

1st John Lesson 21 – Keep Yourselves From Idols

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not [he does not habitually sin as a lifestyle]; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

John is drawing his epistle to its conclusion. Based on everything he has written as a witness of what he heard and saw of Jesus more than fifty years ago John writes;

1. Those born of God's spirit do not live in habitual sin as a lifestyle.
2. They have been given power to "keep themselves" from sin because they have the light of life within them.
3. The wicked one can tempt them, but he cannot force them to do anything.

The word "toucheth" is G680 haptomai – The first meaning is "to attach oneself to."

Does that remind you of Pastor Dave teaching about how the devil comes to believers sniffing around looking for handles he can grab hold of? He is looking for an unmortified handle of flesh where he can "attach" himself to you in order to cripple your walk as a son of God. He even tried that one last time with Jesus right before the cross,

John 14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

What does that mean when Jesus says the prince of this world cometh, and "hath nothing in me"? Does that mean Jesus was not tempted?

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

His body was not free of "temptation." His body was kept in a constant state of mortification by ... he ... the begotten spirit man of God that is the real him ... "he" keepeth "himself" ... and the devil has no access to any handle of the flesh as long as "he" keepeth "himself."

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

When John says "he" in the above verse, he is talking about the reborn human spirit when a person is born again. That spirit has the nature of righteousness and it knows when it is being tempted to sin. When the temptation to sin comes, it is the responsibility of the reborn spirit man ... "he" ... to keep "himself" ... to mortify the deeds of the body. This is how Jesus lived every day. This is how he kept His flesh on the cross every day. By the righteousness of His nature, He said NO to every temptation.

Every mature Christian lives this way. Even the apostle Paul, after being a Christian for many years and after having established many churches (such as the one at Corinth) said,

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

"I keep under my body" is the same thing that John writes **"he keepeth himself."**

This is not will worship. Will worship is what is seen by the unregenerate man in Romans chapter seven. That natural man who has not been born of God, who sets his will to keep God's law, but has no nature to keep it. That is trying to live holy by man's effort. No man could do it because he was spiritually dead. That was the whole reason for the need of a new species of human ... new creatures spiritually reborn in the image of God.

John has been laying this foundation throughout the whole epistle leading up to these climatic verses. John is saying we are a whole new species of "he" who has been empowered by God's grace to "keep himself" from sin. John is not talking about a "he" born of Adam. This is a "he" born of God. Sin has no dominion over this "he" born of God and there is nothing the devil can do to make him sin as long as his mind yields to the truth of God ... "I have been made free from sin."

Let's take a quick look at the highlights of John's epistle leading to this conclusion.

1. God is light.
2. You are a child of light.
3. You walk as a child of light.
4. We love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.
5. Now we are the sons of God.
6. We walk as He walked.
7. As He is, so are we, in this world.
8. We keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
9. We walk as the sons of God we truly are.
10. Our mind is renewed and we always yield to Christ in us.
11. We that are born of God KEEP OURSELVES and the wicked one touches us not!

It's not that the wicked one won't continually try your ground. He'll come sniffing around looking for handles just like he did with Jesus, but as we mature we increasingly mortify every handle and we become that "greased pole" like at the county fair that nobody can get a good grip on. Satan has nothing in us ... no handles he can "attach" himself to. **We, who are born of God, keep ourselves.** We keep our bodies under and bring them into subjection. How? By will worship? No, by the power of the reborn "he" ... the son of God we truly are.

Our mind is no longer carnal. Our mind no longer agrees with the flesh. We agree with God. The Son has made us free and we are free indeed. Flesh, The reborn "I" ... keeps you under. The reborn "I" ... brings you into subjection. The reborn "I" ... mortifies you! It is "through the spirit" ... through the "he" that is begotten of God ... that the deeds of the body are mortified. **The Holy Spirit is not begotten of God ... you are. You, the born again you, keeps your body under the same way Paul did. The same way Jesus did. The same way every mature Christian does.**

1 John 5:19 *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. [Greek = lieth in the power of the wicked one.]*

You could say about all the people of the world ... "Handles are us!" That's what John is saying. Every unregenerate human on earth has the "spirit of the world" in them from birth. They are "flesh creatures" going somewhere to sin. There are many man-made religions that are designed to rein in the flesh, but they are all doomed to fail because of that fatal flaw in mankind ... the sin nature every human is born with.

Only this new species, born again Christians ... those who have been reborn of God in their spirit, those who no longer have the spirit of the world living within them ... they are the only ones who are truly free from the dominion of the wicked one.

Matthew 5:13-16 *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

We are lights in a dark world. We are to let our light shine in order to draw men unto the light of Christ, so they too can believe and become children of God. We are God's hope in the earth. We are the only body Jesus has on the earth to live through. We are vessels

for His life to be made manifest once more to draw all men unto Himself.

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

And we know that the Son of God is come: Throughout this epistle John has layered evidence upon evidence, truth upon truth, to make sure we all know ... Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. With all of this evidence, we "know" ... we don't just have knowledge of it ... we "know." This is the kind of knowledge pastor Dave would say, "*They can't beat it out of you with rifle butts.*" No amount of persecution will ever get you to deny that Jesus is the Son of God who saved you with His own blood. As I meditate what John is writing I can't help but remember something else this same John wrote in the book of Revelation;

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.* Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And hath given us an understanding: It is one thing to have knowledge of something. It is another thing to have "understanding" based on that knowledge. Think of the thousands of people who have knowledge that Jesus died on the cross as the Son of God. Yet, without understanding the things John has revealed in this letter, many ... MANY ... of them do not understand. This causes them to not know they have been made free from sin. Think of the Jewish people who are taught the Old Testament scriptures from childhood. They have "knowledge" of them ... but that does not mean they "understand" them and how all scripture points to Jesus. Here is a perfect example given by Jesus,

Luke 24:36-47 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, **Peace be unto you.** (37) But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. (38) And he said unto them, **Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?** (39) **Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.** (40) And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet. (41) And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, **Have ye here any meat?** (42) And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. (43) And he took *it*, and did eat before them. (44) And he said unto them, **These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.** (45) Then opened he their

understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, **Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

He "opened their understanding." The Holy Spirit opens our understanding. Thank God for Pastor Dave Roberson who taught us about the Holy Spirit's ministry to explain the mysteries of God to us. [Side note ... how little this is preached today ... "Repentance AND remission of sins." Usually the modern gospel only preaches "remission of sins." But there is no remission of sins without repentance first.]

John has written his epistle in such a way that we not only have knowledge now, but we have an UNDERSTANDING of the purpose of the gospel. We are no longer sinners born of the world. Now we are the sons of God born of His Spirit. We are children of the light who no longer walk in darkness. As He is, so are we, in this world. We walk as He walked. We are salt and light to the world. We UNDERSTAND we are only on temporary assignment to this world. We are in the world, but not part of the world. WE UNDERSTAND!

That we may know him that is true; Remember ... this is the very definition of eternal life. Many people know religions of various kinds. There is no life in them. Many people know about Christianity and even call themselves Christians while living the same as the world. There is no life in them either. There is no life in knowing "about" Christianity. There is only one way to have that eternal life ... and that is to KNOW HIM that is true.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

And we are in him that is true;

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6:14-15 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

This is the message of John's epistle, to give us knowledge and understanding that we are not of this world. We are new creatures. We are sons of God, lights to the world, new creatures made in the image of Christ, whose life has been imparted to us and whose light we let shine in the darkness of the world. We are not to love the world or the things in the world.

Just as surely as you were at one time "in Adam" and were a child of the world, so now you are "in Christ" and are a son of God. This is not about legalism and rules and regulations. This is about the truth that you are a new creature, a son of God, and the epistle is written so that you will simply walk as the son of God He has made you.

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Why do you think John waited until the very last sentence of this epistle to make this statement? It is not a side thought. It is not a PS ... it is not an afterthought that he thought of just before sending out the letter. No, this is the purpose of the entire epistle. Everything John has written has been toward this conclusion, and here is why; Can you picture, in your wildest imagination, Jesus ever bowing down to an idol? The point is ... if you cannot imagine Him doing it, then never allow yourself to do it because of ... who you are as a son of God. I will repeat the list I read earlier;

1. God is light.
2. You are a child of light.
3. You walk as a child of light.
4. We love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.
5. Now we are the sons of God.
6. We walk as He walked.
7. As He is, so are we, in this world.
8. We keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
9. We walk as the sons of God we truly are.
10. Our mind is renewed and we always yield to Christ in us.
11. We that are born of God KEEP OURSELVES and the wicked one touches us not!

But now, at the conclusion of the letter, let us add one more to the list;

12. I bow before no idol. I serve my Lord Christ alone.

It took me a while to see the connection John was really making between our keeping ourselves and the wicked one touches us not ... and keeping ourselves from idols.

Notice how similar these two phrases are:

He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one touches him not.

Keep yourselves from idols.

Those flesh handles are how the enemy is able to "touch" you ... by "attaching" himself to one of those handles and crippling your walk as a son of God on earth.

**EVERY UNMORTIFIED FLESH HANDLE "YOU" ALLOW TO REMAIN
REPRESENTS AN IDOL YOU ARE STILL BOWING DOWN TO!**

You have to remember who it is that wrote this epistle. This is the John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. John is the one we call, "The Apostle of Love." JOHN LOVED JESUS when he was a young man. You cannot read this letter without knowing, JOHN LOVES JESUS as an old man.

John cannot imagine knowing Jesus without loving Jesus. He cannot imagine loving Jesus without being willing to do whatever Jesus says. John's life has belonged to Jesus since the day he first met him. John loved Jesus even before he was born again. When he was still known as a son of Zebedee ... one of the "sons of thunder," John loved Jesus.

Of all the disciples, only John was at the cross when they crucified Him. John was not willing to hide in fear for his life like the other disciples. John said earlier in this epistle, God first loved us. Jesus loved John first. But John truly loved Jesus and he was there at the cross ... I weep as I write ... John wanted Jesus to see from the cross at least one friend there ... at least one of His disciples willing to be there ... willing to die with Him if need be. John loved, and still loves, Jesus. His life belonged to Jesus then. His life belongs to Jesus some fifty years later, as he writes this epistle.

This is Christianity. This is the real deal. This love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost is how the world will know that we are His disciples. You cannot truly love Jesus without loving the people that He died for. You cannot love Jesus and not do what He says to do. He is our first love, more than anything else that exists. No idol, no gratification of the flesh, nothing this world has to offer, no riches, no glory, no comfort, nothing else deserves our love and our worship more than Him.

An idol is an image representing a false God. Many today worship an idol they have made in their mind of "another Jesus" instead of the true Son of God who came to save us. They have remade the true Christ into "another Jesus," an idol made in their own

image. It is "another Jesus" that allows their worldly lifestyle as they spend their lives bowing down to all sorts of idols ... not realizing they are doing exactly what the "wicked one" tempted Jesus to do in the wilderness. Satan said to Jesus,

Luke 4:7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

John is concluding his letter with the strongest possible language ... DO NOT BOW!
Love Jesus Christ. Serve Jesus Christ alone.

YOU ARE A SON OF GOD!

DO NOT BOW!

KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS!