

ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY IN A WORLD OF DOUBT

Part 2

1 John 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION

When we opened this study of 1 John, I used the illustration of pickling. Pickling is the process of preserving or expanding the lifespan of food by either anaerobic fermentation in brine or immersion in vinegar. The pickling procedure will typically affect the food's texture and flavor.

We are always in danger of being pickled by the thinking and concerns of the world. We are, as children of God, to be in the world but not of the world.

Picture this setting: A world where people don't believe in absolute truth. Where even many Christians are relativists. Where theologians are uncertain about Jesus. Where new spiritual ideas are rapidly proliferating. Where the idea that there is only one way of salvation is considered outmoded, backwards, narrow, and ignorant.

The threat of false teaching. The greatest threat then, now, and always ... is not **unbelief**; it is **wrong belief**.
The great threat is not the **doubter**; it is the **deceiver**. It's not **irreligion**; it's **heresy**.

John's answer as we have seen in this letter

➔ **So That: Joy (1:4), Holiness (2:1), Assurance (5:13)**
– **Truth, Obedience, and Love**

Proposition: John closes his letter with **3 Truths** God wants you to know with Absolute Certainty:

- I. Your **Protection**
- II. Your **Creation**

III. Your **Communion**

So That: We will better understand the grand confession we make. And **so that** we will reach a noble style of living to sustain this confession.

READ 1 John 5:18-21

1st Truth God wants you to know with Absolute Certainty:

I. Your Spiritual Protection 1 John 5:18

Point – our holiness and our security in the context of personal holiness

Proof –

“^{18a}**We know that no one who is born of God sins**”

Not – “We hope ...” – “We think ...” “We suppose ...”

But – “We **know** ...” – “We **know** ...” “We **know** ...”

John is standing upon the Rock, and feels it firm beneath his feet.

5:13 – “in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

“**is born of God**” – **5:1-5** → What the new birth is and what the new birth does → loves, obeys, overcomes

5:18 → and what the new birth does not do → does not sin “**sins**” – grammatically this is written in the ‘present active’ → the new birth does not “keep on sinning”

Almost identical to: **3:9** – “No one who is born of God practices sin”

“^{18b}**but He who was born of God keeps him**”

This change in tense in the original Greek language moves from 'perfect' "is born" to 'aorist' "was born" (part of understanding). Distinguishes the begotten of God from the Begotten of God → change from you to Christ

The Nicene Creed – “one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [essence] with the Father;”

What do we know about the only Begotten Son?

“**keeps**” – 2:3-5; 3:22, 24; 5:3 → we have seen this Greek word translated as “keeps” in English previously – its appearances all refer to us keeping His commandments or word but now ... He keeps us

John 10:28 – “I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.”

Assurance – Eternal Security – Perseverance of the Saints/God

I love how the author of Hebrews puts it:

Heb 7:25 – Describing Christ as our great High Priest - “is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”

“^{18c}**and the evil one does not touch him**” – Only other use of this word by John – **John 20:17** – when he was accounting how Mary Magdalene came to the risen Jesus when she fell and was worshipping Him - “Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me’” → he was telling Mary that she had work to do - means Satan will not and cannot recapture you

2 Thess 3:3 – “the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*.”

John’s point is your security lies in the watchful eye and the strong arm of the only Begotten Son. You are **kept secure** by the blood of His passion and the rod of His strength

→ He is our Tower and Refuge, our Safety and Security

Illustration – Abigail – 1 Sam 25:29 – “The life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God”

Their garments had no pockets in those days. If you had something very precious, you bound it up close to yourself to protect and preserve → you are like a bundle that the LORD holds closely and securely to Himself → Protection

Col 3:3 – “You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Application – your **growth, joy, and fruitfulness** depend on your understanding this → This Truth enables us to put to death the sins of discontentment, insecurity, and anxiety.

2nd Truth God wants you to know with Absolute Certainty:

II. Your Personal Creation

1 John 5:19

Point – He is describing your creation in contrast to the world’s **destruction**.

Proof – “^{19a}**We know that we are of God**”

v. 18 – 3rd person – “him”

v. 19 – 1st person → “we” - John makes the Truth personal

“of God” → both our new origin and our continual belonging! You. Me. The Apostle John.

Beloved, **Jesus**’ statement to **Nicodemus** was NOT JUST that “you must be born again,” but that “you can be born again!”

“^{19b}**and the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one.*”**

Contrast: Rev 12:9 – “the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world”

Helps us understand the phrase “**whole world**” (and “all”) passages → **2:2** – there is a context – here we are not lying in the power of the evil one – we are resting in the bosom of the Holy One

Kingdom of Satan: **2 Cor 4:3-4** – “if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Kingdom of God:

Col 1:13 – “He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the **kingdom** of His beloved Son”

Literally we have been delivered from “the authority of darkness” – the **kingdom** of Satan: which is characterized by sin, rebellion, ignorance, blindness, falsehood, and hatred.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* – “We have been forewarned that an enemy relentlessly threatens us, an

enemy who is the very embodiment of rash boldness, of military prowess, of crafty wiles, of untiring zeal and haste, of every conceivable weapon and of skill in the science of warfare.

We must, then, bend our every effort to this goal: that we should not let ourselves be overwhelmed by carelessness or faintheartedness, but on the contrary, with courage rekindled stand our ground in combat. Since this military service ends only at death, let us urge ourselves to perseverance.

Indeed, conscious of our weakness and ignorance, let us especially call upon God's help, relying upon him alone in whatever we attempt, since it is he alone who can supply us with counsel and strength, courage and armor.”

Friend, man is given a choice between two **kingdoms**.
But he is not given the choice to live apart from a **kingdom**.
You are free to choose your **master**.
But you are not free to be without a **master**.
And you will have a **master**.

Application – Beloved, our high birth demands our high living.

→ Why would we dabble in the mire of sin?

Application – We identify with the world in its need.
But we separate from the world in its sin.

3rd Truth God wants you to know with Absolute Certainty:

III. Your Knowledgeable Communion 1 John 5:20

Point – An intimate relationship of understanding, of knowledge

Proof – “^{20a}**And we know that the Son of God has come**”

John again distinguishes between Begotten of God and begotten of God. → Only One who preexisted can be said “**has come**”

Jesus set His imperial foot down upon this earth, and He will not draw it back.

“^{20b}**and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true**”

“**has given**” – grammatically perfect tense
→ abiding permanent understanding

“**understanding**” – your heart attitude and way of thinking
your mind, your intellect;
→ Remember the greatest commandment according to Christ - **Mark 12:30** – “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

“^{20c}**and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**”

“**true**” – we see this word 3 times here

Francis Schaeffer – “True Truth” against relativism. This is in contrast to post modernism...where you define your own truth.

John 17:3 – “this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Illustration– “How do you know the sun rose this morning? → By the light which rose with it.

Application – So we may say, spiritually, how do you know that the Son of God has come?

→ By the Son of righteousness arising upon you – with healing in His wings and shining light which diffuses in your heart.

We know the Son of God has come by His presence; by His power put forth on our behalf; by the answers He gives to prayer; by the way in which He appears in dark and gloomy hours, making crooked things straight and rough places smooth.

We know the Son of God has come by how He shows us that in Him, there is rest, peace, and solid abiding happiness.

Every prayer, every petition, every sigh and cry, every longing look you cast up to him, and every word of his grace, every sweet promise, every glimpse or glance of the King in his beauty ... are all so many testimonies that the Son of God has come, and that you know that he has come. (**J. C. Philpot**)

Your Spiritual **Protection**, your Personal **Creation**, your Knowledgeable **Communion**. We could stop here.

But John is not finished.

He has one more, short, terse thought to leave with us.

Proof – “²¹**Little children, guard yourselves from idols.**”

So, we may add a fourth point to our outline today....

IV. Your Watchful Obligation

1 John 5:21

Some people say this is a very strange ending to what was an otherwise very repetitive book. John teaches a truth, and then he teaches it again, and then again, and again, and again...

Then ... all of sudden ... he finishes his letter with a brand new topic he hadn't touched before?!?!?!

I mean...this is not friendly to the seekers.
This is not meeting people where they are at.

How about a nice "Grace to you and peace"?
How about we sing the deepest and most theologically rich song penned in Christendom in the last century, *Kumbaya*?
(It is not, of course)

Nope → ²¹**Little children, guard yourselves from idols.**

Point – This is a warm-hearted warning.

“guard” – watch, like an armed military guard ready to fight an attack of the enemy. This same original Greek word translated as ‘guard’ in English was also used of shepherds “keeping watch over their flock by night (Luke 2:8) which conjures up the image of savage wolves wanting to devour helpless sheep

Exod 20:4 – “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.”

The final years of John were spent in **Ephesus**, where he was likely working in the salt mines in Ephesus and ministering to the regions in Asia Minor.

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we know that the idol makers in Ephesus rioted when the Gospel came. The giant statue of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

→ So tangible idols of wood, stone, and marble was something to which John's audience could relate.

What about today? What about you and me?
Today's idols are more in the self than on the shelf.

Life goals that revolve around something other than God.

→ What is the object of our affections, our efforts, and our attention?

→ Where does the majority of our time go?

→ On what do we spend the greatest amount of our resources?

I love what **Augustine** said – “*Idolatry is worshiping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that ought to be worshiped.*”

This is the **sin of substitution**.

The sin of a bunch of self-made men worshipping their creator.

An **English theologian** had this sage wisdom – “*What other gods could we have besides the Lord? Plenty. For Israel there were the Canaanite Baals, those jolly nature gods whose worship was a rampage of gluttony, drunkenness, and ritual prostitution.*”

*For us there are still the great gods Sex, Shekels, and Stomach (an unholy trinity constituting one god: **Self**). And the other enslaving trio, Pleasure, Possessions, and*

Position, whose worship is described as ‘The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life’ (2:16).

Football, the Firm, and Family are also gods for some. Indeed the list of other gods is endless, for anything that anyone allows to run his life becomes his god and the claimants for this prerogative are legion. In the matter of life’s basic loyalty, temptation is a many-headed monster.”

Beloved, who can count the thousands of idols which tempt our thoughts and engross our affections?

Problem: Our idol may be so hidden that we are not found out.

Answer: We need to look closer and search deeper. They are not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a conscience that has been tenderized by the Word of God.

Illustration - Hidden diseases are the most incurable of all diseases. We need to search every fold of our heart until we find it.

It may not be so big or so ugly as our neighbor’s. But an idol is still an idol, whether so small as to be carried in our pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

Illustration – In Southern California, I will never forget when a former Buddhist gave her testimony from the baptismal waters → She picked **1 John 5:21** as her keynote verse of how God saved her!

CONCLUSION

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. (MacArthur)