

STUDIES IN 1 JOHN

STUDY NUMBER TWELVE: Fellowship is an Indication of Salvation 1 John 5:13-21

Key Verse 5:13: "I wrote these things to you in order that you may know that you are having eternal life, you who are believing in the name of the Son of God."

TEXT:

v.13 I wrote these things to you in order that you may know that you are having eternal life, you who are believing in the name of the Son of God.

v.14 And this is the boldness (confidence) which we are having toward Him, that if we are asking anything according to His will, He is hearing us.

v.15 And if we are knowing that He is hearing us, whatever we are asking, we are knowing that we are having the requests which we have asked from Him.

v.16 If anyone should see his brother sinning a sin not towards death, he shall ask and He shall give him life--those who are not sinning towards death. There is a sin towards death, not concerning that am I saying that he should make request.

v.17 Every unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not towards death.

v.18 We are knowing that everyone who has been born of God is not continually sinning. But He who was born of God is keeping him, and the evil one is not laying hold of him.

v.19 We are knowing that we are out of God, and the whole world is lying in the power of the evil one.

v.20 Now we are knowing that the Son of God has come, and has given to us insight, in order that we may be knowing the truth, and we are in the truth in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

v.21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

INTRODUCTION:

(At Wit's End by Erma Bombeck)

Heaven knows, men aren't the more talkative of the species. In fact, I have just come by some statistics that claim men average no more than six words a day in their own homes. Furthermore, their only hope of increasing this total is through conscientious massage of the throat muscles.

Even out of football season, men approach their homes in the evening with all the detachment of a census taker. He garages the car, feels the stove to see if there's anything going for him, changes his clothes, eats, and retires to the living room where he reads the newspaper and engages in his nightly practice of finer isometrics--turning the television dial. He remains in a state of inertia until the sound of his deep, labored breathing puts the cork on another confetti-filled evening.

The frustration of wives who want to talk with someone who isn't teething is pitiful. While some accept the silent evenings as a way of life, others try desperately to change it. When one woman attempted to apologize at the dinner table for the children--who were performing a native tribal dance through the mashed potatoes--her husband looked up sharply from his plate, glanced at the children, and shrieked, "You mean they're all ours?" (five words)

One of the most disappointing attempts at starting a conversation is, "What kind of a day did you have, dear?" One husband reportedly answered by kicking the dog, another went pale and couldn't form words, another bit his necktie in half. Some just stared blankly as if they hadn't heard the question. Only one man formed a verbal reply. It was "Shut up, Clara."

pp. 189-90

(The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank
by Erma Bombeck)

"One quick question," said my husband, "what does 'Bwee, no nah noo' mean?"

"Who said it?"

"Whatya mean who said it? Your baby just said it and looked kinda desperate."

"It means, 'I have to go to the bathroom.'"

"Thanks, that's all I needed to know. Have a good . . ."

"It also means, 'I want a cookie. Where are my coloring books? The dog just crawled into the dryer. There's a policeman at the door. I am floating my \$20 orthopedic shoes in the john.' The kid has a limited vocabulary and has to double up."

"I can handle this. It's just that she looks so miserable."

"It also means, 'It's too late for the bathroom.'"

p. 146

(Why Geese Fly Farther than Eagles by Bob Stromberg)

On a hot August evening, on the baseball diamond back in my hometown, I was eleven years old, playing right field. I was the worst player on a pretty good team.

All summer I'd been lucky enough to have very few balls hit my way. That's why I was chosen to play out there. Very few balls are hit into right field in Little League.

To my relief, in the last inning of our most important game, once again nothing crucial had flown in my direction. Furthermore, I was home free because I probably wouldn't have to bat again.

"Fine with me!"

Unfortunately, ten minutes later I was walking to the plate with an opportunity to keep us in the game or end our season.

"It's up to you, Bobby," said my coach, knowing there was no way.

I hadn't really hit the ball all year long. Several times I'd closed my eyes and swung about the time the ball was nearing the plate. Miraculously, the ball intersected the arc of my swing at the proper point, making contact with the bat at the thinnest part. The electrical shock of pain from the violently vibrating wood shot open my eyes in time to see the pitcher picking up the ball at his feet and tossing it in a long, slow lob over to first base. Those were my good games.

Now, as I walked toward the plate, I heard the encouraging mumbles of my teammates discussing their hopes for my success. "Oh, well, Harvey, you wanna go to the Tastee Freeze?"

Several of our team parents were packing their younger kids into the station wagons. The fans of our opponents shouted joyfully to their pitcher, "Okay, Bucky! Easy out! Easy out!"

While I stood at the plate, their coach stopped the game momentarily to yell to his outfield, "Move it in, guys! No, no, way in! Come on! Move in!"

The pitcher, a tall, lanky kid with a mustache, hurled the ball at blinding speed right at my head. At the last moment I arched my back, throwing my body into the dust, certain I'd been hit, certain I'd be trotting triumphantly to first base.

The umpire watched the ball curve straight down the middle and shouted, "STEEEEEE-RIIIIIIIKE!!!" The fans went crazy.

The last two pitches were slow balls. At least I think they were. They seemed to take about five minutes to get from the mound to the plate. I could see the stitching on the slowly rotating ball. I could hear my coach screaming "Take a cut, Bobby. Now!"

I wanted to swing, but I didn't. I wanted to risk it all, stand there with a smile on my lips, point to the outfield and say, "See that spot, Bucky? It's goin' right there."

But I didn't. I stood there, a pasty color, afraid to take a swing as the ball floated by.

My reasoning was "If I swing the bat, I might miss the ball."

Now, at the annual science fair, I saw two jittery little girls by their Loch Ness display; two abrasive little round guys who seemed to understand little about friction; and a shy boy who might have been able to tell me a whole lot about parallel circuitry if his dad would have just stopped talking.

Now I understood. The kids didn't want to go to the plate and take their stance in front of the teachers, their parents or me. None of them dared to risk it all and say, "Let me tell you what I learned, 'cause I learned a bunch."

Instead they struck out without taking a cut at the ball. Their reasoning was "If I try to tell them what I know, I might be wrong."

The fear of failure stole all the joy of learning.

I returned home that evening with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was depressed, and I felt bad for those children who had worked so hard and enjoyed it so little.

On the other, I felt pretty good about Lars. He actually understood how plants breathed and was anxious to tell the little bit he knew to anybody he could find. I'm glad he's that kind of child.

Several days later he was thrilled to show me a dead plant 2. I'm not sure if it had suffocated the way it was supposed to or if the two pounds of Vaseline had broken its will to live.

I won't forget the evening. It encouraged me, a middle-aged, comfortable guy, to take a few risks. It encouraged me to be a father who helps his children keep the world in perspective. It made me grateful to realize it doesn't matter whether I go down swinging or freeze at the plate; God doesn't throw me off the team. All in all, I think I learned more at my son's fair than I did at my own.

pp. 74-76

(Baby Boomer Blues by Dr. Gary R. Collins
& Dr. Timothy E. Clinton)

According to Seligman, past generations were able to maintain hope through difficult times because they had three anchors of stability in all of their societies: faith in God, pride in one's country, and stability in the family. All three of these anchors seem to have disintegrated during the baby boom decades.

p. 51

We often sing with intense enthusiasm Fanny Crosby's great old hymn:
 "Blessed Assurance"

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
 O, What a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
 Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
 Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
 Angels descending, bring from above
 Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
 I in my Savior am happy and blest;
 Watching and waiting, looking above,
 Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

This is my story, this is my song,
 Praising my Savior all the day long;
 This is my story, this is my song,
 Praising my Savior all the day long.

(The New Church Hymnal, 1976, Lexicon Music, Inc., #144)

So many times we sing hymns like this and have not entered into the experience.

The questions we raise at this point are:

Do we have this wonderful assurance of knowing that Jesus Christ is living in our lives?

Do we know that our eternal destiny is cared for?

We have been studying together in this little epistle of
1 John:

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

This is communing with the Father as a Christian and getting to know Him better.

In these studies, we talked about:

Study #1:Fellowship Is Restored by Jesus Christ

Study #2:Fellowship Is Broken by Sin

Study #3:Fellowship Is Nourished by Obedience

Study #4:Fellowship Is Escalated by Growth

Study #5:Fellowship Is being Educated by His Spirit

Study #6:Fellowship Is a Rehearsal for the Future

Study #7:Fellowship Is Apparent by Fruit

Study #8:Fellowship Is Sacrificial Servanthood

Study #9:Fellowship Is Preserved by Discernment

Study #10:Fellowship Is Generating "Agape" Love

Study #11:Fellowship Is Activated by a New Birth

And now we come to our final study together:

Study #12:Fellowship Is an Indication of Salvation

v.13 I wrote these things to you in order that you may know that you are having eternal life, you who are believing in the name of the Son of God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

John wrote these things so that his believing readers would know that they had eternal life.

This is also stated in verse 12 and verse 20 of this same chapter.

"I WROTE THESE THINGS TO YOU."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These things are often wrongly taken to refer to the whole epistle, but similar expressions in chapter 2:1 and verse 26 refer to the immediately preceding material, and the same is true here. What John had just written about God's testimony in chapter 5:9, 12 aims to assure his readers that despite anything the antichrists have said, believers do indeed possess eternal life. It may be pointed out, in fact, that the assurance of one's salvation always rests fundamentally and sufficiently on the direct promises that God makes to that believer. In other words, one's assurance rests on the testimony of God.

"I WROTE THESE THINGS TO YOU" with this purpose in mind, that is:

"IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE,"

that is:

"YOU WHO ARE BELIEVING IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."

Stott says:

Putting together the purposes of Gospel and Epistle, John's purpose is in four stages, that his readers should hear, hearing should believe, believing should live, and living should know. His emphasis is important because it is common today to decry any claim to assurance of salvation, to dismiss it as presumptuous, and to affirm that no certainty is possible on this side of death. But certainty and humility do not exclude one another. If God's revealed purpose is not only that we should hear, believe and live, but also that we should know, presumptuousness lies in doubting His word, not in trusting it.
p. 185

Barclay says:

It is John's conviction that such a life comes through Jesus Christ and in no other way. Why should that be? If eternal life is the life of God, it means that we can only possess that life when we know God, and when we are enabled to approach God, and to rest in Him. We can only do these two things in Jesus Christ. The Son alone fully knows the Father, and, therefore, only Jesus Christ can fully reveal to us what God is like. As John had it in his gospel: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). And Jesus Christ alone can bring us into the presence of God. It is in Him that there is open to us the new and living way into the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-23). We may take a simple analogy. If we wish to meet someone whom we do not know, and who moves in a completely different circle from the circle in which we ourselves move, we can only achieve that meeting by finding someone who knows that person, and who is willing to introduce us to him. That is what Jesus does for us in regard to God. Eternal life is the life of God; and we can only find that life through Jesus Christ.
p.135

I have chosen this very first verse in our study as the
KEY VERSE to:

"FELLOWSHIP IS AN INDICATION OF SALVATION."

John is saying, "I wrote these things to you with one purpose in mind:

'IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE.'"

FAITH is such a big factor in our Christian lives, because it is by faith that we accept Him as our Savior, and it is by faith that we learn to walk with Him daily.

Each of us at some time or another are filled with doubts.

Can I really know that I am on my way to heaven without a doubt?

Can I have a certainty about things which are spiritual?

The answer to these questions is YES. The more we have fellowship with the Father, the more we find Him to be totally adequate to meet every need in our lives.

Why have fellowship with the Father? The answer to that question is: He clears away all the doubts about His existence and the doubts about His promises of eternal life.

John says in this first statement:

"I WROTE THESE THINGS TO YOU IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE."

Above everything else, John wants us to know that we have "ETERNAL LIFE." The question that comes to our minds immediately is: Can we really know before we die that our destination is heaven?

I believe that we can know on the basis of the experience of men in the scripture:

For instance, it said of ABRAHAM in:

John 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.

Of JOB in:

Job 19:25, 26

I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;

DAVID in:

Psalms 23:4

Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

The apostle PAUL in:

Romans 8:38, 39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PETER in:

2 Peter 1:10

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

JOHN himself in:

1 John 3:14

As for us we are knowing that we have passed over out of death into life, . . .

The word ASSURANCE means:

"a positive declaration intended to give confidence,"

"freedom from doubt,"

"a certainty."

The very fact that we have fellowship with the Father, and that we long and seek this fellowship with Him, is a healthy indication of our salvation.

It is by faith that I come to the Lord Jesus, and assurance is based on His promise.

FAITH is the ROOT, and ASSURANCE is the FLOWER.

Faith is that poor, trembling woman coming behind Jesus in the press of the crowd and touching the hem of His garment.

Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers and saying, "I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God."

Faith is the penitent thief crying, "Lord, remember me!"

Assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores and saying, "I know that my redeemer lives. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Faith is Peter's drowning cry as he began to sink, "Lord, save me!"

Assurance is the same Peter declaring before the council about Christ, "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, "Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief."

Assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Even with all these wonderful declarations of scripture, there still come those times in our lives when we fear being rejected.

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

G. Campbell Morgan is known as one of the great Bible preachers and teachers of the past 100 years. On May 2, 1898, Morgan preached a trial sermon in consideration for the Methodist ministry. He was accustomed to speaking to thousands, but on that Sunday he preached to only seventy-five people. They rejected him. Morgan wired his father, "Rejected!" His father wired back, "Rejected on earth--accepted in heaven!" Morgan later became a prince among preachers. He could be so only because he knew the source of his acceptance.

p. 76

The obvious question that flows from this is:

If we can know, why don't more people know that they are really born again and have eternal life?

The 1ST REASON is:

1. MAYBE THEY ARE NOT BORN AGAIN.

They may:

be a church member,

be baptized,

be catechized,

attend Sunday school,

have a perfect attendance pin,

have parents who are Christians,

but they have never personally come to Jesus Christ Himself.

The next possibility is:

2. PERHAPS THEY ARE DEPENDING UPON GOOD WORKS.

They are trying to keep the law. "Many will say unto me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, haven't we done many wonderful works?'--living by the ten commandments, living by the

golden rule?

There is another possibility, and that is:

3.Perhaps some people are reversing God's order of:

FACT,

FAITH,

and FEELING.

God said it, I believed it, and that settled it.

When we let FEELINGS come first, this is like trying to pull a train with a caboose.

There is only one man, ISAAC, who relied on his feelings, and the results are in the scripture record.

In Acts 8:30-39 we see PHILIP with the ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

The sequence of events is:

1.give the FACTS,

2.then the FAITH,

3.and the FEELINGS followed:

"He went on his way rejoicing."

4.There is another possibility for not being assured of our salvation, and that is A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE and FAITH:

1.A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE in the sense that we do not understand what God has promised in His word with regard to those who come to Him by faith,

2.and secondly, A LACK OF FAITH.

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The followup question, then, is:

How can I know?

The ways you can know are by:

1. you own personal testimony
2. the authority of God's word
3. your love for other Christians
4. the witness of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you

As I continue to desire fellowship with the Father, this is a very prominent indication of having experienced salvation.

The more intimate we become with the heavenly Father, the more confidence and trust there are in the promises which He has made.

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

In this particular section, we see the word "KNOW" or "KNOWING" recurring 7 times.

"We are knowing" 7 THINGS:

1. WE KNOW THAT WE ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE.
2. WE ARE KNOWING THAT HE IS HEARING US.
3. WE ARE KNOWING THAT WE ARE HAVING THE REQUESTS THAT WE HAVE MADE.
4. WE ARE KNOWING THAT EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD IS NOT SINNING.
5. WE ARE KNOWING THAT WE ARE OUT OF GOD.
6. WE ARE KNOWING THAT THE SON OF GOD HAS COME.
7. WE ARE KNOWING THE TRUTH.

John has said:

"I WROTE THESE THINGS TO YOU IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE."

The questions that come to us at this particular time are:

Do you know that you have "ETERNAL LIFE"?

Have you ever come personally to Jesus Christ and received Him by faith?

The last phrase in the verse tells us what is involved:

"You who are BELIEVING in the name of the Son of God."

Is there a continuing certainty as a result of your present fellowship with the Father?

"YOU WHO ARE BELIEVING IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD" marks out the group that he is talking about. If you have never received Christ by faith, then you will not know that "YOU ARE HAVING ETERNAL LIFE."

v.14 And this is the boldness (confidence) which we are having toward Him, that if we are asking anything according to His will, He is hearing us.

Barclay observes:

C. H. Dodd writes: "Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfil our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of His will." A. E. Brooke suggests that John thought of prayer as "including only requests for knowledge of, and acquiescence in, the will of God." Even the great pagans saw this. Epictetus wrote: "Have courage to look up to God and say, Deal with me as Thou wilt from now on. I am as one with Thee; I am Thine; I flinch from nothing so long as Thou dost think that it is good. Lead me where Thou wilt; put on me what raiment Thou wilt. Wouldst Thou have me hold office or eschew it, stay or flee, be rich or poor? For all this I will defend Thee before men."

p. 137

Westcott says:

The consciousness of a divine life brings to the believer perfect boldness in prayer, that is, in converse with God (14, 15); and this boldness finds characteristic expression in intercession for the brethren (16, 17).
p. 189

J. Vernon McGee says:

George Muller put it like this: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness." It is not trying to get God to do something which He is reluctant to do, but prayer is to be our thinking His thoughts after Him. This is the thing which gives us confidence when we turn to God in prayer.
p. 819

Guy King says:

Putting the two passages, indeed the whole Epistle, together, we may say that the governing factors of successful prayer are--Being: that is, "born of God". Obeying: "because we keep His commandments:.. Dwelling: "we dwell in Him, and He in us". Knowing: "according to His will". Then, simply, Asking: for the definite thing. So comes the Receiving: "we have the petitions."
p. 115

Dr. Mitchell says:

The consciousness of divine life brings the believer into a place of boldness. The more we realize our relationship to the living God, the more we realize that we are the children of One who is God, the more we see that His life has become our life, the deeper will be our appreciation of the fact that God's heart is wrapped up in us who are believers.
p. 154

This consciousness and realization of relationship to God and partnership with Him in His divine life brings the believer into a place of boldness in prayer. This is not to be belief only, but it is to be a daily experience. There is nothing too great for God to do for man, and there is nothing too small for God to grant to his people. "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

(Turn It to Gold by D. James Kennedy)

Dr. Harry Ironside tells of a game he used to play with his little son. It was called "Bear." They would arrange a few chairs in the corner and pretend they formed a cage. Then the "bear" would go into the cage. You know, of course, who the "bear" was: it was Papa himself. Papa, on all fours, growls fiercely and raises his "claws" at the little boy, who stands outside laughing at him.

Inevitably, of course, the bear gets out of the cage. Now the game gets exciting! The bear goes after the little boy, who runs for his life, squealing with glee. The father, being on all fours (and perhaps just a tad overweight), has some difficulty catching the youngster. But eventually he maneuvers him into a corner.

Trapped, the little boy puts his arms over his face and begins to scream with excitement and fear. He knows the vicious "bear" is upon him. He can hear the growling and feel the hot breath on his arms. Any moment, the bear's claws will reach out and grab him and he will be devoured!

Then suddenly the little boy whirls around, throws his arms around the "bear," and says, "I'm not scared! I know you're not a bear! You're my daddy!"
pp. 59-60

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Prayer, too, is an expression of trust in the name of God's Son. One who believes in the name of Jesus Christ has an assurance in approaching God in prayer. Requests made in accordance with God's will are heard by Him and a believer can be certain of receiving answers to them. Naturally, Christians today discern God's will through the scriptures, and ask accordingly.

In this context, then, it is natural to suppose that John was thinking especially, though not exclusively, of a Christian's right to ask God for help in keeping His commands.

That kind of prayer is transparently according to His will. Thus, in victorious living, a Christian is relieved of any burden through prayer that is based on faith in the name of God's Son.

We are having a freedom of speech and are able to make requests of Him at any time.

We read back in:

chapter 4:17

In this the love has been brought to completion which is in us, that as a result we are having boldness in the day of judgment; because just as that one is, also we ourselves are in this world.

chapter 2:28

And now, little children, keep on abiding in Him, in order that whenever He is revealed, we might have boldness and not shrink away in shame from Him in His coming.

chapter 3:21

Beloved ones, if our heart is not condemning us, we are having boldness toward God.

On the basis of our fellowship with the Father, we are having a confidence toward Him. And this confidence is: "If we are asking anything according to His will, He is hearing us."

He is hearing us because the lines of communication have been established, and we are in fellowship with Him.

John 16:24

Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.

Matthew 21:22

And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

When I am in fellowship with the Father, the requests which I am making of Him will more likely be in His will because He has burdened my heart through my fellowship for the things that I should be praying about. And the things which I am praying about are His will to fulfill.

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

Men would be their own carvers, and not suffer God to use his right; as if a stone should order the mason in what manner to hew it, and in what part of the building to place it. We are not ordinarily concerned so much at the calamities of our neighbours, but swell against heaven at a light drop upon ourselves. We are content God should be the sovereign of others, so that he will be a servant to us; let him deal as he will himself with others, so he will treat us, and what relates to us, as we will ourselves. We would have God resign his authority to our humours, and our humours should be in the place of a god to him, to direct him what was fit to do in our own cause. When things go not according to our vote, our impatience is a wish that God were deposed from his throne, that he would surrender his seat to some that would deal more favourably, and be more punctual observers of our directions. Let us look to ourselves in regard of this sin, which is too common, and the root of much mischief. This seems to be the first bubbling of Adam's will; he was not content with the condition wherein God had placed him, but affected another, which ended in the ruin of himself and of mankind.

Limiting God in his way of working to our methods, is another part of the contempt of his dominion. When we will prescribe him methods of acting, that he should deliver us in this or that way, we would not suffer him to be the Lord of his own favours, and have the privilege to be his own director. When we will limit him to such a time wherein to work our deliverance, we would rob him of the power of times and seasons, which are solely in his hand. We would regulate his conduct according to our imaginations, and assume a power to give laws to our sovereign. Thus the Israelites 'limited the Holy One of Israel,' Ps. lxxviii. 41. They would control his absolute dominion, and of a sovereign make him their slave. Man that is God's vassal would set bounds to his Lord, and cease to be a servant and commence master, when he would give, not take, directions from him. When God had given them manna, and their fancies were weary of that delicious food, they would prescribe heaven to rain down some other sort of food for them.
p. 729

(Living by the Book by Howard G. Hendricks
& William D. Hendricks)

Abraham teaches us something about prayer in Genesis 18. So does Nehemiah. I encourage you to make a study of the great prayers in Scripture: for example, David's prayer of confession in Psalm 51; Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving after the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10); Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2); Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55; Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3:14-21; Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46); and the Lord's Prayer, which is really the Disciples' Prayer, and in fact, our prayer (Matthew 6:5-15).

As you study those passages, ask yourself, What is there in these prayers that I need to be praying?
p. 305

(Looking Back, Moving On: Applying Biblical Principles of Freedom to Your Life by
Boyd Luter)

Many of us have bought an understanding of prayer as some kind of 800 number to God for the purpose of ordering whatever we want, free of charge.

With this prevailing mentality, it's no wonder that some pragmatic people tend to give up on prayer when they don't see immediate dividends from their time investment.
p. 108

However, when you're dialing 911 in the middle of a crisis situation, you don't want to be put on hold or told to find help elsewhere. So, I'm sure Paul was hardly elated when he cried out in pain repeatedly to the Lord and the answer kept coming back, "I'm not going to take the thorn away, Paul. It will teach you invaluable lessons about My power and grace." But God did answer Paul by telling him that the thorn was tolerable because he could spell spiritual "relief" in the midst of painful circumstances G-R-A-C-E.

p. 109

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

If we ask according to his revealed will, the unchangeableness of his nature will assure us of the grant; and what a presumption would it be in a creature dependent upon his sovereign, to ask that which he knows he has declared his will against, since there is no good we can want but he hath promised to give, upon our sincere and ardent desire for it.

p. 132

(Success, Motivation, and the Scriptures by William H. Cook)

The person God will choose to use will be the one who has faith and expects results. God is insulted by those who hold a "little God" concept, yet the biggest thing millions ask him to do each day is "bless the food."

Henry Ford said, "Whether or not you think you can, you're right!" I would add, "Whether or not you think God can do it through you, you're right!" If you refuse to honor God enough to believe him for big things, he will go on only blessing your food.

p. 125

"GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD . . ."

Question: What do you get when you cross a praying mantis and a termite?

Answer: A bug that says grace before eating your house.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

DO TWO CHRISTIANS MAKE A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

"Biblical principles for building positive relationships do work--but only if you apply them to your marriage."

These days Christian couples seem to end up in divorce court almost as often as nonbelievers. The writers, who have counseled Christian couples for years, have discovered that part of the reason is that a marriage is not automatically Christian just because the husband and wife have both accepted Christ. Only by applying biblical principles to the relationship can a couple build a healthy marriage that is genuinely Christian.

To start with, couples should realize that it takes three persons to make a marriage Christian--the husband, the wife, and God--like the cord of the three strands in Eccl. 4:12. When stress begins to pull a couple apart, the best way to get the marriage back on track is for them to each take responsibility for their relationship with God.

The dynamic relational principles taught by Jesus need to be applied to the marriage. (1) Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself. As the person closest to you, your spouse certainly qualifies as your neighbor. This kind of love means putting his or her best interest ahead of your own. (2) Having a servant's heart toward each other can revolutionize a marriage. "Jesus washed the disciples' feet. We just want someone to wash the dishes!" (3) The unconditional love that Jesus taught and modeled does not wax and wane like romantic feelings. Real love stands firm even when times get tough. (4) All too often spouses react to superficial issues rather than granting their mate full acceptance as Jesus did with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other outcasts of His day.

The writers advise couples to develop the habit of praying together. At times this can be very difficult, but they have found it helps them get their relationship back on track. It's important for spouses not to compete in praying, e.g., trying to impress each other instead of focusing on God. During the rocky times, they have found that their faith made a significant difference in their relationship in two ways. First, they were able to pray and put their situation in God's hands. The third strand of the cord held steady even when the other two wavered. Secondly, they found their identity and security in Christ rather than in each other, so when the going got rough they were able to pull together and support each other.

"Do two Christians make a Christian marriage?" by Dave and Claudia Arp. Today's Christian Woman, Jan/Feb 1992. Pages 48-50.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

QUICK-QUOTE: PRAYER

"There is nothing that makes us love a person so much as praying for him."

--William Law
(in Praying, May/Jun 1992)

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v.15 And if we are knowing that He is hearing us, whatever we are asking, we are knowing that we are having the requests which we have asked from Him.

What a joy to know that the Lord is hearing us when we pray.

Exodus 22:23

If thou afflict them in any way and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry.

Psalms 34:15

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Jeremiah 32:27

I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

The real problem in unanswered prayer comes when our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways:

James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

When the highest promises are made, God expects they shall be put in suit. Our Saviour joins the promise and the petition together, the promise to encourage the petition, and the petition to enjoy the promise. He doth not say, perhaps it shall be given, but it shall, that is, it certainly shall; your heavenly Father is unchangeably willing to give you those things. We must depend upon his immutability for the thing, and submit to his wisdom for the time. Prayer is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, which dependence could have no firm foundation without unchangeableness. Prayer doth not desire any change in God, but is offered to God that he would confer those things which he hath immutably willed to communicate; but he willed them not without prayer as the means of bestowing them.

p. 132

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT

"Now, Rachel," the doctor informed his patient, "there is absolutely no doubt that you will fully recover."

"But why are you so sure?" replied Rachel. "You said before that this was an extremely serious disease with the odds against me!"

"Quite right," replied the doctor. "My medical guidebook clearly states that eleven out of every twelve patients with your illness succumb to it."

"This doesn't reassure me, Doctor," replied Rachel shakily.

"Oh, well, it should," answered the physician. "You see, you are the twelfth patient I've treated with this disease--and the first eleven died!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

NERVOUS

A gentleman was getting a little nervous after a three-doctor bedside conference. The nurse had to ask one of the doctors to return.

"Do calm yourself down," soothed the doctor. "Why have you gotten so excited?"

"Well, it was all that arguing by you three doctors as to what was wrong with me. No one seems to know what is wrong with me, and I'm worried," answered the patient.

"Oh, don't pay any attention to those other doctors," replied the physician. "They don't know--but I do, and I am positive the autopsy will prove me correct!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v.16 If anyone should see his brother sinning a sin not towards death, he shall ask and He shall give him life--those who are not sinning towards death. There is a sin towards death, not concerning that am I saying that he should make request.

There is "SIN" which leads to "DEATH," and then there is sin which happens in the life of a Christian which is an accident that came in a moment of weakness or frustration. This is what he is meaning here.

He is returning to his thoughts in:

chapter 3:9

Everyone who has been born of God is not practicing sin, because His seed is remaining in him; and he is not able to keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Extending his discussion of prayer with the theme, faith and love, a Christian who truly loves his brother and sister cannot be indifferent to their spiritual needs. Verses 16 and 17 have been much discussed but they should not have occasioned as much difficulty as they have.

Sometimes a Christian may sin so seriously that God judges that sin with swift physical death. That is a sin that leads to death. ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA are cases in point in Acts 5:1-11.

Most of the sins which one sees a Christian brother commit are not of such a nature as their common occurrence shows. For these a believer ought to pray, knowing that any sin, if continued in long enough, is a threat to a fellow Christian's life:

James 5:19, 20;

Proverbs 10:27,

11:19,

13:14,

19:16.

Thus the restoration of a brother may secure a prolonging of his physical life.

This sin which is not towards death is the sin that our advocate Jesus Christ takes care of in:

chapter 2:1, 2

My little children, these things I am writing to you in order that you may not commit an act of sin. And if anyone commits an act of sin, we are continually having one who pleads our case with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. And He Himself is satisfaction for our sins; not for ours only but also for the whole world.

My responsibility with regard to the problem of sin in my life has been spoken about in:

chapter 1:9

If we are confessing our sins, faithful is He and just that He should forgive us our sins, and should cleanse us from every unrighteousness.

Our boldness to come into His presence is even to the point where we can pray for a sinning brother and see him restored in the things of the Lord. John says:

"IF ANYONE SHOULD SEE HIS BROTHER SINNING A SIN, [this refers to a Christian brother] NOT TOWARDS DEATH [because his sin has been forgiven and cleansed by faith in the Lord Jesus] HE SHALL ASK AND HE SHALL GIVE HIM LIFE."

This "LIFE" that is being given is reminding the guilty one of what sin does to our Savior Jesus Christ, and also of our responsibility for maintaining fellowship with the Father by confession of sin which we have committed.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary speaks about the phrase "A SIN NOT TOWARDS DEATH":

All sin ultimately does lead to death (Romans 6:23--"For the wages of sin is death.") This should be understood in the sense "not punished by death." The distinction is between sins for which death is a rapid consequence and sins for which it is not.

There is no need for the word "A" before sin. John was not likely thinking of only one kind of sin. It is not necessary for a Christian to be absolutely sure which flagrant sins are punishable by swift death as long as he can recognize many which are not. He is commanded to pray regarding sins which are not punishable by swift death.

This does not forbid prayer, even in the most serious cases, but naturally in such cases believers will submit their prayers to the will of God. Christians, on the basis of this verse, should be able to pray with confidence.

Van Gorder says:

Several facts about this "sin unto death should be noted: (1) The article "a" is not present in the Greek text. The verse could therefore be rendered, "there is sin unto death." This suggests that John was probably not speaking of one certain sin, but of the continuation of some sin. (2) The verb translated, "sin" in verse 16 is in the present tense, and means "continually sinning." The sin unto death is therefore not a single, isolated act, but one that has been repeated over and over again by the disobedient child of God. (3) The words "if any man see" indicate that it is some overt action, probably affecting the entire assembly of believers. (4) It is definitely the sin of a brother. It is committed by a child of God and therefore concerns the family.

You may be hesitant to admit the possibility of such a sin and ask, "Would God really allow physical death as an extreme chastisement for sin in the life of one of His children?"

pp. 160-61

Dr. Mitchell says:

Scripture states three reasons for the physical death of a Christian:

1. A Christian may die because his work is finished. Paul could say, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Peter wrote, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." Their work was finished.

2. A Christian may die for the glory of God. Jesus told Peter that he would be martyred and that by his death he should glorify God. Numerous martyrs have died for the glory of God.

3. A Christian may die under the chastening hand of God. Paul had a recommendation for dealing with the man in the Corinthian congregation, the man who was living in adultery. He was to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit might be saved. When Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their unbelief in regard to the Lord's Supper, he says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira were chastened with physical death because of their lie. These verses in I John 5 are referring to Christians and speak of a "sin unto death."

I firmly believe it is possible for a Christian to die prematurely under the chastening hand of God. This does not indicate that such a Christian is lost eternally, but it does mean that such a person is robbed of the opportunity of staying on earth as a testimony for the glory of God. None of us wants to leave this world before his work is completed. Yet, Scripture teaches that some Christians die under the chastening hand of God.
pp. 160-61

J. Vernon McGee agrees when he says:

"Death" refers here to physical death. It has no reference at all to spiritual death because the child of God has eternal life. John is saying that believers can commit a sin for which their heavenly Father will call them home; that is, He will remove them from this life physically, perhaps because they are disgracing Him.
p. 819

"THERE IS SIN TOWARDS DEATH, NOT CONCERNING THAT AM I SAYING THAT HE SHOULD MAKE REQUEST."

What is this "SIN UNTO DEATH"?

There is "SIN UNTO DEATH" for the person who is not a Christian, and also for the one who is.

The "SIN UNTO DEATH" for a person who is not a Christian is the rejection of Jesus Christ or the denial that He has come in the flesh to die on the cross for our sins.

The "SIN UNTO DEATH" for the Christian is physical death.

John is writing to Christians and dealing with our fellowship with the Father. I believe he is referring to the same thing that Paul speaks about in:

1 Corinthians 11:30

For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 said one thing and did another. They lied to God, and here sin resulted in physical death.

As long as the Christian hates sin and hates himself for sinning, he is never beyond repentance and forgiveness. "SIN UNTO DEATH" is the state of the man who has listened to sin so often and refused to listen to God that he has come to a state where he loves to sin, where he regards sin as the most important thing in his life.

The "SIN UNTO DEATH" is the Father saying to His sinning child, "If you are going to persist in disobedience, it is better for you to come on home with Me than to remain there on earth, jeopardizing My cause."

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

They would own him in his power, when they stood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress, but they would not imitate him in his holiness.

p. 501

Van Gorder counsels as follows:

Christian friend, if there is sin in your life, right now take the scriptural route and confess that sin. Forsake it, lest it break out in flagrant transgression, bring dishonor to the name of the Lord, and throttle the spiritual power of His church. At all cost avoid the risk of bringing upon yourself divine chastening that could lead, as it did in Corinth, to physical sickness or death. "As obedient children . . . be ye holy in all manner of life" (1 Peter 1:14, 15).

p. 165

v.17 Every unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not towards death.

Once again we do not have the little word "A" occurring in the Greek text. You could simply translate this 17th verse by saying:

"EVERY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN, AND THERE IS SIN NOT TOWARDS DEATH."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This verse affirms that there is genuine scope for the kind of prayer John enjoined in verse 16. There is sin that does not lead swiftly to death. When he prays he is demonstrating his love for his brother and is thus obeying the frequently repeated command of this letter to do so.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Believers who are alive today have all sinned, but we haven't sinned a sin unto death. We did something that was wrong, it was unrighteousness, but God didn't take us home. If He were taking home every believer who sinned, I would have been taken home a long time ago.

p. 820

John still wants to show us that sin is sin, whether we confess it or not.

This sin which "entangles our feet as we run the race" is what he is dealing with here in this portion.

Sin which is committed as an accident by a Christian is not towards death. And the Christian, when the sin is committed, will flee into the Lord's presence to experience confession and repentance in order that fellowship with the Father might be restored.

v.18 We are knowing that everyone who has been born of God is not continually sinning. But He who was born of God is keeping him, and the evil one is not laying hold of him.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary calls these final 4 verses "The Epilogue":

In a brief epilogue, the apostle John sought to reinforce some of the basic truths in his epistle. The "we" which runs throughout 6 times is probably apostolic as it was in the prologue.

In verse 18 John was affirming that anyone "BORN OF GOD" is a person whose true, inward nature is inherently sinless.

The one "WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD" is keeping himself.

A believer's new man, or new self, is fundamentally impervious to sin, and hence, "THE EVIL ONE" is not able to be "LAYING HOLD OF HIM."

Sin is no longer a pattern of life for a Christian.

chapter 3:9

Everyone who has been born of God is not practicing sin, because His seed is remaining in him; and he is not able to keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Sin, as we discovered earlier, for the Christian is an accident rather than a way of life. We have been released from the power of sin by the placing of the new divine nature within--THE SEED OF LIFE.

"BUT HE WHO WAS BORN OF GOD IS KEEPING HIM, AND THE EVIL ONE IS NOT LAYING HOLD OF HIM."

It is possible to translate this phrase:

"BUT HE WHO WAS BORN OF GOD IS KEEPING HIMSELF."

Psalms 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word,

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

"AND THE EVIL ONE IS NOT LAYING HOLD OF HIM."

This phrase could be translated:

"HE IS NOT KINDLING A FIRE."

"HE IS NOT CLINGING TO HIM."

"HE CANNOT HARM HIM."

"HE CANNOT EVEN TOUCH HIM."

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

John 10:28, 29

and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Colossians 3:2

My life is hidden with Christ in God.

Romans 8

Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?

God is keeping us with his dynamic power and restraint of Satan.

John 17:15

I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

J. Vernon McGee says:

As we have seen in this epistle, you and I have two natures: an old nature and a new nature. That new nature will not sin. It never sins but has a desire for God and for the things of God. That old nature will sin, and it is because of it that a believer does sin.
p. 821

Blaiklock says:

"Let us finally," John seems to say, "turn from the dark mysteries of sin, apostasy and perdition, and close with the splendid certainties of the faith which is ours. And let me sum up all I have said to you in three grand assertions." These follow in verses 18, 19, and 20, each introduced by a ringing "we know."

p. 107

Dr. Mitchell says:

There are three divine certainties of victory:

1. The assurance of holiness in verse 18,
2. The assurance of life in verse 19,
3. The assurance of redemption in verse 20.

p. 162

Barclay says:

John draws to the end of his letter with a statement of the threefold Christian certainty.

p. 144

Guy King says:

Let the believer, then, rest his case, take his stand, upon such rock-like foundations, amid all the winds that blow, and the waves that threaten. In the world in which he is situate, he will experience much opposition, and many perplexities; theories and problems will engage his attention, and sometimes even question his Christian belief. There is a fundamental principle which should always keep him steady: Don't let what you know be upset by what you don't know. Resting upon "Thus saith the Lord", he need not quail before what saith the world.

p. 121

Westcott prepares us for the remainder of the epistle by saying:

The thought of sin, of sin among the brethren, of sin unto death, forces the Apostle to recall once more the assurance of faith. In spite of the sad lessons of daily experience he re-affirms the truths which the Christian knows: the privileges of the divine birth (18); the fact of the divine kinsmanship (19); the advance in divine understanding issuing from divine fellowship (20).

The threefold repetition of oidamen, we know (18, 19, 20), gives a rhythmic form to the paragraph.

p. 193

Stott says:

Here are no tentative, hesitant suggestions, but bold, dogmatic, Christian affirmations which are beyond all dispute and which neatly summarize truths already introduced in earlier parts of the Epistle.

p. 191

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

The hell of devils belong to his authority. They have cast themselves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his justice; they have by their revolt forfeited the treasure of his goodness, but cannot exempt themselves from the sceptre of his dominion.

p. 681

This will be a shield against all temptations. God is present, is enough to blunt the weapons of hell; this will secure us from a ready compliance with any base and vile attractives, and curb that head-strong principle in our nature that would join hands with them. The thoughts of this would, like the powerful presence of God with the Israelites, take off the wheels from the chariots of our sensitive appetites, and make them perhaps move slower at least towards a temptation.

p. 178-79

v.19 We are knowing that we are out of God, and the whole world is lying in the power of the evil one.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

They are distinct from the satanically-controlled world system and basically free from its power. They need not listen to worldly ideas:

1 John 3:7, 8

Little children, let no one keep on leading you astray; the one who is doing righteousness is righteous, even as that one is righteous. The one who is doing sin is of the devil; because the devil is sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was made visible, in order that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Nor need they to succumb to worldly desires:

1 John 2:15-17

Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because everything which is in the world, the passionate desire of the flesh, and the passionate desire of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and its passionate desire; but the one who is doing the will of God is abiding forever.

With a message of assurance and certainty, John says:

"WE ARE KNOWING THAT WE ARE OUT OF GOD."

1 John 5:12

The one who is having the Son is having the life; the one who is not having the Son of God is not having the life.

John also draws the contrast of those who do not have the Son and do not have the life. He does that in the final phrase in verse 19:

"AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS LYING IN THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE."

2 Corinthians 4:4

in 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.

John once more points up the opposition between the Father and the world.

Because of His love, however, Christ is the satisfaction not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world--that is, that world that is "LYING IN THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE."

If they will only come to Christ.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

It is in vain to fix our hearts anywhere but on him, in the desire of whom there is a delight, and in the enjoyment of whom there is an inconceivable pleasure.
p. 650

v.20 Now we are knowing that the Son of God has come, and has given to us insight, in order that we may be knowing the truth, and we are in the truth in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This is the grand affirmation of the deity of Christ.

"NOW WE ARE KNOWING THAT THE SON OF GOD HAS COME, AND HAS GIVEN TO US INSIGHT."

The blessed assurance now is that Jesus Christ, God's Son has actually come and He has given us "INSIGHT."

James 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

Psalms 111:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Luke 24:45

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

Ephesians 1:18

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is

the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

We see the tragic contrast in:

Ephesians 4:18, 19

being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

The reason the "SON OF GOD HAS COME, AND HAS GIVEN TO US INSIGHT" is seen in the purpose clause:

"IN ORDER THAT WE MAY BE KNOWING THE TRUTH."

John 8:32

and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

"AND WE ARE IN THE TRUTH IN HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE."

1 John 4:1, 2

Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. In this you are knowing the Spirit of God: every spirit that is confessing Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

"THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE."

Jesus Christ is divine. He is God, and He can provide for us "ETERNAL LIFE."

v.21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Here is John's final warning.

Chapter 2:15

Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. . . .

Chapter 4:1

Beloved, stop believing every spirit, . . .

Now in this passage he says:

"GUARD YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS."

An "IDOL" is anything that takes the devotion which belongs to God for itself.

It can be:

- a home,
- school,
- parents,
- television,
- athletic events,
- anything that comes before God.

It is our responsibility to keep our hearts for the true God and eternal life rather than the "IDOL."

Exodus 32:1-8

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool.

Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

John 2:14-16

And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise."

Acts 17:6

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols.

Acts 17:23

For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

"Dear children, or born ones, guard yourselves from idols." Any moral compromise with worldly perspectives was likely to lead to some involvement with idolatry.

Stott says:

The worship of idols, unreal and dead, is inconsistent and incompatible with that knowledge of the true God, which is eternal life, just as sin and selfishness are incompatible with the knowledge of God who is light and love. It is this incompatibility, this incongruity, of sin, lovelessness and error with the true Christian, which is the underlying theme of the Epistle.

p. 197

Barclay says:

The Christian must never be lost in the illusions of pagan religion; the Christian must never erect in his heart an idol which will take the place of God; the Christian must keep himself from the infections of all false faiths; and he can do so only when he walks with Christ.

p. 148

Dr. Mitchell says:

Is there anything or anybody that takes the place of Christ in your heart? In your devotion? Do you have any ambitions which displace Him in your heart?

The very first verse in the Bible says, "In the beginning God." If Dr. Westcott, the eminent Bible scholar, is correct, then the last verse of the Bible to be written is: "Keep yourselves from idols." The whole Bible between the first verse and this last verse reveals in type, in shadow, in experience, in reality that the heart of God is displayed to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

He is the way to the Father.

He is the truth that sets us free.

He is the life that brings us into relationship with the living God.

p. 167

J. Vernon McGee says:

Anything that stands between Christ and the believer is an idol. John says that you are to keep yourself from the things of the world which occupy your mind and your attention. Covetousness is idolatry; other things are idolatry. Many people are worshiping many things in this wicked world today. These things are nothing in the world but idols.

p. 821

Van Gorder says:

An idol is anything and everything that draws the affection and devotion of the heart and soul away from the Lord Jesus Christ. What a tender plea from the apostle! "Little children, keep [guard] yourselves from idols."

Anything that creeps into the affections or usurps the decisions of the heart--that unique place that belongs to Him alone--is an idol. Dear fellow believer, let nothing of the world grip you and hold you and dominate you until your mind and thoughts are subject to it.

p. 174

A NEW PASTORAL CONVERSATION MODEL

"Since God's love and power is the answer to unhelpful guilt, anxiety, boredom, and alienation, the continuance of these distressing feelings is the result of our clinging to idols."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

IS IT AN IDOL?

According to a Nielsen survey of television viewing habits, women over 55 average almost 36 hours in front of the tube each week. Children under 6 watch 27 hours in the same period. In the average American household, the television is on for 6 hours and 44 minutes a day. One media journalist suggested that if someone from another planet wanted to beam a message to earth and reach the largest possible audience, he should interrupt a situation comedy on Sunday night in November between 8:30 and 9 o'clock. At that time nearly 100 percent of the households that own a TV have their set in operation. Just think, during some evenings the residences of almost any street in the United States have one thing in common--a bluish-white glow flickering in the windows!

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

IS YOUR LABOR IN THE WAY?

If Demetrius had been a modern-day labor leader in our time, his plight would very likely have received international attention. The evening news report might have sounded something like this: "Police donned riot gear in Ephesus today to control an angry mob of workers. Although confusion dominated the scene, a few things are clear. The commotion was initiated by members of a local silversmiths union. They contend that the rapidly growing Jesus sect known as 'the Way' is creating a serious threat to the economic and religious interests of the community. A spokesman for the group said that a radical named Paul is spreading separatist doctrine that could hurt the tourist traffic to the temple of Diana. This would cut down the sale of silver idols, a trade affecting the livelihood of many local craftsmen."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

With the hymn writer we can sing:

"Whiter Than Snow"

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
 I want Thee forever to live in my soul.
 Break down ev'ry idol, cast out ev'ry foe.
 Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

(The New Church Hymnal, 1976, Lexicon Music, Inc., #459)

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Fellowship with the Father is an indication of salvation.

LESSON #2: You can know that you are having eternal life.

LESSON #3: We can have boldness in prayer when we are asking according to His will.

LESSON #4: Sin which is not unto death is an accident on the part of the believer and a fruitage of his old nature.

LESSON #5: Sin must be dealt with in the heart of the believer by confession and repentance so that fellowship can be restored.

LESSON #6: Sin unto death is physical death for the believer who persists along the pathway of sin.

LESSON #7: The new divine nature within the believer is indeed sinless.

LESSON #8: Satan's only entrance to us is through us our old nature.

LESSON #9: The whole world is the evil one's domain.

LESSON #10: The Son of God has come, and He has opened our eyes and given us insight so that we can choose to walk in the light.

LESSON #11: We are in the truth in His Son, Jesus Christ.

LESSON #12: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

(Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential for Excellence
by Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphey)

After the presentation, someone said, "But, it was dangerous, wasn't it? The patient might have died."

"Sure, it's a dangerous procedure," he said, "but look at the alternative if we do nothing."
p. 68

(Victory through Surrender by E. Stanley Jones)

In a close human friendship eventuating in a real marriage there are these five actual stages:

1. The stage of drawing near. This is the Yes and No stage. It is the tentative, explorative stage. You want to and you don't want to, you blow hot and cold. The self is afraid to commit itself and yet it wants to commit itself. It is tired of this self-isolation and yet it hesitates [to] give it up, afraid of change.

2. Then comes the stage of mental decision--the mind is made up. The mind no longer debates, it decides. There may be marginal questions, but the center has given way, given way to decision. The debate becomes a voice: I'm going to belong to that other person. Mentally you are on the march, a march out of the old into the new.

3. Now we are ready for the stage of passing from the decision to action, to doing it. You actually inwardly let go, you belong to that person. Nothing is weighed out or measured, nothing that the eye can see, but down deep you belong to that person. The tension has turned into trust and the trust has turned to entrustment, you entrust yourself to that other person, to sink or swim for life or death, to survive or perish. It is done.

4. Then you pass into the stage of inner unity. Having given to that other person the most precious thing you have--yourself--you are now free to take from the other the most precious thing he or she has, the self. A mutual acceptance of selves takes place. You belong, unconditionally. Now love springs up and becomes the atmosphere, the climate, the motivating of the relationship. Love guides the actions, the planning, the directing of two lives together.

That love relationship continues as long as there is self-surrender at the basis of the relationship. But if either one withholds the self, then love refuses to spring up, or if it has sprung up it dims or dies.

5. The stage that ensues is one of continuous mutual adjustment of mind to mind, of will to will, of being to being by continuous mutual self-surrender. The big self-surrender is made when you are married inwardly and outwardly. That doesn't have to be done over again, in a real marriage it is once and for all.

pp. 105-7

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

God owes nothing to the holiest creature; what he gives is a present from his bounty, not the reward of the creature's merit.

p. 536

LIVING CLOSE TO JESUS

In the 17th century a bishop named Francois de Fenelon wrote these instructive words regarding our relationship to the Lord: "Tell Him all that is in your heart like one who unloads his pent-up feelings to a dear friend. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subjects on which to converse. They do not struggle for something to say, they just talk out of the abundance of their love. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with Him."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

J. C. Ryle declares, "If you are to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must pray more, for prayer is a shield to the soul. I was reminded of this when I visited Sheffield, England. The needle grinders there always wear a magnetic mouthpiece at their work to trap all the fine dust that flies around them. This prevents it from entering their lungs, and so saves their lives. Prayer, in a sense, is such a device. You must use it continually and properly. Otherwise, you will never work successfully for the Lord, or remain uninjured in the unhealthy spiritual atmosphere that surrounds you."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

We have been talking about:

"FELLOWSHIP IS AN INDICATION OF SALVATION."

The questions that come to us at this time are:

Do you know Jesus Christ personally?

Does He live in your life, and, as a result of that relationship have you experienced the joy of fellowship with Him?

Are there any idols that are keeping you from this fellowship?

Is there a misplaced love and communion?

Is there a faulty love and belief?

It was Bill Bright who said in his book Revolution Now:

Some years ago I became aware of a young coed who is now my wife. I thought she was the most wonderful young woman in the world. And as I became better acquainted with her, I fell in love with her and she with me. But we were not married just because we admired each other or because we loved each other. It was not until one day we stood before a minister and exchanged vows, I said to her, "I do, until death do us part;" and she said to me, "I do, until death do us part." And in that moment, because of the two words, "I do" we became husband and wife. Two words "I do" changed the course of our lives. She left her home and I left mine and we started a third home. Now there was no display of emotion when I said, "I do." The walls didn't shake and the lightning didn't flash. There was no roar of thunder. I did not feel like jumping up and clicking my heels. As a matter of fact, I felt a little numb. But we were married nonetheless. Those two words did it. She marched down the aisle on my arm, Mrs. William R. Bright. You know, I have not proposed to her since. I have told her that I love her thousands of times, but one wedding ceremony is sufficient. My love for her has grown through the years since that moment when we said I do. So it is with Christ, if you have never said to Christ, "I do receive you as my Saviour," or if you have asked Christ into your life scores or even hundreds of times, may I encourage you to do so right now. Ask Christ for the final, the very last time to come into your life and then on the authority of his promise thank him that he has come. He will not lie to you. Millions have received him. Their lives have been changed as a result. After you have received him, never ask him into your life again. The rest of your life you thank him that he is there, for his promise is to never leave you nor forsake you.

Perhaps you are a Christian out of fellowship, and these studies have pointed up a need for you to restore that fellowship by the confession of sin and the obedience to the word.

Luke 19:42

"Eternal peace was within your reach and you turned it down," He wept. "And now it is too late. You have rejected the opportunity God offered you."

I see a pierced hand reaching down and resting upon you. I hear a gentle voice pleading. It seems as though the Spirit of God is bent on making one last effort to impress His will upon you, a will that means only your good.

Jeremiah 6:16

This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

HOW TO LOOK LIKE JESUS

Saintly Dr. A. J. Gordon of Boston often told the little incident of what he called "the greatest compliment I ever received." Standing in one of the Boston streets gazing through a store window, he became conscious of a tug upon his trouser leg. Turning, he looked down upon a bright little girl gazing at him with a look almost of worship.

His heart went out to her as he stooped down. "Yes, my dear, what can I do for you?" he asked.

She paused for a long moment looking at him. When she spoke, it was in the form of a question. And what a question! The little girl, gazing into his soft, warm eyes, wished to know, "Mister, are you Jesus?"

I don't know how this story strikes you. To be mistaken for the Lord Jesus is surely the greatest compliment a Christian could receive. It marks out our true business here on earth--to manifest and magnify Him. I was convicted of my own failure in the light of this clear, underlying truth. Over and over I asked the question, "How does a Christian get to look like the Lord Jesus?"

I made it a matter of prayer asking the Lord to reveal the secret of it from a totally unexpected source!

I had been invited to attend a golden wedding anniversary party. It was a gala evening. The children and relatives and friends gathered with joy to "wish them well." I remember so well standing to one side with a friend watching the charming, graceful couple who had traveled the road of life together in such fine fashion. Then my friend made a chance remark. For me the remark fell as a directed message from the Lord.

"Look at them," he said softly. "Why, they have been living together for so long that they have gotten to look like each other."

That was it--the secret, the answer. They were living together in every blessed sense, loving each other deeply sharing to the fullest measure, veiling nothing. It was little wonder that they had grown to resemble each other.

Is that not the best way in which we may live so as to magnify and manifest the Lord Jesus Christ? We must walk in sweet communion with Him. We must seek nothing apart from His will. We must have all things moved, melted and molded to the sensitive pattern of Jesus only. This is the whole sweet secret.

Only it is not a secret in the sense of being hidden and mysterious. For the Holy Spirit is always trying to teach and lead us into the truth. Said one who had well learned the blessedness of this, "That I may know him . . ." (Phil. 3:10), "For to me to live is Christ . . ." (Phil. 1:21), "Yet not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

--Edwin Raymond Anderson--

STUDY #12 - 1 John 5:13-21

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