginning, "What we heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of life, and the life was manifest and we've seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard we proclaimed to you also, that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. He starts by introducing Christ." That's chapter 1 verses 1 to 3. We saw Him. We heard Him. We touched Him. We saw the living, eternal life. We saw God the Father manifest in the Son. That's where he begins. That's the first and great certainty that makes all other certainties possible.

And so, he ends where he began. We know this, of all things that we know, that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding in order that we might 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. And there's a great Christological statement there. This is the final certainty. And because of all of that he ends with, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols. Don't get sucked off toward any other supposed god. Don't worship at any other shrine than the Son of God." We know that the Son of God has come. God in the form of man, God the Son is come, present tense. To have come and to be present, He is here. Our faith is not theoretical, our faith is based on an abiding reality, the Son of God has come. Born of a virgin. Lived a sinless life. Died a substitutionary death. Rose literally from the grave. Ascended to the right hand of the Father interceding for us and some day will come again. And we not only know the Son of God has come but we know that He has given us understanding so that we might know Him who is true. And not only know Him but we are in Him who is true in His Son Jesus Christ. This is just the essence of what it means to be a Christian, to have understanding, to know Him who is true, the true and living God as revealed in Jesus Christ. And not just to know Him but to be in Him who is true. And who is it? It is the true God and eternal life. All other gods are imposters and no one else possesses eternal life.

And John goes back to the heart of all Christian theology, back to the issue of genuineness. No one is a Christian who doesn't believe this. No one is a Christian who doesn't believe that God is revealed alone in His Son Jesus Christ, that He alone is the true God and eternal life. There is no salvation apart from Christ. Christ alone. Back in chapter 4 verse 14, "We have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and he in God." That's exclusivity.

Down in chapter 5 verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." There isn't any other way to be born of God except to believe that Jesus is the Christ. Back in chapter 4, "Don't believe every spirit, test the spirits. Many false prophets have gone out into the world, by this you know the Spirit of God. Every Spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." That's why no people in other religions will ever be in heaven because only those who confess Jesus are born again and know God. There is no other way.

Chapter 2 verse 23, "Whoever denies the Son doesn't have the Father. The one who confesses the Son has the Father also." Backing up to verse 22, "Who is the liar? The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." So John comes back to what we've been talking about, the doctrinal argument, Christology. And here he says, here's the climactic certainty, we know that the Son of God is come into the world. We've been given understanding to know Him who is true, to be in Him who is true. And he uses this word true a couple of times here,

actually three times in that one verse, because it's essential that people understand the truth as over against the lies of Satan. We know Him who is true. We are in Him who is true. This is the true God.

Do you get the picture that he's trying to emphasize true? *Alethin*os, you could translate it real, authentic. And because of that, verse 21, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols. Don't allow anything apart from Christ to influence you." Since you know the true God, stay away from idols. Paul told the Corinthians the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10. He said, "You cannot come to the table of the Lord and then go to the table of idols, the table of demons." You can't do that.

John's ministry was associated with Ephesus. Ephesus was the center of idolatry, massive amounts of idolatry occurred there. The Temple of Artamus, Diana, 420 feet by 250 feet, hundreds of people lived off the temple trade, priests, eunuchs, temple wardens, prostitutes, etc., etc., etc. And you remember the guilt of the silversmiths who made the idols, book of Acts gives the story in chapter 19, you remember how rampant idolatry was in that ancient world and sometimes Christians could drift off into those kinds of things. So he ends by saying, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols. You're not going to fall back into that because you're being kept by the one who is born of God. But don't tamper with that."

And so John's summary ends. We know we have eternal life. We know along the way to get to our eternal life we have answered prayer. We know we have victory over sin. We know we belong to God and we know Jesus Christ is the one true God and eternal life. And if we know those things to be true, it's evidence that we belong to God and our lives will manifest a pattern of righteousness. Yes, sin will be there but to interrupt the pattern of righteousness.

Father, we thank You as we come to a conclusion tonight for just a few reminders at the end of this wonderful epistle of things that we have studied in great depth going through. And most of all, the whole point was just to be reminded of how certain we are of these things. How wonderful it is to live with this kind of certainty in a world of fear and anxiety and doubt and wonder and even dread, depression over what might come. These things are written that our joy may be full. And our joy comes from certainties that whether we live or die, we're the Lord's. If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die unto the Lord. So whether we live or die, we're the Lord's. Nothing will ever change that. For those of us who have passed the doctrinal test and believe the truth of Christ and whose lives demonstrate that there has been a transformation because they're characterized by obedience to the Word of God and love for others, there can be certainty. Certainty that we have eternal life, certainty that we have answered prayer, victory over sin, certainty that we belong to You forever all based on the certainty that Jesus Christ alone is the true God and source of eternal life. Thank You that we can live in those certainties, how gracious You have been to us to give us the blessedness of

knowing for sure. Thank You for that gift and may we live lives of full joy and gratitude for such a blessing. We thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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