

1 John 5 - This is the Testimony

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You guys ready to get into some scripture tonight from 1 John? Open your Bible there please. 1 John chapter 5. While you're turning to 1 John, I want to remind you of something that we've said in the past about this letter. This is a challenging letter.

I'll be honest with you. I don't normally encourage — I mean, this isn't the first book I would tell a new believer to go and tackle, to be completely honest with you. And one of the reasons, is that understanding what John is saying in this letter is really predicated on understanding why he wrote it. John was dealing with some very specific false teachings that were circulating in the first century. And it was what was in the beginning stages of what we later came to know as Gnosticism. And Gnosticism was a particularly heinous sort of a teaching system that defied a lot of what the Bible has to say about who Jesus is, what he came to do and so forth. But when John was still in his ministry, Gnosticism was just beginning to kind of flower and it took quite a while for it to become recognizable — kind of almost, like the New Age movement.

Over the last several decades, we've watched the New Age movement morph and evolve from its original character. There's nothing new about the New Age movement. But I'm just saying the way that it was kind of, perpetuated throughout the last few decades. Anyway, yeah.

So it's tough to put your finger on exactly what is the New Age movement is, and it was tough to put your finger on what Gnosticism is. And here's what makes 1 John a challenging book to study: it's like listening to a one-sided phone conversation. If you've ever sat and listened to somebody who's maybe having an argument with somebody on the other side of the phone, you're only hearing one side and you're not really hearing the full gist of what the, why they're saying what they're saying. And that's what you're hearing here in 1 John.

John is arguing for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but he's arguing in the face of what would later become Gnosticism. So, he's not explaining to you why he's saying the things he's saying. He doesn't say, “Here's what's going on. I've been hearing this weird teaching about (dadadadada...) well, here's the truth.”

He doesn't do that. He just comes out and he makes statements and we think, "Where did that come from"?

When you read through 1st John, you hear a statement and it almost smacks you. You wonder, "Why did he say that and why did he say it *that way*?" Well, he doesn't explain it. You have to discern from what he's saying, *why* he's saying what he is, and that's why we believe he was essentially responding to Gnosticism, or at least what was in the early stages of it.

And by the way, Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis* — which simply means *knowledge*. And Gnosticism at its root was the idea that the more you know, the more saved you are. I mean that's a very distilled sort of an explanation of it, but it was salvation based on KNOWLEDGE, rather than the Gospel, which is salvation based on grace through faith.

John begins here in chapter 5 and verse 1. And he says in verse 1,

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ", (and of course the word *Christ* is the Greek word for what in Hebrew is "Messiah". And so he's saying), *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God"*. (ESV)

And when he says, "believes" here, he is talking about putting one's faith in. It's the belief that Jesus is my Savior. He's not just talking about an intellectual sort of an agreement and he goes on to say, *"and everyone who loves the father, loves whoever's been born of him"*.

And he's referring to people like you and me. We've been born of God. And the point that he's making here is that when you believe that Jesus is who He says He was and He is your Savior, then you're going to have a love for God and that love for God is going to be seen in your love for other people. So he's made this kind of long around statement to get to the point of what he wants to say, and that is that the new birth creates in us a love for one another. Okay?

Verse two. He goes on and says, *"by this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments"*.

And John is specifically referring to the commandment to love one another. Verse three says,

"for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome".

Now, he doesn't explain here at this point why the commandments of God are not burdensome. He is, we're going to see it as we get in here. But John is simply saying right here on the surface, that love for God will be seen in our desire to walk an obedience to Him. And I love to see, I love to see that in new believers. And it's one of the things I look for in new believers. I want to see a heart that wants to serve and obey God. And people, it's just one of the most beautiful things to see.

Somebody will come up and say, "I just, I recently came to know Christ as my savior, and I just want to obey him. I just want to do what he says". Yeah, I understand that's a work of the spirit. That's that love for God that translates into a desire to walk in obedience to His word. And I love hearing it.

And he goes on to say in verse four, "*for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith*". And guys, this is what it all comes down to.

We've talked about, we've talked about loving others, loving God. We've talked about obedience to God. We've talked about victory in our faith, victory in our walk, which is victory over sin, victory over the devil, victory over the world. How are those things obtained? How do we get those?

Somebody says, "I've got this issue in my life. How am I going to deal with the sin issue in my life"? Somebody, another person says, "And my issue is, my, my marriage", or this issue or that issue, or whenever everybody's got something going on in their life. "How am I going to walk in victory in this area of my life"?

And the answer is faith. Always. It all comes down to faith. And that is why John goes on to ask the question that he does in verse five. If you look with me in your Bible, he says,

"Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God".

So see there, here's now where he's giving some real legs, so that we can walk out this idea of faith, and what it means to have faith and have victory. To have faith and have love. To have faith, and then to be able to want and a desire to love and to serve God. It all comes down to faith. It does not come, those things do not come down to strenuous human effort. We've said this many times before, your Christian walk does not come down to trying harder.

Stop trying harder to be a good Christian. Stop trying harder to live a righteous life. Stop trying harder to get over that area of sin that you just can't seem to get past. Stop it. Knock it off. It comes down to faith. Faith is the key.

Do you know the Apostle Paul talks about this in his letter to the Romans? Let me put a couple examples up on the screen for you. Romans chapter one, he starts off in the very first part of Romans by saying,

[SLIDE]

Romans 1:5

“Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations”. (Romans 1:5 ESV)

I want you to notice that phrase *“to bring about the obedience of faith”*.

People don't normally take those words, faith and obedience, and put them together. They don't normally think of them in the same sort of a sense, the obedience of faith. We think of things like the obedience of zeal, or the obedience of effort, or the obedience of a fervent desire. No, it's the obedience of faith. Paul says we are here to bring that about. And then in later on, (far in fact, the end of Romans chapter 16), look at this. He says,

²⁵”Now to him, who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about” (What?) *“the obedience of faith”*. (ESV)

Wow. Obedience comes by faith as we trust. As our hope is put in Him. It's not about trying harder. It's not about gritting your teeth. It's not about saying, “I'm going to get over this area of sin in my life”. It's about trusting the Lord with all of your heart and leaning not on your own understanding, but relying completely on him.

Lord, I can't do this. If you have an area of sin in your life that you're struggling to get past, smartest thing you can say to God is:

“I can't do this, You can. And I'm trusting You to do this work in me. I am trusting You to give me the victory. I'm trusting You to be my victory because

You were victorious over death at the cross. Now You are my victory. I want to enter into Your victory. I want to walk in Your victory”. We do that by faith, people.

So Paul talks here twice in the book of Romans about the obedience of faith. Now, do you understand why John said earlier that the obedience to the commands of God are not burdensome? That's what he said. He says, we, if you're born again, you're going to, you're going to walk in obedience to the commands of God. And those, he says, those commands are not burdensome.

And, you know, some people who don't understand the obedience of faith. They listen, they look at that comment, they go, “Oh yes, they are”! They're, “Yes, it is burdensome because you gotta' do this, do this, do this...”.

Yeah. See, they don't get it. Listen, walking in obedience to God is burdensome when you're doing it on your own effort and strength. That's when it becomes burdensome. But when you understand that it's not in you, except through Jesus Christ living in you, it's not in you as a physical mortal person. You can't walk in yourself to beat it, but Christ in you can give you the victory. It's when we begin to really, truly understand that the power of God that resides within us begins to become efficacious in our lives, and we see that beginning to bubble out in the way we live and so forth.

God, I can't do this, but You can. And I'm trusting You. I'm trusting You as I walk in faith, as I build up my faith in the word of God, as I pray and seek Your face, I trust that you're going to give me the victory. That's what John is talking about. That's what Paul is talking about. That's what the Bible talks about.

Now I'm going to read verses six, seven, and eight together and you'll see why. Well, for one thing they all go together.

⁶ *“This is the one who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.”* (Doesn't just tell the truth. He is the truth.)

⁷ *“For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit”* (and that speaks of the spirit of God) *”and the water and the blood; and these three agree”*.

Now, before I weigh in on these verses here, a little bit, let me just kind of tell you that these have been debated for many years. What does this mean?

And people, oh, I read so many commentaries on even just what the water refers to. I mean, the blood, we're fairly sure we know who the spirit is. Really, it's

kind of the water that becomes the big bugaboo for a lot of people. And it is particularly in that phrase, Jesus, “who came by water” that, messes a lot of people up.

But let me just explain here that the key to understanding what John is talking about here is understanding, again, a little bit about that gnostic heresy that was in the initial stages during John's lifetime. What later became Gnosticism was frankly claiming that the person of Jesus Christ was born a mere man. He was never born deity. He was born merely human, just like you and me.

And then at his water baptism, according to Gnosticism, the spirit of Messiah, the spirit of Christ, descended upon him. And at that moment he became deity and humanity. Lived his life as deity and humanity, and then just prior to dying on the cross, when the Bible says he dismissed his spirit, the Gnostics believed it meant he dismissed the Christ spirit. And then he died as just a mere man. Right. Kind of weird, right?

Well, this is what was going on, and these things were beginning to surface. And John was hearing about these things, and he knew them to be contrary to the true gospel and the true understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do, and so on. And so John writes here that Jesus came by water and by blood. And he is essentially declaring that when Jesus came to earth, he came to earth as God in human flesh, right from the beginning, died on the cross for us as God in human flesh, and so he's refuting this Gnostic idea. But again, if you don't understand that, these verses, you kinda read this and you go, “What? What is he even talking about”?

Come by water and blood, and it doesn't make much sense because this is that one side of the conversation that we're getting. He's not telling us why he says this. We have to piece it together based on what we know that Gnosticism grew into, eventually, over the course of about a hundred years or so. John considers the water and the blood to be those things among which, along with the spirit testify to the person of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh, which is beyond human testimony. And that's why he writes in verse 9,

“If we receive the testimony of men”, (and that's what the Gnostics were doing, they were giving the testimony of men. He says), *“the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son”,* that he is God in human flesh. Began as God in human flesh, ended his earthly life or ministry as God in human flesh.

Even though John is a man who is also giving testimony, he's giving the testimony that God gave to him. He's claiming that these other men are just giving the testimony from the perspective of men. Verse 10,

“Whoever believes in the son of God has the testimony in himself”.

And this of course, is a wonderful reminder that the testimony of God is the testimony of the spirit and the spirit is in you. And that means the testimony is in you. And I know we're not getting weird here like the Mormons.

The Mormons love to talk about testimony. If you've talked to a Mormon lately, some of you have an LDS background and you know that they're all about their testimony. Which by the way, you can use if you're witnessing to a Mormon, if you do have the time to talk to them.

I get this question quite often, “How do I witness to a Mormon”? And they are so big on this issue of testimony that rather than sitting and debating the differences between biblical Christianity and Mormonism, which I don't think personally does a whole lot of good. I tried it once, like for hours. And I got nowhere. But what really can make a difference is if you just kind of, first of all, listen. Ask them to give you, give you their testimony and listen patiently.

And then say, “Now I listened patiently. Would you do the same while I give you my testimony”? And you just begin to share with them about what Jesus Christ has done in your life that's going to mean something. And that's going to, because as far as a Mormon is concerned, that's like irrefutable evidence. So, give them your testimony.

Anyway, what John is getting at here, when he talks about the testimony being in you, he's talking about the work of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit testifies to our spirit of the realities of these various things, such as we are children of God, who Jesus is, who God the father is, and so on and so on.

He goes on in verse 10. The latter part of verse 10 says,

“Whoever does not believe God” (and that means to, doesn't believe His testimony has basically,) “made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.”

And John is simply saying to deny that Jesus is who He said He was, is to call God a liar. And he believed very strongly, John did, that these early Gnostics and false teachers were calling God a liar because they were contradicting the

testimony of the Holy Spirit that is given to each and every believer about who Jesus is, what he came to do, and how you are saved so forth. Verse 11.

“And this is the testimony”. (You ready?) “That God gave us eternal life and this life is in His son”.

Boom. There it is. That's the gospel testimony.

Now you, when I speak of you having a testimony, I'm talking about what He's done in your life personally, but he's talking now about the testimony of the gospel or the witness of the spirit concerning what is the gospel.

The gospel is simply that God has given us eternal life and that life is found only in his Son, right? Only in his son, as Jesus himself said, and as recorded by John. We'll get to it later. In our study of the Gospel of John, Jesus said,

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the father except by me”. (John 14:6)

Okay, those are very dynamic and exclusive words. And John is saying the same thing, the life that God gave is in his Son. Verse 12.

“Whoever has the Son, therefore, has life”.

That makes sense. We just found out that life is only available in the Son. So if you have the Son, you have life. Now, when he says ‘have the Son’, he's referring to someone who has put their faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. So if you've done that, you have life.

But, the converse is whoever does not have the son of God, does not have life. Okay? So if you don't have Jesus, you don't have life. Why? He *“is the life”* he said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life”*. He didn't say, *“I am the way and the truth and A life. I am The life”*. In other words, I'm it. I'm the only life. The only life there is. It's me. When you have me, you have life. Right?

So if you have Jesus, what have you got? Hey, life comes along with the package. You don't have Jesus, you don't have life. These are pretty simple concepts, but if anybody's denying who Jesus is, you know they don't have life because they don't have Him, and that's the message that he's trying to convey. Pretty simple.

Verse 13, *“I write these to you who believe”*.

So who's his audience? It's believers, isn't it? This is not an evangelistic letter. This is not written to unbelievers. This is written to the body of Christ. He says,

¹³*“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know”, (and that means that you might be confident), “that you have eternal life”.*

That's why I'm telling you these things. I'm telling you that life is in Jesus. If you have him, you have life. And you can be confident of that. And then verse 14,

“And this is the confidence that we have toward him”, (toward him) “that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us”.

All right, now we're going to talk about prayer for a little while. John just kind of made a transition. He's talking about our confidence in salvation. Now he's going to talk about our confidence when it comes to pray or praying or prayer. So let me ask you this... when you pray, how confident are you about your prayers? He wants you, God wants you, to be confident. And James is going to lay out some things here. In fact, he's going to give us elements to help us walk in greater confidence related to prayer. And he's going to say some very important things here about prayer. And the first thing he says is, this is the confidence we have toward him that if we ask. And the first thing that he is telling us about prayer is about asking.

You might say, “Well, pastor Paul, that Well, duh. Of course we're talking about asking if we're talking about prayer”. No, here's the deal though. Some people don't ask. Do you guys remember what James said? Let me put it up on the screen; James, chapter 4, latter part of verse 2:

[SLIDE]

James 4:2

“You do not have, because you don't ask”.

There are times when there's things going on in our life, and we just, we aren't praying about it. Why aren't we praying about it? Who knows? You know, thick-headed people that we are. Whatever the solution or the reason may be, we just didn't ask. It's like, “Well, did you ask God”? “Well, no”. First thing, first key to prayer is to ask.

Oh, I've had people say the lamest things to me about why they didn't pray about something. Like, "God's too busy". Have you ever heard that one? I want to slap 'em. I mean, really, truly, are you really going to use that on me? God, God's got enough to think about without your prayers. Your God is too small. Your God needs an upgrade.

You need to follow the biblical God. Because He's not too busy for anything and your prayers are not too much for Him. And He is, He's not getting exhausted by your prayers. I also hear people say that.

Why else don't we ask? "I just feel guilty". There are a lot of people that will not pray about something because they're in trouble and they know that they know that. They know they got themselves into it. In other words, they're at fault. "I'm in this pickle. Because of my choices, I made bad choices and here I am and see, I can't ask God to help now because I got myself here". Which again belies a real understanding of the mercy and tenderheartedness of the God to whom we pray.

Do you really, do you really question how much God loves you? Do you really think He's petty? And sitting back when you go through a situation like that and saying, "Well, boy, you got yourself into it. You're going to have to climb out. You better not go praying to me about this because boom, you're the one who did it. I'm just, I'm not doing a thing. This is on you, pal".

Yeah. Some people actually think God's like that, and so they don't ask. There are all kinds of other reasons. Guilt. Shame. "I am so ashamed. I can't even pray". God knows. God knows. God knows the depth of your iniquity and he loves you still. Ask. Bring it to him and ask.

The second thing that we learn here is where John says that, "*If we ask anything*" (1 John 5:14). And I thought about that. I thought about that word. "Anything" he says we should ask "anything". Now that doesn't guarantee that we're going to get everything that we ask for, but we should pray about anything and everything.

Here's another question for you. What's too small to pray about? What's too big to pray about? What do you feel is too unimportant to pray about? We should pray about anything. Whatever you, we should just be having a conversation with God. Remember what Paul said to the Philippians on the screen from Philippians chapter four. He says:

[SLIDE]

Philippians 4:6

“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God”. (Philippians 4:6)

In everything. In everything. So what do you think you should pray about? How about like, everything? Just kind of have a conversation, have a, just talk with God about life. Have a conversation, have an ongoing conversation with God. You can pray about anything. He loves you that much. He's never going to get tired of you. He's never going to get exasperated with you. He's never going to get peevish and sullen, like people can. He's always going to receive you with love and tenderheartedness.

Thirdly, you'll notice that at the end of verse 14, he says,

“this is the confidence we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us”.

Right. And so he says that we are to pray according to His will. It's a wonderful thing to pray according to His will, and He has revealed His will to us in his word. And when you pray according to his will, it's very cool. Look what he goes on to say in verse 15.

“And if we know that he hears us”, (We know that he hears us because we're praying according to his will), *“in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him”.*

See, it again comes down to faith. When you're praying for somebody to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, that could be a very challenging thing to pray about, particularly if that person is in the worst kind of, I guess sort of place, in their life where they're just raging against God and you think, “good grief, I don't think this person will ever be saved”, but the fact of the matter is, God has revealed his will. That it is, he wants everybody to be saved and you know that when you're praying, that you're praying according to his will. So, pray. Confidently.

There's a lot of things that we can pray about that we know that are his will, and we therefore can pray with confidence and then leave the timing and the place and all the details up to him as far as how he's going to answer it.

Verse 16. Okay, here we come back to some challenging verses.

“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin, not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sins that do not lead to death”.

Oh, okay. I shouldn't have actually paused there because that kind of gave you the wrong impression. Let me read verse 16 over again.

“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life - to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death”. (ESV)

All right. Once again, we come upon some verses that are very widely debated as to their meaning. When we simplify this passage, we see that John is giving directives or giving us insights here in the case of praying for a brother. And we'll even throw in a sister too, because that would apply, who has fallen into sin.

So how do I pray for somebody who's fallen into sin? Well, he just encourages prayer for such a brother, or individual. And again, this is a believer, a fellow believer, okay? Who has entered, has fallen into sin. How do, what do I do? Well, you pray for him.

But you'll notice that this prayer that he encourages us to have all seems to pivot on whether or not the brother or again sister, has sinned in such a way that it leads to death. Now, what's he talking about there when he talks about sin that leads to death? Well, it would appear that John, because he's talking about a brother or a believer, it's, in my opinion, he's not talking about spiritual death, he's talking about physical death.

Okay. Because you're not going to die spiritually because you've entered into sin as a believer, we're saved by grace through faith. If we would die spiritually after getting saved because we fell into sin, that would mean you're saved by grace and kept by works. In other words, you gotta' hold on to good works and not sin, or your salvation is nullified. I don't believe that. I don't believe that.

We're saved by grace through faith, people. I get these questions every, almost every day, but certainly every week. “Pastor Paul, if (dot.dot.dot.dot) if somebody does (dot), can they lose their salvation or can they...”? They have questions that surround that sort of a thing.

And I keep coming back to people and saying, it's not sin that's going to cause you to have a problem with God. You're saved through faith, believing what

Jesus did on the cross. I asked people, “Was it your goodness that got you saved”? Well, no. “Well then how could your lack of goodness get you unsaved”? You see the, this is a problem with people.

We think that we're saved by grace through faith and kept by walking rightly. And if I don't walk rightly, then I won't be kept anymore. And that's just not biblical. I don't believe that John is referring here to spiritual death. I think you gotta' remember something about John. He witnessed people dropping dead because of sin. Ananias and Sapphira come to mind (Acts 5:2).

He understood that there were sins that lead to death. Paul tells us in the book of Corinthians that some of the Corinthians had died because they had taken the Lord's Supper improperly, without considering the body. He said, “*That's why some of you are sick and some of you even fallen asleep*”, which is a euphemism for death. (1 Corinthians 11:30)

The early apostles saw people die physically; doesn't mean they weren't saved. I'd fully expect to see Ananias and Sapphira if I were in heaven. How's that mess with your theology? I don't think that they lost their salvation. I think they were believers. They made a mistake and then they, and God took them out.

Can it happen? Yeah. We see it in the Bible. I think that's what John's talking about here. He says, listen, if somebody sends us in and God takes 'em out, don't pray for 'em. It's done. It's over. They're in the Lord's hands now. He decided to take him home. That's His business. The judgment is gone. The die is cast and they're, you know, don't worry about praying for those people.

But if somebody has, he says, not every sin leads to death. So if a brother falls into sin, then pray for him. Pray that God would restore him to life and to his walk with the Lord. Okay. Verse 18.

He says, “*We know that everyone who's been born of God does not keep on sinning*”.

Now, we dealt with this earlier in the Book of John. This refers to living in continual, unrepentant sin. He says that anyone who's been born of God does not keep on sinning or continue to walk in unrepentant sin.

Is he saying that believers should never sin? No. We talked about this. Again, I go over it because it keeps coming up like a bad dream. This is something that happens among particularly new believers. They think that they got saved and now I shouldn't sin anymore, and when they do, they question their salvation.

That's not what John is saying. Talking about that continual, unrelenting, unrepentant sin.

He says, that's not going to happen. But, "*He who was born of God protects him*". Who's he talking about? Who's the "he"? That's Jesus. Jesus is the one who was born of God who protects the believer, to the degree he says that "*the evil one does not touch him*".

This is another constant remark that we, I'm sure you hear believers talk about a lot, and that is the work of the devil in their lives. "Boy has Satan been attacking my family".

Now, I'm not here to, I'm not trying to convince you that spiritual warfare isn't happening, doesn't happen, or hasn't happened to you. I'm not doing that. What I am wanting to convince you of according to scripture, is that Satan doesn't have freedom into your life apart from God's permission. We see this in the Bible. Goes all the way back to the Book of Job. Satan could only do to Job what God allowed him to do. And then we come to the New Testament during the last supper when Peter is kind of shooting his mouth off about how he's never going to, ever fall away and "I'll never deny you" and this and that and the other thing. And Jesus looks at Peter and he says, "*Satan has asked to sift you as wheat*" (Luke 22:31).

But I want you to take special note of the fact Satan had to ask. He doesn't just have the freedom to waltz into your life. Now, there are times when God will allow Satan to buffet you for God's purposes, right? Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians, refers to a work of the enemy in his life, which he called a thorn in his flesh, he called it a messenger of Satan.

But he went on to explain that God had a purpose in that messenger. He said "*to keep me from becoming conceited because of the incredible revelations that I had received. There was given to me a messenger of Satan to buffet me*" (2 Corinthians 12:7). In other words, to keep his feet on the ground. I don't know if Paul had a propensity for vanity. Apparently, God thought so, or at least was keeping him from getting there. Right. So does God allow sometimes the work of the enemy in our lives to challenge, test, or even buffet us for God's disciplinary reasons? Well, sure seems like it.

We can see that in the word of God, but that doesn't mean Satan has the freedom to waltz into your life whenever he pleases, right? John says right here that the one who was born of God, and that's Jesus, protects the believer so that the evil one cannot touch him.

Verse 19, *“We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one”*.

And this is really an incredible statement because even though the enemy is not allowed to touch a believer except for God giving that the enemy permission, the enemy still has some inroads into our lives, doesn't he?

How? Well, he's in temporary control of the kingdom of this world. And as such, the whole, he says, John says, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. So you see, if Satan can't get to you from within, he'll try to get to you from without. And that means with the world knocking on your door. (knock, knock, knock, knock) “Hey, look at all the pleasures out here! Want to partake”?

And it's a very tempting thing, isn't it? Now, that's not a direct work of the enemy. It's an indirect work of the enemy because the enemy's in charge. The whole world is under his influence, right? So the enemy can still get to you in an indirect way through the world. But the thing we also learned about this verse 19, he says, *“we know that we are from God”*.

We, in other words, we've been born of God, but we also know that the whole world lies in the power, and that means literally the influence of the evil one. And that means that those who live their lives outside of Christ, whether they know it or not, whether they want it or not, they are under the full influence of the kingdom of this world. And that's not, shouldn't be surprising to any one of us.

I mean, good grief, I haven't always been a believer. I spent the first five years of my married life living the life of an unbeliever, and I was under that influence of this evil world. And I lived like it, which you would expect. And that's our friends and neighbors and in some cases, loved ones who don't know Christ, who have resisted Christ. They too lie under in the influence or under the influence of the world, which is under the influence of the evil one.

Verse 20. *“And we know”*, (notice there's lots of things that John says ‘we know’). *“we know that the son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true, and we are in him who is true in his son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life”*.

Boy, some wonderful things that he's saying here, but I want you to notice first that John says the son of God has come and has given us understanding. How do we have understanding? It is given to us, Okay? He's basically saying this

understanding does not come through human IQ. It comes through spiritual revelation.

Now, that's not to say that we shouldn't dig into the scriptures and apply ourselves to knowing and understanding what God has revealed in the word, because the Spirit is going to take that and he's going to continue to illuminate and open our hearts to what is true and so forth. But listen, it is a work of the Spirit.

He says the son of God has come and has “*given us understanding*”. It is a supernatural, spiritual work. And it is also through Him that we know that we are in Him, that we are in Christ. It's through Him that we know that we're in Him. It's through Him that we are in Him. I'm not in Christ because I made the right decisions in life. I'm in Christ because of Christ.

Notice he ends saying here, the last part of verse 20, when he, as he's speaking about Jesus Christ, he says, he “*is the true God and eternal life*”. Jesus is the true God and eternal life. And then he ends this letter simply saying, ²¹“*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*”.

Now, in John's day, when he talks about idols, he's really truly referring to idols. Lest you might think about, when you think about biblical idols, because in John's culture, the practice of paganism was so widespread, it just literally enveloped almost every area of life. And no matter where you lived in the Roman empire, which was the entire known world at that time, paganism was all around. I mean, it was all around. So what that means is that idolatry was a constant threat to the life of a believer, should they come to a place of compromise. And so he's telling them that there's a danger of getting sucked into that sort of a thing. And so he says, keep yourselves from that kind of idolatry.

Now, in our day, we look at this verse and we say, well, people aren't really big into little figurines. Or the whole, I mean, paganism is still alive, don't get me wrong, but nothing like it was in John's day. Heathenism is more popular now than Paganism. But idolatry is really today anything that we set up as an idol in the place of our worship and devotion to God.

So the question that we have to ask ourselves constantly as believers is, “Is there anything in my life that has eclipsed my devotion to God”? That's the question. Is there anything in my life that's taking more of my time, more of my effort? I'm sitting here saying this, and we're all, I hope you're under conviction, because I sure am.

I mean, I get convicted on a regular basis from the Holy Spirit when, and he'll say, "Paul, you're spending too much time doing that thing right there". Whatever it might be. It's just maybe some of the things I love to do. "Be careful that thing doesn't eclipse your love for Me". You're right, because that can enter into an idolatrous sort of affair with the things of the world or the things, the pleasures. And I'm not talking about sinful pleasure. I might be talking about something like, camping or motorcycling or even, computers. I'm kind of a geek.

But, those sorts of things, they can kind of, they can begin to really take your time and attention away to the point where you're not spending the time in the word in prayer, so on and so on. And so that could become an idol.

Music can become an idol. Love can become an idol. Romance can become an idol. Movies can become an idol. Books can become an idol. Sleep can become an idol. Food can become an idol. We gotta' be careful. If it eclipses your devotion to the Lord, if it takes your time, if it dominates your thoughts.

Then we need to say, Lord, this is an area I need to get in order, and I ask you to help me do that. Because, just as John's world provided lots of pagan opportunities to slip into idolatry, our world presents a lot of options today to slip into a modern idolatry as well.

And with that, we finish John's first letter.

The other two are going to go quick. Second and third John are short and we'll get through them quickly and then on to Jude and then on to Revelation.

So, let's pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity tonight just to sit in your presence. Lord, we thank you for the salvation that is ours by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And we thank you Lord for the obedience that comes from faith. Lord, forgive us when we try to obey you out of human effort, when we try to be a good Christian in our own strength or in the strength of self. Because Lord, we can't do that.

And we need to trust you to be the victory in our lives. You are the victor, and we ask you Lord, to make us victorious conquerors through Jesus Christ, our savior. We pray that this study that we have gone through will simmer in our hearts and that we would meditate on the things that we've learned about You and about how You work in our lives. And we ask you to continually fill us with insight and understanding through the revelation of Your spirit.

We praise you and thank you for all good things that you've given to us in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and all God's people said, amen. God bless you.