

SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

TEXT: I JOHN 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION:

1. The word "know" is found 27 times in I John, eight times in chapter 5.
2. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments" (5:2).
3. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life..." (5:13).
4. We know God hears our prayers and answers our prayers (5:14, 15).
5. Spurgeon said, "Knowledge in this Epistle is frequently meant assurance in opposition to anxiety."

I. WE KNOW WE HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN (5:18)

1. Verse 18 says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not..." (5:18; cf. 2:1; 3:6).
2. John has already warned that a Christian that habitually sins is in danger of committing the "sin unto death" (5:16). In I Corinthians 11:27-30, the apostle Paul warned that those who take the Lord's Supper unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to themselves, and "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (die)."
3. First John 5:18 means a genuine born-again child of God is not habitually and characteristically a sinner because we have victory over sin.
4. Victory over sin is an important Bible doctrine. Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion (power) over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."
5. Romans 6 emphasizes that we are dead to sin and free from sin.
6. We have not only been saved from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin.
6. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "The Christian life is essentially incompatible with continued practice of wrongdoing" (*The Apostle John*).
7. Another preacher said, "Sin is unnatural to the Christian because it is alien to his divine birth" (Roy L. Laurin, *Epistle of I John*).
8. The new nature we received when we were saved does not sin (5:18; cf. 3:9). This is not so-called "sinless perfection," but victory over sin.

9. John has already said in chapter 1, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: (1:8), and, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1:10).
10. The Bible often uses the word "blameless" to describe Christians, but never "sinless." Only the Lord Jesus Christ is sinless (cf. I John 3:5).
11. Luke 1:6 says Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth (the parents of John the Baptist) "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
12. The apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:8, "that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."
13. And in Philippians 2:15, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."
14. And in I Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
15. The Bible teaches that both pastors and deacons are to be "blameless" (I Timothy 3:2, 10; Titus 1:6, 7).
16. Widows in the church are to be "blameless" (I Tim. 5:7).
17. Second Peter 3:14 says, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things (the return of Christ, and the new heavens and a new earth, etc.) be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
18. Are you blameless?

II. WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD (5:19)

1. "We know that we are of God" (5:19). God does not want Christians to be doubtful and uncertain (cf. I John 3:14).
2. H.A. Ironside said, "It is well to remember that some vivid emotional experience is not a safe ground of assurance. It is the blood of Christ that makes us safe and the Word of God that makes us sure."
3. The apostle Paul said, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12).
4. "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (5:19). Our Lord said we are in the world, but "not of the world," even as He is not of the world (John 17:13, 14).

5. J. Vernon McGee said I John 5:19 means, "the whole world lieth asleep in the arms of the evil one. The devil has put the baby to sleep."
6. The whole world (those outside of Christ) is under the power of the wicked one, i.e., the whole world is under Satan's control or dominion.

III. WE KNOW THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING (5:20)

1. Understanding these principles will keep us from danger, and God "hath given us an understanding" (5:20; cf. 2:20, 27).
2. The Greek word translated "understanding" means, "the mind as the faculty of understanding" (*Thayer's Lexicon*).
3. Our Lord said in Matthew 22:37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (understanding, same word in Greek).
4. First Peter 1:13 says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind" (understanding, same word in Greek).
5. The mind can be either enlightened by God, or darkened by the devil.
6. Ephesians 1:18 says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened..."
7. Ephesians 4:18 says, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."
8. Believers living in the flesh (old nature) are in danger because they continue to sin and "the wicked one" (Satan) has deceived their mind (5:18).
9. God "hath given us an understanding" (5:20) means the Spirit of God is our teacher to lead us into all truth (5:20).
10. John ends his letter with, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (5:21).
11. "Anything that stands between Christ and the believer is an idol (5:21)" (J. Vernon McGee).

CONCLUSION:

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee. -- William Cowper*