

WALKING IN THE LIGHT- First John and the Path to Living Deeply in Christ - Part twenty-six

Sunday, July 18th, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2119

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE OUT

IPAD TEXT - 1 John 5:18-20 - "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. [19] We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. [20] And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know 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."

You don't have to know **everything** theological to walk with Jesus in this world but you **do** have to know **certain** things deeply. Our text today is a model of conciseness and priority. John points out the **three certainties** upon which the Christian walk is **founded**. And I chose the title **"Keeping the spirit of bondage out"** because these are also the three truths by which the Christian life is **sustained**. All of them start out with the words **"we know"**:

IPAD TEXTS:

- a) **"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning...."(18).**

- b) **“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one....”(19).**
- c) **“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true....”(20).**

John is **reducing the Christian walk to its essentials**. You can't give equal attention to many things. There probably isn't time for that. Or at least John knows most of us won't **make** time for that. But these three truths the Christian must know and **apply** himself to with determined persistence.

By that I mean he or she must **start each day rehearsing these truths**. Like the spy-ware protection on my computer, these truths can't just be purchased or acknowledged. They must be **installed** and **run regularly**. They must constantly be **acting in the background** of my thoughts, plans and affections.

These truths are the **spiritual immune system** to keep the power of the enemy at bay. And here's something important to remember. You don't have to **deny** these truths to lose ground spiritually. Leave them in some cedar chest in the back corner of your mind and the devil will rob you blind. I have two points in this teaching. We'll consider one of the today and the second next Sunday.

- 1) **SET YOUR HEART EACH DAY TO NOT COMMIT ANY SIN**

IPAD TEXT - 1 John 5:18 - "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning...."

John makes a very fundamental point about holiness in this verse. But we need to notice something more than the point John makes about Christians not continuing in sinful actions. It's the way he **assumes** the point - "**We know....**" It's like he's saying, "**Of course we all know this....This goes without saying.....This is so obvious, but let me remind you.....Of course, it's a given no one could even think about living a Christian life continuing in sin....**"

It's the "**black-and-whiteness**" of John's words that jars me a bit. It almost catches my casual mind off guard. I wonder if **our** church "**knows**" this truth. I mean, I wonder if we **know** this truth the way we **know** the alphabet.

And that's a really **good** comparison because the alphabet is something you must **know** in the sense that you never **un-know** it. You **use** your alphabet knowledge in every letter, email, tweet, text, newspaper, map, book, stock-quote and restaurant menu. In other words if you **don't** know the alphabet there are a host of other life-skills you **un-learn** as well. So many other things don't work well when you don't **constantly know** the alphabet.

Knowing the Christian doesn't continue in sin is like knowing the alphabet. Nothing else works in the Christian life if this truth has no **working application** in my soul. In other words, I don't just lose **one** truth if I don't know this. I lose **all the other truths** about knowing and loving and walking with God as well.

The Christian is not just a person who has had his sins forgiven. He has been set into a **different relationship** to sin than the person not born of God. His whole **condition** and **reaction** is different in respect to sin.

The one who is **not** born of God is not only **guilty** in terms of his sin. John says he is "**....in the power of the evil one**"(19). He lives in a **state - a permanent condition - of sinfulness**. He is **dominated** by the devil and darkness. It's not just that he does some bad things once in a while. In Ephesians Paul says all the unsaved "**walk in darkness.**"

People make occasional efforts to improve themselves. They set goals. They make resolutions. And certain areas of life may be morally cleaned up. Non-Christians can quit smoking or drinking. They can lose weight when they need to. They can stop cheating on their spouse. But none of those changes touches their **essential nature**. John says there is something they cannot change. They are **“in the power of the evil one”**(19).

In our text John describes those who are **“born of God”**(18). John didn't make that term up. He got it from Jesus and Jesus chose it for a very good reason. When you think of it, there is no greater gap than the gap between those who are **born** and those who have **never** been born.

There's no greater difference than the one between those who **exist** and those who **don't exist**. I mean, the difference between a man and a fly is a gigantic one. But at least both the man and the fly are living creatures. They both **exist**. You can point to each one and say, “There it is.” But there are no points of comparison **at all** between a person who **exists** and one who **doesn't**.

In John's theology being **born of God** makes as drastic a change as **physical birth** makes to earthly existence. John says **God's seed** has been planted in you. You have been changed inside. Something is now **in** you that wasn't there before. And it **manifests** itself. You are taken **out** of one realm and placed **into** another. Your **will** is still involved in your daily living. You still must make good decisions. But you have been **enabled** and **empowered**. There are new possibilities for obeying and pleasing God.

And this new aspect of your existence is marked, more than anything else, by this - you set your whole life to make a **definitive break with sin**. Being "**in sin**" isn't your natural state anymore. You may still **fall into sin**. But even your old habits start to become more **alien** to your nature. Over time, as you grow in Christ Jesus, to take sin into your being starts to taste like drinking vinegar.

I'm not sure this is stressed enough in today's church. Something has filtered into the church that would never have been tolerated for one minute a hundred years ago. In an effort to sound humble, Christian people say things that can almost pass for an excuse for **future sinful actions**: "God, I know I'll never be all that You want me to be, but I'm so glad You love me just the same." Or, "I'm not perfect, just loved."

Please understand. It's not that those statements are untrue. But they still carry a certain danger. They fail to emphasize the ***most important part of the truth***. You can emphasize grace in such a way that you never reckon on its ***transforming power - its power to make you holy and keep you from sin***.

"Well, after all, pastor Don, John says this whole world lies under the power of the evil one."

That's right. The ***world*** does. But ***you*** don't. That's the whole point of the New Testament. This world is hopelessly rooted in a ***continuous course of growing unrighteousness***. Ultimately, it can do nothing else. But John says you and I are ***delivered*** from the power of the enemy and filled with the Spirit of holiness.

Let's keep thinking about this. It is true that a brother can commit a sin. John has just talked about that in **verse 16 - "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life...." - IPAD TEXT**

The Christian may commit a sin. But it's so painful for him to do so, and so unsettling to the whole body of Christ that it ***sets people to praying like crazy for spiritual life***. That's the whole point of that sixteenth verse of the fifth chapter.

You get the impression from John that while the Christian may sin, it's not something to be **expected** or **accepted**. It sets the sinner to **confessing** and it sets the church body to **praying and crying out to God**.

That's because everyone is on the same page. Something is terribly wrong when the Christian sins. It's like discovering the plague. God certainly can and does forgive us when we confess our sin, but sin in the Christian is viewed as essentially **out of character - horribly unusual, a distorted kind of behavior**.

This is John's first point in these closing verses. **Never view sin as an acceptable part of life in Jesus**. You don't honor Jesus by casually mopping up repeated sin with His shed blood. Never come to live with sin. Being **"born of God"** makes sin as foreign and unacceptable to your system as COVID 19.

I know we aren't perfect. Just as we are **"born of God"** we must **"grow in Christ**. But every Lord's Day we gather to celebrate the power of resurrection life in Christ Jesus. Every Lord's Day we gather to give **demonstration** of a power greater than death itself. We're not paying homage to a **creed** or a **belief**.

In spite of what you may see at the front of most churches, we gather around an **empty grave**, not just a **cross**. We gather to give **declaration** and **demonstration** of what it means to be “**seated with Christ Jesus in heavenly places,**” of having “**God’s seed abiding in us.**”

We are called to make this new life a **visible** reality. True, it’s certainly not **complete** yet. But it is **real** and **living** and **actual** right now, in this fallen world. The world isn’t supposed to be seeing proof of the **Fall** in my moral behavior. They can see proof of the Fall all over Toronto. What the world is supposed to see evidenced in **my** life is the power and life of the risen Christ and the difference He makes:

IPAD TEXT - Colossians 3:1-3 - "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

IPAD TEXT - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*"

Here's Paul's much neglected point. Conversion doesn't just bring Jesus into **my** life. It brings **my** life into **His**. The Bible says my life is "***hidden with Christ in God.***" Let that sink in. Live out of that reality. You can't help but be fruitful there.

More on this next week.