



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

1. John Concludes His First Letter (1 Jn. 5:13-21; cf. Jn. 20:30-31)
 - a. "In both [John's Gospel (Jn. 20:30-31) & first letter (1 Jn. 5:20)] the purpose includes reference to what has been written, belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, & the possession of eternal life. The difference reflects the different purposes of the letter & the Gospel. **The Gospel has an evangelistic purpose** (that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ & so have eternal life), whereas **the purpose of the letter is to reassure those who are already believers** (that you may know that you have eternal life)." (Colin Kruse, *The Pillar NT Commentary: 1, 2, & 3 John* , p. 157)
 - b. "In this final section of 1 John (vv. 13-21), things we can know continue to dominate the conversation. Seven times the word 'know' appears. **Christianity is not an 'I hope so' or 'I think so' faith. It is an 'I know so' faith because what has been revealed in the Bible was given to us by God** , a God who speaks & a God who speaks only truth. As John brings his letter to a close, what is it, in particular, that God wants every child of His to know?" (Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John* , p. 160)
 - c. "The apostle John tells us it is possible to have eternal life, the very life of God, & yet have doubts. However, ... **He wants us to have assurance** ." (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 161)
2. We Can Know We Have Eternal Life (1 Jn. 5:13; Jn. 3:18) – Jn wants to bolster & reassure their faith
 - a. "1 John [5:13-21] conveys the author's intent to **bolster his readers' faith & to leave them reassured** of their standing with God." (Clifton Black, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: 1, 2, & 3 John* , p. 861)
 - b. "The author's purpose in writing...is that 'you may know that you have eternal life'. **His readers had been disturbed by the denials & claims of the secessionists** . These people denied important elements of the message the readers had embraced at the beginning. They also claimed to be recipients of special revelation through the Spirit to which the readers were not privy. **The readers' assurance had been shaken by these denials & claims** , & the author's primary reason for writing the letter was to **bolster their assurance by counteracting the false teaching** of the secessionists." (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit* , p. 157)
3. We Know That God Answers Prayer (1 Jn. 5:14-17) – vv. 14-15 petitions, vv. 16-17 intercessions
 - a. Those in relationship with God can have confidence before him & especially in their prayer
 - a. "When we know that **we have eternal life** , needless to say, **we can go before the Lord with confidence** (vv. 14-15). We know that if we ask anything according to God's will, he hears those prayers & will answer them." (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* , p. 2324)

- b. “[Verses 14-15] are linked with 5:13 by the conjunction ‘and’,...The presence of the conjunction suggests that the author wants to say that, **along with assurance of eternal life, believers also experience confidence in their relationship with God &, in particular, confidence in prayer.**” (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit* , p. 157)
- b. Ask according to God’s will (v. 14)
- a. “George Mueller (1805–1898) was a great man of prayer who refused a regular salary & financial support for himself or the ministries he led. A leader of the Christian Brethren movement, Mueller said, **‘Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness’** (Be Real, 179). Therefore nothing we ask for lies beyond the power of God except that which lies beyond His will, His purpose, His plan.” (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 162)
- c. Ask knowing that God hears & answers (v. 15)
- a. “**How does confidence that God hears us amount to our having what we ask?** To properly ask of God, one must always submit to his perfect & omniscient will. Even Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prayed, ‘not as I will, but as you will’ (Matt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk. 22:42). Since in any given situation we may not know whether what we’re asking is in God’s will, whenever it seems God has not answered, we must receive that in the confidence of knowing we were heard. We do have what we ask according to his will even if his will is ‘No’ or ‘Not yet’.” (Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT: 1, 2, & 3 John* , pp. 302-3)
- b. “Symptomatic of [the] certitude [in these verses] is the community’s engagement in prayer... **Believers may adopt a frankness toward God ... if God ‘hears’ whatever we ask, then we ‘receive’ what we have asked for.**” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , p. 861)
- c. “In prayer we have petitioned a hearing from God; what we receive is, by definition, God’s reply to that petition & the confirmation that God has, indeed, heard us... **1 Jn. 5:15 is...formulated in terms of faith’s knowledge** : & if ‘we know’ that he hears... ‘we know’ that we have. In trusting alignment with God’s will, the church is sure that its prayers both ‘are’ (not should be) heard & ‘are’ (not will be) fulfilled.” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , p. 862)
- d. For whom should we intercede? (vv. 16-17)
- a. “We come now to remarks about sin mortal & not mortal, about those for whom one should & should not pray – comments, which have predictably stirred up a mare’s-nest of interpretive debate.” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , p. 862)
- b. “John now addresses the issue of **sins that his readers may see others commit**. Verse 16 is perhaps the most troubling to new readers of the NT, for it immediately raises the question, ‘What is the sin that leads to death?’ & the second quickly follows, ‘Have I committed, or could I commit, this sin?’...It is ironic that [this] verse shakes some readers’ confidence in their salvation, since John’s purpose is to reassure his readers of their eternal life.” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 303)
- c. “First, John addresses a brother who is ‘sinning a sin’ not leading to death. Then he addresses someone whose sin ‘brings death.’ **The crucial question is this: Is John speaking of physical death or spiritual death?** ... **John has spiritual death in mind & two different persons in view** . Thus his argument is that brothers & sisters in Christ can fall into sin, but their salvation & spiritual death is not at stake because they have Christ as their atonement & advocate & they believe in Him for eternal life.” (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 163)
- a. A believer committing sin that doesn’t lead to spiritual death? Yes!
- a. “**John instructs his readers about what they are to do when they see a Christian brother or sister sinning a sin that does not lead to death. They are to pray for that sinner** . John recognizes here that some of his readers will sin in various ways, & he puts some responsibility on the members of the congregation for the spiritual health of the church.” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 304)
- b. “**If you see [a brother or sister] in sin, don’t talk first to others about them** , which would be gossip. **Talk first to God about them** . Pray for **their restoration** because this is always God’s will. Pray to the Lord & He will **give life** ; He will restore the joy & vitality of their salvation since their sins do not & cannot lead to spiritual death.” (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 163)
- c. “**Sometimes it has been assumed that believers are also in danger of committing sins [that lead to death] & so losing the eternal life that God has given them** . However, as far as the author is concerned, **believers cannot commit sins which lead to death** ...When speaking about ‘sin that leads to death’...John does not have physical death in mind, for all sinners are susceptible to physical death because of sin. **What he has in mind is spiritual death** , that failure to experience eternal life which is the privilege of those who believe in the Son of God.” (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit* , pp. 159-60)
- d. “1 John 5:13-17 is a testimony of hope...Prayer, for John, is not a form of abracadabra or self-interested manipulation. **Prayer** , rather, **is a force that promotes restorative life** , bestowed on us by a mercifully responsive God (5:16). In intercession for their brothers & sisters, **Christians actually participate in Christ’s Priestly Ministry of atonement for the world** (2:1-2; 5:16-17). More obviously, **prayer molds the one who prays** . It quells impertinent self-assertion, timidity, & apprehension, redirecting us toward alignment with God’s will, confidence that God has heard us, & knowledge that ‘all we ask of him is ours’...Prayer in 1 John,...is enacted in the faith that a genuine conversation between God & humanity occurs, out of which God gives shape to the future.” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , pp. 863-4)
- a. “If anyone...”
- a. “John begins with a general condition, ‘if’ (not a condition of fact), & the indefinite pronoun ‘anyone’. **The exhortation applies to any or all of his readers at any future time who happen to see a brother or sister sinning.**” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 304)
- b. Sin that does not lead to death are observable sins
- a. “‘a sin that does not lead to death’. Note that **whatever sins are in view, they are observable to others** . These are not hidden sins of the heart, but sins that are committed in ways others can perceive.” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 304)
- b. “**When his readers see fellow believers committing a sin, the author says they are to pray for them** . The fact that the readers may ‘see’ a fellow believer fall into sin indicates that the sin is observable, not some internal attitude.” (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit* , p. 158)

- c. God will give life
 - a. “[**I**]f the sinner is a fellow believer, don’t they already have eternal life (Jn. 5:24)? Does this mean that they’ve somehow **lost it by sinning**? The future tense of ‘will give’ does not mean that the sinner doesn’t have eternal life already, but reflects the fact that eternal life is still a future reality. Therefore, it **expresses a reassurance that sin that does not lead to death will not disqualify a sinning believer from eternal life when they pass from this life**. This is not to say that the eternal life of a sinning believer depends on the prayers of others, but that dealing with sin in the church is a corporate responsibility.” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 305)
 - b. “This promise of life for those who sin is restricted to the case where the person involved is a believer who has committed ‘a sin that does not lead to death’, something the author reiterates when he adds: **I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death** . The ‘**sin that does not lead to death**’ is **the sin believers commit & for which forgiveness has been secured by the atoning sacrifice of Christ** (cf. 1:9; 2:1–2). For this reason, the author is quite confident that prayer for the restoration of a repentant believer will be answered, ‘& God will give him life.’” (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit* , p. 158) “
 - c. Verse 16a focuses...on a particular case: request made on behalf of a community member who commits a sin that is ‘not toward death’. For such sinners, intercession may be made. Indeed, it must be made, since ‘all wrongdoing is sin’ (v. 17). In response to that prayer, life is given, ultimately... by God.” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , p. 862)

4. The Sin Unto Death

- a. Rejecting Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Secessionist view)
 - a. “The ‘**sin unto death**’ likely refers to the **secessionists**’ rejection of Jesus as the Son of God, which, for the author, places them outside of salvation” (Raymond Brown, *Epistles of John*, p. 617).
 - b. “For the Elder, [John] the sin that leads to death seems to be identified with **the refusal to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God** , a belief the schismatics had forsaken .” (Judith Lieu, *Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, p. 195).
 - c. “The sin unto death is a willful & persistent rejection of the revealed truth about Christ... **It corresponds to the behavior of the secessionists** , who had left the Johannine community & propagated false teachings” (Stephen Smalley, 1, 2, 3 *John*, p. 299).
 - d. “John may well have in mind here **those who were once part of the Christian fellowship, but who have turned away in a decisive & permanent way, as seen with the secessionists** .” (Robert W. Yarbrough, 1–3 *John*, p. 316).
- b. Should we pray for those who rejected faith in Jesus & left?
 - a. “**Is John being hard-hearted by instructing prayer only for those whose sin does not lead to death?** At the time John wrote, it is **likely he was referring to those who had left his church(es)** as committing the sin that leads to death (2:19). They **denied that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh** , **denied that he came in both water & blood, & thereby denied the significance of his atoning death** . They had put themselves beyond the fellowship of apostolic Christian belief, & therefore John is focusing his pastoral attention on strengthening the fellowship of those who remain. There is no point in interceding for the sins of those who persist in beliefs about Jesus that prevent them from receiving God’s forgiveness. John simply says, ‘I am not saying that you should pray about the sin that leads to death.’ He does not forbid praying for those who have left the church & are still in need of God’s transforming grace in Christ; that is just not the situation he is addressing here.” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , pp. 308-9)
 - b. “In the context of 1 John, **the sin that leads to death must be related to the statement in 5:12** , ‘The one who has the Son has life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have life’ & is therefore on the path that leads to death... **Sin that leads to death is that which excludes one from the realm of life, sin that prevents one from having the Son** .” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 307)
 - c. “Those whose sins do not lead to death commit sins ‘unwittingly & which do not involve rejection of God & his way of salvation. The sinner is overcome by temptation against his will; he still wants to love God & his neighbor, he still believes in Jesus Christ, he still longs to be freed from sin.’ **The [person] who is sinning the sin that leads to death has a heart that has not been transformed by the new birth. Despite their self-identification as a Christian & their presence in the gatherings of the church(es)** , they have refused to believe in Jesus Christ, to follow God’s commands, & to love their brothers & sisters. As Kruse suggests, ‘**the sin that does not lead to death is the sin of the believer...the sin that does lead to death is most likely that of the unbeliever.**’ Scholer also emphasizes that ‘the sin not unto death is one which a believer can & does commit & the sin unto death is one which a believer does not & cannot commit.’” (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 308)
 - d. “**What is a sin toward or not toward death?** ...If we seek clues from elsewhere in 1 John, at least two possibilities emerge. (1) In 3:14-15 the refusal to love, or hatred for one’s brother is equivalent to dwelling in death. This interpretation is favored among patristic & medieval commentators...(2) If...a deathward sin is committed by one ‘outside’ the community, beyond the purview of eternal life...then the sin heading toward death maybe an outright denial of Jesus...This interpretation is held by a majority of modern interpreters. It presupposes the theology of [John’s Gospel], who describes **sin as a refusal to believe Jesus’ testimony** (Jn. 8:24; 5:22; 16:8-9).” (Clifton Black, *Op Cit* , p. 862)
 - e. “It may be that there’s no satisfactory resolution of the tension between 2:1 & 3:6-9. However, if we recognize the connection between sin & anomia [‘lawlessness’ CSB] (rebellion) in 3:1-10, we might say that **the sin which distinguishes the children of the devil is the sin of the devil, rebellion or anomia, & it is this sin that it is impossible for believers to commit because God’s ‘seed’ remains in them & they cannot commit it** .” (Colin G. Kruse, *Letters of John* , p. 132)
 - a. Roman Catholic theology of mortal (unpardonable) & venial (pardonable) sin (see Appendix)

5. We Know We Are Born of God & Have Victory Over Sin & the Evil One (1 Jn. 5:18-19)

- a. "1 John draws to a close with a capsule restatement of **three** of the epistles **primary topics** : the believer's **moral life** (5:18), the believer's **God-given identity** (5:19), & the **identity of Jesus, in whose truth the believer resides** (5:20)... **The epilogue is a compressed series of assertions, each introduced by 'we know' ...**" (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 864)
- b. "Like the epistle overall, this conclusion is obviously **intended to bolster the community's confidence** ." (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 864)
- a. We are born of God & do not go on practicing sin
- a. "Beginning with verse 18, John brings his epistle to a majestic close by reiterating the great certainties of the Christian faith. We know that whoever is born of God does not sin. Of this we can be sure that **one who has the divine nature does not go on practicing sin** . The reason follows: he who has been born of God keeps himself, & the wicked one does not touch him." (William MacDonald, *Op Cit* , p. 2325)
- b. "In v. 18...the **chief goal is...encouragement in holiness** ..." (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 865)
- b. We are born of God & are protected by Jesus from the evil one
- a. "In verse 18, John makes **three powerful affirmations that assure us once again of our victory over sin** . **First** , we know that the person born of God **does not keep on sinning** . Sin is no longer the pattern of his or her life... **Second** , 'the One who is born of God keeps' or protects him. I like the fact that the HCSB capitalizes 'One' because I believe the reference is clearly to Jesus & not us. **We do not keep ourselves. Jesus keeps us** ...Therefore, & this is our **third** promise, 'the evil one does not touch' me. The word 'touch' has the idea of grabbing hold of something with the intent to harm... **Satan may grab at us & tempt us through doubt, friends who fall away, idols, fleshly enticements, & worldly allurements, but because of the power of Christ he cannot get us** ." (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 165-6)
- b. "The meaning of...5:18 is extraordinarily difficult. Again the author's capacity for making obscure statements results in several possible meanings for this phrase: (1) '**The fathering by God protects him [the Christian]**.' Here a textual variant...has suggested to some that the passive participle should be understood as a noun ("fathering" or perhaps "birth"), but the manuscript evidence is extremely slight. This almost certainly represents a scribal attempt to clarify an obscure phrase. (2) '**The One fathered by God [Jesus] protects him [the Christian]**.' This is a popular interpretation, & is certainly possible grammatically. Yet the introduction of a reference to Jesus in this context is sudden; to be unambiguous the author could have mentioned the 'Son of God' here...as a reference to Jesus as he consistently does elsewhere in 1 John. This interpretation, while possible, seems in context highly unlikely. (3) '**The one fathered by God [the Christian] protects himself**.' Again a textual problem is behind this alternative, since a number of manuscripts supply the reflexive pronoun ?????? in place of ?????? in 5:18. On the basis of the external evidence this has a good possibility of being the autographic wording, but internal evidence favors ?????? as the more difficult reading, since ?????? may be explained as a scribal attempt at grammatical smoothness. From a logical standpoint, however, it is difficult to make much more sense out of ??????; to say what 'the Christian protects himself' means in the context is far from clear. (4) '**The one fathered by God [the Christian] holds on to him [God]**.' This results in further awkwardness, because the third person pronoun ?????? in the following clause must refer to the Christian, not God. Furthermore, although ?????? can mean 'hold on to', this is not a common meaning for the verb in Johannine usage, occurring elsewhere only in Rev 3:3. (5) '**The one fathered by God [the Christian], he [God] protects him [the Christian]**.' This involves a pendant nominative construction where a description of something within the clause is placed in the nominative case & moved forward ahead of the clause for emphatic reasons. This may be influenced by Semitic style; such a construction is also present in John 17:2. This view is defended by K. Beyer (*Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament [SUNT]*, 1:216ff.) & **appears to be the most probable in terms both of syntax & of sense** . **It makes God the protector of the Christian (rather than the Christian himself), which fits the context much better** , & there is precedent in Johannine literature for such syntactical structure." (NET Bible note)
- c. We are of God & not under the Evil one's power & grip (Jn. 10:28-29)
- a. "The inclusive 'we' refers to those who have been born of God & therefore are no longer of the world, a world that lies under the power of the evil one, the devil. **The reason the devil cannot 'touch' or take hold of one of God's children is that they are no longer within the realm of his power** ." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 311)
- b. "In stark contrast to the safety of the believer in Christ, the whole world rests in the power of the evil one. We are safe, but the world is a slave. **Believers in Jesus have a certain & settled knowledge that they are God's** ." (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit* , p. 166)
- c. "This verse **reaffirms the Christian's divine origin** ...Considered within an apocalyptic framework, the world is gripped by **the evil one** , who **cannot lay hold of the one begotten of God** ." (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 865)
- d. 1 Jn. 5 " **gives the reader assurance** that though the evil one is at work in the world, which lies in his thrall [control], **there is protection for those born of God** (5:18-19)." (Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness* , p.)

6. We Know What Is True (1 Jn. 5:20-21)

- a. Jesus has come & given us understanding
- a. " **Christian knowledge of the truth must be more than the acknowledgment of Jesus' birth & death ; it must entail trusting Jesus as the source of understanding about God** . Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, has given us 'understanding' – that facility & disposition to comprehend the significance of his coming." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit* , p. 315)
- b. To know the true one (see Jer. 31:33)
- a. " **To know 'the True One' is to be 'in' him through his Son, Jesus Christ** . This concept is similar to the apostle Paul's idea of union with Christ (Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 6:17; Phil 2:1). To be 'in Christ' is to be joined to his eternal life, his

destiny; this is the basis for Jesus' statement, 'Because I live, you also will live' (John 14:19)." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 315)

c. Guarding ourselves from idols

- a. "...the original recipients would most likely have seen this 'punchline' as **a rhetorically powerful ending that demanded a response to the implied question, 'Whom will you serve? The one true God or idols, who represent only false ideas, darkness, & death?'**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 316)
- b. "The letter's last words could not be more abrupt...His reference to idols seems to come out of nowhere. Idolatry was a live option within religions of antiquity & a besetting temptation for early Christians, particularly those whose journey to Christ bypassed monotheistic Judaism." (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 865)
- c. 1 John "**concludes with an emotional bang** by characterizing the Christology of the secessionists as a form of idolatry [1 John 5:21]." (Ben Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, p. 195)
 - a. Guard yourselves against substitute gods
 - a. "The imperative verb with the reflexive pronoun 'keep yourselves' indicates **the personal responsibility & effort that John expects of his readers** as they move forward in their Christian lives with the benefit of his teaching in this letter." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 316)
 - b. "Keep yourselves from idols means keeping yourself from **trusting, obeying, revering, & following** – that is, in effect, **worshipping – anyone or anything other than God himself, & his Son Jesus Christ** ." (ESV Study Bible)
 - c. "If there is a true God, there are also false gods . Therefore John provides a simple but perfect complement to verse 20 & a perfect conclusion to the letter in verse 21. 'Little children,' he says, 'guard yourselves from idols.' **Be on guard** , John says, **from god-substitutes** ." (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 167)
 - d. "He wants believers to **guard themselves from any ideas concerning God, other than those which have been handed down to us by the Apostles. Jesus Christ is God . Any other thought is idolatry** . Here John is not speaking primarily of idols carved out of wood. An idol is a substitute or false god taking the place of the true. Here an idol is not so much a material thing as a false teaching." (William MacDonald, *Op Cit*, p. 2326)
 - e. "Amazingly, the object of idolatry can be a good thing. However, when we turn a good thing into a god thing it becomes a bad thing: an idol . Tim Keller helps us see how idolatry is sin when he says, 'The ultimate reason for any sin is that something besides Christ is functioning as an alternative 'righteousness' or source of confidence—and is thus an 'idol,' a pseudo-savior, which creates inordinate desires.'" (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 168)
 - b. Idols stand in contrast to all that we know about the one, true God
 - a. "This command stands in the context of what has just been stated that 'we know' in vv. 18, 19, & especially 20, **that the Son of God has brought knowledge of the one true God, against whom 'the idols' stand in opposing contrast** . Are these idols to be understood as literal objects of wood & stone that represented the pagan deities in the various temples throughout the city of Ephesus? . . . **Most interpreters take the reference to refer not to the worship of objects of wood or stone, but to adherence to any belief that is contrary to knowledge of the one true God** ...In the historical situation of that moment, John was likely alluding to **the false ideas about God that were being taught by the secessionists** ." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 317-8)
 - b. "John teaches...in 5:20, that **the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the one true God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ** , for this is the knowledge by which one attains eternal life...This true knowledge of God in Christ stands in opposition to the many voices, views, & religions that offer God-substitutes [idols]...John...was writing to Christian readers about **the idolatry of fashioning one's own understanding of Jesus Christ that , in this case, eliminated or diminished the atonement of the crucifixion** . John says that there is true knowledge of the one true God & there is idolatry — false knowledge based on untrue assumptions about reality." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 320-1)
 - c. Only the one, true God satisfies our heart
 - a. "In sum, **idolatry is anything you love, enjoy, & pursue more than God, more than Christ** , who 'is the true God & eternal life.' **Idols say 'we are true' when God says only Christ is true** . Idols say **they will give life when God says only Christ provides life, eternal life**. Idols **promise but can never deliver** , whereas God says Christ both provides & delivers. So guard yourself from idols of power, control, comfort, approval, position, applause, & pleasure. Your heart will never be satisfied & at rest with any of these little false gods. Only Christ truly & eternally satisfies." (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 169)

Reflection on vv. 18-21

- "The crucial issue before us in 1 John 5:18-21, maybe the hardest for the modern Church to grasp, because **our interpretive framework is so different from 1 John's**...Our reflex is to view things sociologically & anthropologically, whereas 1 John speaks ontologically & theologically. That difference is important, for **in John's view, God is not jockeying for a place among our everyday affairs, to add something useful to our life. Through Jesus Christ, God is reconfiguring life itself into a life that dispels this world's illusion & conforms us with the indestructible reality that is God.**" (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, pp. 865-6)
- "John's claims about life in Christ seem strange to us, preposterous really: we who are of God do not sin (5:15a, 19a); the evil dominating this world does not touch us (5:18c, 19b). In 1 John, **such knowledge does not have its origins in more effective politics, extended therapy, better education, improved commentary, & anything else whose creation is of this world.**

To regard such provisional resources as definitive of eternal life is...to court idolatry: 'absolutizing something finite, & in so doing seeking the interests of self.' **Knowledge of eternal life issues only from trust in the one who is eternal life: the Son of God, Jesus Christ (5:20). Like a new program that reformats a computer's hard drive, Christ reformats us – the way we live & think, what we know, & how we know it.**" (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 866)