

OpenTheo

1 John 5



1 John - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg provides a commentary on the last chapter of 1 John with a focus on how belief and conduct serve as evidence of kinship with God. He emphasizes the importance of love, obedience, and overcoming the world, which can only be accomplished through rebirth. Gregg also touches on the Doctrine of the Trinity and the role of faith in receiving desired outcomes. The overarching theme is that believers must keep themselves free from idols and cling to their faith to avoid being swayed by the wicked one.

Transcript

Well, we come now to the last chapter of 1 John. It's rather interesting. There are some of the most interesting passages in the book in this chapter, but also the most perplexing.

There's at least two passages, if not more, in this chapter that have been quite variously interpreted because of their ambiguity, and different scholars think different things about their meaning. The fact that they are ambiguous enough for this to be the case suggests strongly that John presupposes a certain shared pool of knowledge on some subjects with his readers, and this kind of thing will underscore to us what we should always be mindful of when we read an epistle in the Bible, and that is that the writer of the epistle did not have us in mind. Like all writers of letters, they were writing to some actual people, and those actual people had some kind of a relationship with them, and there was some kind of shared presuppositions in their community that they had, which they could allude to, and it make perfectly good sense to them, but since we're not in their community, and have not heard what they've heard taught, in live interaction with the Apostles, we often have a real difficult time knowing what it is they're alluding to.

It's in some cases like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. You can kind of guess what the other person is saying when you're listening to somebody else talk on the phone. There's these periods of silence, and then the person at your end says something, and as you follow the train of thought, you don't really hear what the other side is saying, but you can kind of guess most of the time, probably, something along

those lines, and that's what reading somebody else's mail is like here.

We don't know what communication had gone on between them before. We're only getting this letter by this author to these known people, these people that he knew, who he fellowshiped with, who obviously had sat under much of the same teaching, and so it's possible for him to make comments that they would understand, and which are either difficult or perhaps even impossible for us to understand for sure. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, there's that famous verse about those who are baptized for the dead, and modern commentaries have come up with all kinds of different views of what that means, and we perhaps will never know for sure exactly which of these views is correct because Paul, in 1 Corinthians, was writing to people that knew him.

He had lived and taught among them for 18 months, and they knew a lot of things that he was alluding to that we don't know and may never know. Likewise, John had a relationship with these people. They had been in fellowship with him for who knows how long.

They might even have been his own converts, and he might have had years-long relationship with them, which means the practices of their group were well-known to them and to him, but not so much to us, and therefore, when he makes some kind of comment that they would understand and we don't, we may just have to come to terms with the fact that no one in the 21st century really knows for sure. There are theories galore on some of these things, but in some cases, we just have to say, well, it seems like it could be this or that, and apparently, we don't have to know. Fortunately, we've gotten along this long without knowing, and we may have to get along the rest of our earthly lives without knowing as well.

That's not true of everything in the chapter. We're going to run into that problem, in my opinion, when we get to verse 6, but first, we have some verses that are much easier to understand. At the beginning of the chapter, John says, whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, which of course is the Greek word for the Messiah, so if you believe Jesus is the fulfilled promises that God made concerning the Messiah, that he is the one the Jews were looking for and so forth, then that person who believes that is born of God.

Now, John has brought up previously the whole idea of being born of God. He said earlier in chapter 3 that everyone who practices righteousness is born of God, in chapter 2, actually, verse 29, and he spoke about us being children of God in chapter 3, and knowing the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil. In chapter 3, however, he was mainly focusing on the fact that the children of God have something of God's own nature given to them, so that as he is righteous, they also practice righteousness.

They have a spiritual affinity to him. In this case, he talks not so much about their life, but their beliefs. The person who confesses that Jesus, or believes that Jesus is the

Christ, is born of God.

So, one's beliefs and one's conduct give evidence of their kinship to God, and everyone who loves him who begot, meaning God, also loves him who has begotten of him, meaning his kids. Now, some people think him who has begotten of him is a reference to Christ. After all, the New King James translators have actually capitalized the word him.

This is their opinion. There are no capitals in the Greek, and therefore any capitals you find in the English are the translator's judgment call. I don't think that John is saying that everyone who loves God loves Jesus, although John would certainly believe that, but that's not a point that he's been trying to make in this epistle.

He's not arguing that we need to learn to love Jesus. He's saying that we need to learn to love each other. And what he's saying is if you love a father, then for the father's sake you'll also love those who are begotten of him.

Him who has begotten of him, uncapitalized, would simply be generically any person that has begotten of him. That means your brother, your sister, anyone who has begotten of God, if you love God, you'll love his kids too. And he said, by this we know that we love the children of God.

This is the subject, not loving Jesus in this particular case, but loving the children of God, those who are begotten of him. We know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

So this is how we know that we really love God. There is this matter of obedience, of course. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, he said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

He said that in John 14. In other words, you can show that you love me by keeping my commandments. But you know, people can keep commandments without loving people.

Out of sheer terror of punishment, some will obey laws, even God's laws, out of sheer terror of punishment. However, at the end of chapter 4, John has already said, not at the very end, but near the end, he said in verse 18, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment or torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. That is to say, there are people who serve God out of fear, but that's not love. If they love God, they don't need to serve him out of fear.

Perfect love casts out fear. Once you love God, you don't have to serve him out of fear anymore. If you serve anybody, God included, merely out of fear, it's a burden to do so.

It's not pleasant to do so. If you have to keep rules for somebody that you don't love, but you fear, then keeping those rules is a tremendous impingement that you feel it upon your liberty. You feel like you're in bondage, and in fact, you are.

Bondage to law and fear are pretty much the same thing, because people who are legalistic, that is, who are in bondage to rules and regulations, do so because they are afraid. They're afraid of what might happen to them if they don't. Now, isn't the fear of God a legitimate biblical concept? Of course it is.

Anybody who doesn't have enough good sense to fear a freight train, enough to stay off the track when it's coming, doesn't have any wits about them. They're foolish people. Anyone who doesn't fear someone as powerful as God, enough to say, well, I really don't want to get on his wrong side, that person is not smart, which is why the Bible says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

You start being wise only after you begin to fear God, enough to not want to cross him, not want to be on his bad side. On the other hand, while you may have that fear, that doesn't mean that you can't love him and serve him out of love so that that fear doesn't become an issue. It's like many children used to fear their father's anger.

When they would misbehave, their mother would say, wait until your father gets home, and that would strike fear into the child's life because the child had been disobedient. And they knew the father was going to give them a strapping or something, going to take them behind the woodshed, as they used to do, and give them a spanking. And it wasn't going to be a pretty thing.

So kids would fear their father. But hopefully, they didn't only obey their parents out of fear. Maybe some did.

A rebellious child, who in his heart was rebellious, might obey nonetheless out of fear of punishment. But a child who knew very well that disobedience could bring a beating from his father might still love his father and obey most of the time without any concern for the beating. After all, if you're obeying, the beating isn't on issue.

If you're obedient, just because you don't mind being obedient, because you love your parents, well, then the spanking issue, it's in the back of your mind, but it's not anything that motivates you. You're not thinking along those lines. And it's like being afraid of anything powerful that can hurt you if you're wrongly related to it.

One example I normally give is of traffic, freeway traffic. It doesn't scare me, but that's partly because I try to stay aligned with it. I try to go the same speed and in the same direction as the traffic.

And therefore, when I pull on a freeway, I don't have a moment's thought of fear. In fact, I'm not even probably giving very much thought at all to the traffic because I'm thinking

about other things because it's natural enough for me to go along with the traffic. If I'm in a good relationship with the other cars, the traffic isn't scary at all.

On the other hand, if I contemplated getting on the wrong direction against traffic and driving against traffic or trying to cross the road on foot against heavy traffic, that's a scary thing because, of course, then I'm not in a proper relationship with it. And anything that's as powerful as traffic and potentially destructive, if you're not in a right relationship with it, you're crazy to deliberately do that, to court that kind of disaster. You should have a fear of that.

But on the other hand, you can spend your whole life without that fear if you stay in the right relationship with traffic. Likewise with God. If you're in a right relationship with God, there's no need to fear.

Sure, there's this in the back of your mind, you know for a fact that people who aren't right with God are in a heap of trouble. In fact, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. That is, we persuade men to come around to God's way because we know how terrifying it is to be in a bad relationship with Him.

In Psalm 119, I don't know the verse number, but David might know it. It says, horror has taken hold of me because of those who forsake your law. Horror has taken hold of me because of seeing them forsake God's law.

That means I'm seeing what's going to happen to them. I can tell they're courting disaster. They don't fear God, but I fear God for them.

Because I do know something about the judgment of God. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, Paul said. And so, there's a sense in which I don't fear God when I'm in a good relationship with Him, and when I love Him, I am in a good relationship with Him.

So, my love, my relationship with God out of love, it kind of removes the whole consciousness of fear. Any fear I have is like a fear of something that, you know, I don't ever have to confront. I don't have to confront danger in the presence of God.

I don't have to confront His wrath because I'm serving Him because I love Him. And it's a world of difference in experience. And I think many people who are Christians do somewhat conform their lives to the will of God more than they feel comfortable doing or want to do because of fear.

And keeping His commandments is burdensome to them. But people who love God, John said, this is the love of God that you keep His commandments and it's not burdensome to you. It's never a burden to serve somebody you love.

You only look for more ways to do so. Because love, by its very definition, is the desire that somebody else is pleased, that somebody else has what they want, what they need. Somebody else's happiness is more important than your own if you love them.

And if you love God, then it's not so much that you fear what God might do if you're disobedient. It's that you know that God is pleased by certain things and you love Him, you want to please Him. And anyone who's been in love knows what that's like because when you're in love, you want to impoverish yourself making that person happy.

You want to serve that person. You want to do expensive and sacrificial things for them. That's not because you fear anything, it's because you love them.

And if you love God, you keep His commandments because you know that it pleases Him. It's not a burden to do that. It actually makes you happy to do that.

And this has become so obvious to me how that in the same church, or in my case at one time, in the same family, two parties were living exactly the same way as Christians, that is externally the same way. One person living out of love for God and the other living out of terror of God because they apparently did not love God. They're legalistic.

They kept the rules because they didn't dare not keep the rules. The other person actually kept the rules but wasn't afraid of anything because the rules were being kept out of love. I remember when the first person, the legalistic person, actually left the faith after years of living that way.

That person said that they had felt like they'd been in a cave all those years that they were a Christian. They ceased to be a Christian and said, I feel like I've come out into the light out of being in a cave. Well, no doubt they were because for them, their experience with God wasn't Christianity.

It was legalism. It wasn't a relationship of love with God and Jesus. It was a burden to them.

And when they came out, they felt relieved. Now I can be selfish again. Now I can just do what I want to do again.

I'm not trying to be a Christian anymore. I'm ignoring the rules now. I feel free.

I feel I'm in the light. I feel released. And yet, from the standpoint of the other party, being obedient to God, being in a relationship with God, that's being in the light.

And to go out into the world away from God would be going into the cave. It's such a totally different experience. Both people going to the same church, perhaps, or living in the same home, both professing to be Christians and living precisely the same way externally, but one doing it out of fear and legalism, the other person doing it out of love

for God.

The one who's in fear and legalism, it's a burden, but they dare not relieve themselves of it. They're afraid of what would happen if they didn't obey God. And that's the only thing that keeps them obeying.

But love is different than that. Perfect love casts out fear. When you love God, you wouldn't dream of wanting to disobey Him, not because you have any fear, although there is an awareness that there would be much to fear if you were on bad terms with God.

But there's not the slightest interest in being on bad terms with God. The desire is to cultivate an intimacy, a loving relationship. And when God tells me He wants something done, His wish is my command, I'm glad to comply.

It's not a burden. Obeying God is not a burden to those who love Him, but it's a horrendous burden to those who don't. And that's what John is saying.

This is how we know that we love God, when we keep His commandments and don't find it burdensome to do so. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. Now why does he say whatever instead of whoever? He apparently here is talking about the new nature that is born within you of God, that you receive a new nature, the divine nature, as Peter refers to it.

Peter does that in 2 Peter 1.4. 2 Peter 1.4, Peter says, we have become partakers of the divine nature through rebirth, through being born of God. He is born in us something of His own nature. And that which is born of God overcomes the world.

We can't overcome the world without rebirth. We can conform to God's commandments, but they'll defeat us. We'll become burned out because we're working so much against our natural desires to be selfish, but we dare not because we're obeying rules and we are afraid not to obey them.

This will burn anyone out. No wonder people fall away from Christ if they've only lived a legalistic religion. How many people have I known that are, they call themselves recovering Catholics or recovering Jews or someone else like that who's raised in a strict religious home where they were brought up keeping very strict rules by strict parents of a religious system, but when they got older they escaped.

They escaped and never looked back, never went back, but they still feel damaged by it. I've known many people they feel like they've been damaged by a legalistic upbringing. And especially, frankly, a lot of people who were raised Roman Catholic have said that.

They've said that they were recovering Catholics. I know some people who are not Catholics who were raised just in evangelical homes who were nonetheless legalistic.

And they didn't have as much of the love of God as they appeared to have or else they would not have burned out or crashed and burned.

You know, when you are trying to be religious, but it goes against your nature, it's a hopeless burden. But that which is born of God, that nature that's born in you of God, that isn't, that doesn't find it difficult to be obedient. You overcome the world.

And by the world, what's he mean? Well, remember what he said about that back in chapter 2? In chapter 2 verse 15 through 17, he said, Beloved do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. You love the world, you don't love God, he's saying.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. Now, these are the things that John's referring to as the world. And by that, he doesn't mean the planet Earth world.

He means society and culture that is in rebellion against God. In John's gospel, he refers to Satan as the ruler of this world. He doesn't mean the planet, he means that society on Earth that is opposed to God, Satan is the ruler of that group.

That's the world that John is talking about, the outside world, outside the kingdom of God, outside of Christ's family is the world out there. And he's saying that world is trying to overcome you. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, that's all that is in the world and it's always making its appeal to you, wanting to destroy your walk with God, trying to keep you from being obedient to God and follow your own lusts instead.

There's always that tendency, there's always that urge. But the person who's born of God, who has the divine nature in him, will overcome that. They will have something given that's God-given, some divinely bestowed resource of a new nature that makes it possible to go a different direction than the direction the world is beckoning.

And so, for this reason, he can say anyone or anything that's born of God, whatever, he means the nature in us that's born of God, overcomes the world. He says, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Now, these references to overcoming, in this case, overcoming the world, it's the same word that's used earlier in A Different Connection in chapter 2, verses 13 and 14 where he said, I write to you young men because you have overcome the wicked one, Satan.

You have overcome the wicked one. In chapter 4, he spoke about the spirit of Antichrist as an evil spirit, and he says in verse 4, chapter 4, verse 4, he says, you are of God, little children, and have overcome them, the evil spirits. The evil spirits, Satan, who's the prince of this world, the world itself, these are all the enemies that seek to destroy and

compromise the Christians' walk with God and relationship with God.

Demonic powers, the devil, the world and its lusts, they're all making war against the soul. That's actually what Peter actually used that expression in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 11. In 1 Peter 2, 11, Peter said, Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

There's a war against your soul, these fleshly lusts of the world as well as the prince of this world and the demons and so forth that are part of this world system. They make a war against your soul, but John says, you overcome them, little children, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. And how did he come to be in you? He's been born in you.

The divine nature has been born into you. Whatever is born of God is going to overcome. Remember in the book of Revelation, written by this same author, in each of the seven letters to the seven churches, it is said, To him that overcomes, I will grant thus and so privileges, a number of privileges, a different name for each of the seven churches, but in each of the seven letters to the seven churches, they actually end with this promise, To him that overcomes, meaning in the church, those who win this battle against the flesh and the world and the devil, they will have certain promises that apply to them.

In Revelation 11, verse 12, no, chapter 12, verse 11, excuse me, it's the other way around, Revelation 12, verse 11, it talks about how Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is cast down from heaven to the earth to oppose the Christians and it says they overcome him. It says they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives to the death. This overcoming concept is in John's writings.

In fact, it first appears in the Gospel of John. In John 16, 33, where Jesus said to his disciples, These things I've written unto you, or spoken unto you, excuse me, that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. He said, You will have peace in me, but you also live in the world and there you'll have tribulation. The Christian lives two places at once, in the world and in Christ.

In the world there's tribulation, there's pressure, there's trials, there's persecution. In Christ, nonetheless, we have peace. Peace in the midst of such tribulation.

And Paul and John, not John, but Peter and James all write about this idea of rejoicing in tribulation, having peace in tribulation, not being overcome by tribulation. And Jesus said, Well, I say these things so that you'll have peace, even though in the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer, because I have overcome the world. I have defeated the world, and I'm going to give you me to live inside of you so you can

overcome, too.

This overcoming motif originates in John 16, 33, continues in 1 John, throughout these passages we've noted, and then into Revelation, He that overcomes. They overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and do not love their lives, even to death. When people are so committed to Christ that they love him enough that they would even lay down their lives for him, as many, many hundreds, if not thousands of martyrs did in the early days, and even more so do so even as we speak in places like China and North Korea and many other parts of the world, Christian martyrs.

They say there have been more Christian martyrs since the year 1900 than all of history previously. There are organizations keeping track of those kinds of human rights violations and people being killed for their faith and so forth, and Christian martyrs are more numerous now than ever. Not here, not where we're living, but in the world nonetheless.

Yet those who are faithful unto death have, like Jesus himself who is faithful unto death, have overcome the world. They look like they've been overcome by the world. When the world kills you, it looks like you lost and they won.

But you didn't if you died uncompromised because the world's concern is not so much to kill you, after all, everyone's going to die whether you're Christian or not, everyone's going to die. Dying is universal. What is not universal is dying with a good conscience, dying uncompromised, dying while sticking to your guns, even though the pressure, even mortal threats are made against you, trying to persuade you to compromise and say, nope, not me.

And dying faithful, that is overcoming. So you can see that the overcoming, the warfare itself is very different than natural warfare. It's not physical.

In physical warfare, when someone dies, they lost. In Christian spiritual warfare, dying like Jesus did is conquering, dying faithful, dying in obedience to God. That's overcoming.

Now the people John's writing to have not yet died, but they are indeed overcoming because of their faith in Christ. Who is he that overcomes the world but he that believes that Jesus is the Christ? Now here's, or that Jesus is the Son of God, he says. Now here in verse 6 is where we hit a bit of a rough patch.

It says, This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.

And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one. Now in the midst of this section we just read is verse 7. It's

the most explicit declaration of the Trinity in any verse in scripture. There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, the Word meaning Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.

You couldn't ask for a more succinct summary of the Trinity doctrine. It's perfect. In fact, it's too perfect.

It's too perfect even to be authentic. There are no ancient Greek manuscripts that contain verse 7. All the ancient manuscripts lack it, and most modern translations acknowledge it. The King James includes it, and so does the New King James because the New King James fairly slavishly follows the King James in most respects.

But why? Why does the King James include this verse when it's not found in any of the ancient manuscripts? The reason is because the King James version was translated from a group of Greek manuscripts that was called the Textus Receptus. These were manuscripts that were the best available in 1611 when the King James translation was made. However, in the past 400 years, men have discovered far more manuscripts of the New Testament, far more ancient than the ones that were available in some cases in 1611, and what they found is none of the ancient manuscripts have verse 7, which in fact is in the Textus Receptus.

Now if the Greek manuscripts that are ancient don't have it, why is it in the Textus Receptus? It's an interesting story. A man named Erasmus, a Roman Catholic humanist scholar in the Roman in the 16th century, contemporary with Luther. In fact, Luther and Erasmus, they actually, they debated over some of the issues that Luther disputed about with the Catholic Church.

They had debates, but Erasmus was a good man. He was a good Catholic man, and the Catholic Church commissioned him to put together what was called an eclectic text of the Greek New Testament. Now what we call the Textus Receptus is what he put together.

What is an eclectic text? I'll give you a little bit of scholarly background on this, about how the New Testament has come down to us. Nobody has, of course, the Greek handwritten copies of any New Testament book written by the hand of the original author. Those simply have not survived.

They were written on perishable material 2,000 years ago. The kind of material they're written on just doesn't last, and so they had to be copied and recopied as older copies became worn out and needed to be replaced, there were people who copied them. There were scribes and monks and so forth that were determined not to let these sacred documents disappear, so they made copies.

Every time some got too old to be usable, they're brittle and falling apart, they made

more copies. In fact, there are something like, I believe it's something like 8,000 Greek manuscript copies of the New Testament that have been found that are available for scholars to look at right now, 8,000 copies. Now, of course, they haven't found all the ones that existed because most of the ones that existed are totally deteriorated and haven't survived.

So you can imagine how many copies were made that only the smallest minority of them would have survived, and there's 8,000 of those that we have. Now, here's the thing. In the days of Erasmus, they only had a relatively few of these copies.

Most of them have been found since those days, since the 16th century, but they did have some. They had some Greek manuscripts. I don't remember the exact number, but it was a relatively small amount, and the Roman Catholic Church felt that since these manuscripts, in some details, differed from one another, because that just happens when people copy things, some details get altered a little bit.

The differences were not immense, but they were differences, and the Catholic Church thought there should be one Greek text that was authoritative that everyone used. So they hired Erasmus to take all the existing Greek texts they had, read them all line by line, see which readings where there was a difference from one manuscript to another in the same passage, which readings seemed to have the best manuscript evidence in their favor, and create what's called an eclectic text, taking the best reading of every passage from considering all of the different manuscripts available. Well, as it turned out, he did that and came up with what we call the Textus Receptus.

Actually, there were some problems. The last few verses of the Book of Revelation didn't even exist in any Greek manuscript that they had in those days. Fortunately, they had some old Latin copies that had been translated from an earlier Greek that was lost, and Erasmus was able to translate those, I think it was ten verses at the end of Revelation, from the Latin Vulgate into his own Greek translation.

He didn't even have a Greek manuscript that contained those verses. So he took the Latin and made his own Greek translation of them into the Textus Receptus. Whether he used the same words that were in the original, who knows? But more than that, he left out 1 John 5-7 originally.

Now, 1 John 5-7 was in the Latin Vulgate, which Jerome had translated back in, what, the 4th century, I think. The Roman Catholic Church noticed that this verse was missing from Erasmus' work. They said, why did you not include this statement about the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit being one? He said, well, it's a very simple thing.

It's not in any of the Greek manuscripts. It's in the Latin, but I haven't found any Greek manuscript that contains it, and you've asked me to make an eclectic text of the Greek manuscripts, and it's not in there. But he said, if you provide me with a Greek

manuscript that has it, I'll put it in there.

Well, lo and behold, they did. Not sure how they managed that, since all the manuscripts they had found before were in his hands, but suddenly, on demand, a Greek manuscript appeared containing this verse, and they gave it to Erasmus. And so, keeping his word, he put it in there.

But he put a footnote in there saying he doubted its authenticity. So, even the man who created the Textus Receptus didn't think that verse belonged there, but he put it under, he put it in there, basically under pressure from the powers that be. Now, we will say this, even though the oldest Greek manuscripts don't have that verse, a lot of Latin manuscripts did.

That's why the Catholic Church was familiar with it and wondered why he hadn't put it in there. But the Latin is not original. The Latin itself was translated early on from early Greek originals.

So, most scholars are convinced, as Erasmus was, that 1 John 5-7 never was written by John, that someone put it in there. That the statement that is made in verse 8, which John did write, that some monk or some scribe felt like he could elaborate on that by putting verse 7 in there, which looks a lot like it. I mean, it has different information, but it's structured the same way.

What John did write is, there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one. Apparently, someone thought it would be really nice to write, and there are three that bear witness in heaven, too. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.

But whoever wrote it probably wasn't John. Now, of course, those who say this are not opposing the doctrine of the Trinity. I don't oppose the doctrine of the Trinity.

I actually believe with the information in verse 7. I believe there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. But that doesn't mean the verse is authentic. The doctrine of the Trinity can be derived from other parts of the Bible.

Nothing quite so succinct and clear as this verse would be if it was authentic, but still, I believe the doctrine that God is three in one, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is not difficult to establish from a synthesis of the various statements that are relevant to the subject elsewhere in the Bible. So, the doctrine of the Trinity, as we have it, is really a synthesis of material found in a lot of different passages rather than something stated in any one place in the Bible. But this verse states it one place, but unfortunately, we can't rely on this verse as authentic.

And so, by the way, if you have a modern translation, more modern than the New King

James or the King James, it will have something to say about that. It might have a footnote where they include it and say that the oldest manuscripts don't contain it or something like that. This is a very famous verse because of the controversies that have raged over it.

But I think we can fairly safely say John didn't write it. This is the opinion of almost all textual critics and biblical scholars. What he did say, though, is verse 6 and verse 8, where he says, This is he, Jesus, who came by water and blood.

What does that mean? Well, that's one of the great mysteries of this passage. What does it mean that he came by water and blood? There's at least three different opinions about this and perhaps more. Some see in this some kind of a reference, although not at all one that can be reasoned through, to John chapter 19 by the same author.

And we know that Jesus, when he was crucified, was pierced in the side by a soldier. And it says in John 19, verses 34 and 35. One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and immediately blood and water came out.

And he who is seen has testified as John was there at the cross and he saw the water and the blood come out of Jesus side. Now, the reference to the water and the blood in John 19 and the reference to water and blood in 1 John chapter 5, verse 6, by the same author, has always tempted people to try to find some connection between those two things, that Jesus came by water and blood. Now, this is not an entirely satisfactory connection because Jesus didn't come by water and blood.

But if John is specifically trying to argue against the Gnostics and their suggestion that Jesus really wasn't a physical person, John could be saying, well, I saw water and blood come out of his side and that was physical. Therefore, the water and the blood that came out of his side is a testimony that Jesus was a physical man, contra the opinions of the Gnostics. And of course, that is something that John might want to establish.

The problem with this interpretation is that he doesn't just say he came by water and blood and leave it at that. He says, not by water only, but by water and blood. As if he needs to clarify that there's some people who think Jesus came only by water.

But he says, no, it wasn't only by water, it was by water and blood. Now, since the water and blood came out of Jesus' side simultaneously, it doesn't seem like anything he's, you know, arguing about. It's not only by water, but also by water and blood.

It doesn't seem to fit that scenario as near as I can tell. I can't tell how that would make sense of him saying it that way. Another theory is, once again, that he is speaking against the Gnostics and that Cyrenthus, the Gnostic teacher, taught that the Christ essence was not really inherent in Jesus, the man, but when Jesus was baptized, the Christ thing came upon him, the Christ spirit came upon him, and he was associated with

the Christ for the years of his ministry, but that just before he died, the Christ left him.

That the Christ was something different than Jesus himself, but it was associated with him, came upon him for those three and a half years between his baptism and his death, but came upon him at the baptism and left prior to his death. And some say, well, what they're saying here, what John is saying here, is that Christ, or Jesus, the son of God, came by, through, actually the Greek word is through water and through blood. Now, this is not at all an easy concept, and once it's, even when you read the commentaries saying it, you think, what? But I'm going to tell it to you and you'll probably say, what? And I'm not going to be able to do better than that because it's not necessarily a view that I'm taking.

It's just one of the views. And that is that it's affirming that Jesus was the Christ when he went through the water, as before his baptism and through it, and also when he went through death, through blood. So Jesus didn't become the son of God or the Christ at his baptism.

He was the son of God through the water, and he continued to be the son of God through the bloodshed, so that it's refuting the idea that the Christ or the son of God thing that associated with Jesus, a normal man, for that period of time, you know, wasn't with him before he was baptized and wasn't with him when he died. I realize that's sort of a, what? What in the world does that mean, kind of a thing? I've never found a satisfactory explanation of what John's saying here. His readers apparently knew, but I don't, and commentators, in my opinion, don't either.

A third view is that some say that the spirit and the water and the blood, mentioned in verse 8, there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree in one, is a reference to the stages by which a person became a Christian in ancient times. First, they received Christ's spirit and were born again. Second, they were baptized in water, and the reference to blood, they say, is reference to their first communion, so that this is talking about the steps a person took in conversion, receiving Christ through this, you know, receiving the Holy Spirit, being water baptized, and taking a first communion, and they say the blood is the first communion.

However, many scholars feel like this is not very likely, since to mention the blood and mean by that the first communion would be very obscure. If he wished to speak of communion, he should have said the blood and the body, or the wine and the bread, or something else like that. Blood is simply too obscure by itself, and so we really have three really, really different ideas of what is meant here, none of them really very authoritative, all of them simply grasping.

Now, one thing we can say, John was not insane, and he was not irrational, and therefore what he said made sense in the context of his and his reader's context, whatever that

was. They knew what he was talking about, they knew what point he was arguing, and we are simply left here wondering. And as a Bible teacher, it's very frustrating to have to come to a passage and say, you know, I don't have a clue, and I never have had a clue what this meant.

From the time I was young and read this passage to the time just last night, even today when I read the passage, it remains equally obscure to me. And I've read the commentaries, and they seem to be bluffing, they seem to me to be guessing, and pretending that they know when they're just as much in the dark about it as any modern person is. We assume John's readers were not in the dark, and it made perfectly good sense to them.

We're going to have to be content with that, as far as I'm concerned, at least I'm not going to be able to give you any more light about it, and I don't really think anyone I've ever read has any real light to give on it either. Now, verse 9, if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. That is, we do in fact receive the witness of men on a regular basis.

When people tell us things, we believe them, even if we don't know them. For example, when you read something in the newspaper, you might not trust the newspapers 100%, but in general, if a story appears in the newspaper, you generally kind of just figure by default that probably it's a true story, probably really happened. Now, you're receiving the testimony of a mere man, maybe a man or woman that you don't even know.

And if we do that, then we certainly should receive the witness of God, which is greater. God at least never lies. God never gets his facts wrong.

People do. People sometimes don't know what they're talking about, and other times they know, but they don't tell the truth about it. But we receive witness from them anyway, and we can't not do so.

You cannot possibly live your life without receiving testimony from man. Think about it. If you can't receive any testimony from any man, you can't know anything that you have not discovered through your own experiment.

You can't know anything about any geographical region you've not been to. You can't even know if it exists unless you've seen it with your own eyes. But we do believe in, we do believe the maps and the globes we see.

Someone has seen those things. They're telling us about it. They've studied it.

They've measured it, and we accept what they say. Why not? If we don't, we'll never know. We'll be totally ignorant of anything except the square of ground that we live on and have been to and seen.

Likewise with history. We won't know a thing about history before the time we're born if we don't believe what people say. We do, of course.

We have to believe what people say in some degree, or else we'll simply live in a narrow little world that's made up of only the things we've discovered for ourselves, and we can't affirm anything about the microscopic world, anything about the astronomical world, anything about the geographical world, anything about the history of the world that happened outside of our own experience. No one will do well to be limited like that. And so we, of course, regularly from the very beginning of our lives have learned to believe what people tell us.

We doubt what some people tell us, and we should, but we have to believe or not know anything, really. We have to accept people. So we routinely do.

But God is totally reliable. His testimony is greater than man. So he says we shouldn't have any doubts when God says something is true.

And he said this is the testimony, the witness that God has given of his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son.

Now, if you don't believe what God said, you're calling him a liar. It's just that easy. Now, if you do believe God, you have the witness in yourself.

What does that mean, you have the witness in yourself? There's probably more than two possible meanings, but I can think of two. One is, he's talking about there's something inside you bearing witness that this is true, if you're a Christian. Paul said this, or something a lot like it, in Romans chapter 8. And he said, in verse 16, Romans 8, 16, he said, the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Now, how do I know I'm a child of God? Well, a number of ways, but one way is that the Holy Spirit in me bears witness with my spirit that this is true. That means my spirit is receiving testimony from the Holy Spirit. I have an inward witness of the Spirit that it's true.

It's not the only way I know, but it's one of the ways I know, because the Holy Spirit bears witness with my spirit. John said, he that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. He could be talking about the witness of the Spirit that confirms to the believer that they really are saved, really are born again.

And a person who doesn't have the Spirit bearing witness might have a serious reason to doubt. But another interpretation has been suggested, and that is that he's saying, the person who's a believer possesses, as it were, as a stewardship, the witness of the Gospel. We know it's true, and it is ours to bear witness to.

We possess the witness. It is ours to manage. It's ours to steward.

It is ours to bear to the world this witness about Christ. If we believe it, we should be telling it, is what some people would say. We have this witness within ourselves that we are the possessors and bearers of this witness to the world.

But if we don't believe what God said, he says, then we're calling him a liar. We're making him a liar, because that person who does not believe has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son. And yet we receive testimonies from men.

Why shouldn't we believe the testimony God gives of his Son? And this is the testimony, verse 11, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Now, he's saying the promise that God has witnessed to us is that he has given us eternal life. Now, this can be misunderstood, except John clarifies it.

The life is in Jesus. If you have Jesus, you have the life. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have the life.

It's not inherent in man. It's not even inherent in the believer, per se, to possess eternal life. It's inherent in Christ.

Christ is eternal life. In fact, in the opening verses of the Gospel of John, John said of the Word, it says, in him was life, and that life was the light of men. In Christ is the life.

John says that's what God has witnessed, that he's given us eternal life, but this life is in his Son. So, where do we get it? By being in his Son. If we have the Son, we have the life.

If we don't have the Son, we don't have the life. Lots of people have misunderstood this business. I've had people quote to me John 3.16 saying, listen, it says, whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

If I have eternal life, I can't lose it, right? Or else it's not eternal. If you say that I could possibly maybe lose my salvation, aren't you saying that the life I have is not eternal? If it's eternal, it's always going to be there, right? Well, not exactly. I mean, maybe, but that's not what the Bible says.

The Bible says the life is in Christ. Yes, whoever believes, that's present tense, whoever believes in him has eternal life because it's in him. If you don't believe in him at some later point and you don't abide in him, then how can it be said that you have the life if you don't have him anymore? And Jesus made it very clear that being in him is contingent on our decision.

Jesus said that very clearly in John 15. He said in the beginning of John 15, I'm the true vine, my father's the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit.

You are already clean because of the word I've spoken to you. They're already Christians. Abide in me, that means remain in me.

Don't stop being in me. Remain in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit for without me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they're burned. Now, abiding in Christ is like a branch remaining in a vine, remaining attached to a plant.

The life of the plant is of course in the branch. Therefore, if the vine has eternal life, then the branches have eternal life too. But the life is in the vine, not in the branch.

The life is in Jesus. He's the vine. As long as you are connected to him, as you abide in him, you also have eternal life.

If you don't abide in him, if you disconnect from him, well, the life is still eternal life and it's still in the same place in the vine, in Christ, but you're not. If you don't abide in him, you're not in him anymore. You have to remain in him, he says.

And anyone who doesn't remain in him is cut off and withers and thrown into the fire. Why does wither? Because the life that was in it isn't there anymore. It's not that the life was not eternal.

It's not that eternal life has ceased to exist. It's that the branch in question has ceased to participate in it, has ceased to be drawing upon it, has broken itself off from the place where the life is found. It is eternal life and as long as you abide in him, it remains eternally in you as well.

And there's not a reason in the world why Christians should fear that they would have to somehow break away from him. That's never necessary. When people sometimes say, well, I'm afraid, you know, you make me afraid I might lose my salvation.

Why? Why would you be afraid of that? Are you planning to backslide? Are you planning to betray Christ? Is that what's on your mind? Are you afraid you might have to do so against your will? Nonsense. Nobody ever has to stop trusting Christ. That's within your power to continue to do until the day you die and most Christians, I think, do so.

But you have to realize that if you stop doing so, the promise of John 3.16 is whoever

believes in him, not whoever used to believe in him has everlasting life, whoever currently believes him. You believe moment by moment. You trust him day by day.

You trust him from this day until the day you die and you die still in possession of him because you abode in him. You remained in him and you bear fruit in him and that life that is eternal is in him and therefore in you while you are in him. And that is the teaching about eternal life that John gives us here.

This is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, but it's in Jesus. It's in his son and he that has the son has the life. He that does not have the son of God does not have the life.

Down to verse 14. Now this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

Now there's many times in the Bible, including in John's other writings, where you seem to have like blanket promises of answered prayer. John records Jesus saying, whatever you ask in my name, I'll do it. And so you could get the impression that he's saying nobody who ever prays ever fails to get an answer.

But as with all other major subjects in the Bible addressed in many places, statements that sound absolute in one place are qualified by other statements elsewhere in scripture. For example, James said, let him ask in faith, nothing wavering for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. He said, let not that man think that he'll receive anything from the Lord.

The man who doesn't have faith when he asks, remember the disciples couldn't do anything when they didn't have faith. They said, why couldn't we cast the demon out? He says, because of your own belief. You need to have faith.

He said to the man who had a demon possessed son, he said, all things are possible to him who has faith. You have to pray with faith. That's a condition.

You have to pray in Jesus' name. That's a condition. And that doesn't just mean you add his name as a little formula at the end of your selfish prayers.

It means you pray as his agent. That's how you act in anyone's name is to act as their agent. And a person who acts as the agent of another does what that person wants done under their authorization.

An agent is authorized by someone to do what that person wants done. To do something in Jesus' name means you are authorized to come before God with requests, which Jesus would have you make on his behalf. That's doing something in his name.

It doesn't mean praying any selfish thing you want, and then tagging on a little formula in Jesus' name. That's not praying in his name. That's only claiming to do so.

When someone says, I asked this in Jesus' name, that doesn't mean they really did. They're saying they did, but if you look at what they asked and the motives for doing so, it might be that they didn't ask what he would want at all. They just asked what they wanted and said, I'm doing this in Jesus' name.

To act in Jesus' name is something you really do, not something you only claim to do. Adding the words at the end doesn't make it so. Remember when the sons of Sceva said to the demon, we cast you out in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, the demon said, we don't recognize you.

We recognize Jesus and Paul, not you. You say you're acting in Jesus' name, but I don't think you're authorized. You're not acting in Jesus' name.

You're only talking like you are. Many Christians, when they pray, I think they say, I pray in Jesus' name, but they're just talking like they're praying in Jesus' name. They're really praying what they want.

They're not praying as agents of Jesus coming before the Father, making the requests that he would make on his behalf. That's what in Jesus' name means. It certainly involves praying according to his will.

And that's something stated here in this passage. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Oh, that condition isn't stated in every place, but it's here.

It's another reason you have to know how the general promise of answered prayer is qualified by statements that fill in the details. James actually says you ask and receive not because you ask with wrong motives that you may consume it on your lust. Another reason that prayers may not be answered.

Your motives are wrong. You're not asking according to God's will. These are all aspects of prayer that the Bible talks about that all have to be taken into consideration when we consider the promise that God will answer our prayers.

Prayer is not something God gives us to persuade him to do what we want. Prayer is a means by which we urge God to interfere in the affairs of man, something he might refrain from doing if not invited. He has, after all, given the world to the sons of man, the Bible says.

Why should he interfere with man's behavior? Well, if he's invited, if he's asked, then interference is something he may, in fact, do if it's according to his will. We're not here to pray that our will be done, but what? Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Praying for God's will is the only kind of praying that has any real promise of being

answered.

Now, verse 16 and 17 are one of the hardest parts, but not as hard as the part of the spirit, the water, and the blood. He says in verse 16, if anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask and he will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death.

I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin and there is a sin not leading to death. What in the blazes does that mean? Well, let's consider what death means.

What does death mean? Sometimes in the Bible it speaks of physical death. Sometimes it speaks of something else, metaphorical or spiritual or some other kind of death. Like the prodigal son, his father said, my son was dead.

He's now alive. Well, he wasn't literally dead. Many times the Bible speaks of death in a figurative sense.

We were dead in trespasses and sins, the Bible says, before God brought us to life and regeneratives. There's all kinds of ways death can be used. Many people, probably most commentators that I've encountered, believe something differently about this passage than I think is likely to be true.

I think it's more likely to mean something different than what most commentators say, but there are different views even among commentators. It seems that most of the times I've looked this up in commentaries, they say death means spiritual death. And they say a sin leading to death, or the word leading is not in the Greek, it's in italics, it's simply sinning unto death.

He that sins a sin not unto death. What's that mean, a sin not unto death? As opposed to there is a sin unto death. I do not say you shall pray for that.

What does it mean, sinning unto death? A very popular notion among commentators is that John is referring to the unpardonable sin. One which, if a person has committed it, they're done. It's unpardonable.

Don't pray for them. It's hopeless. They've sinned an unpardonable sin.

Spiritual death is the inevitable result of committing such a sin. Of course, once this is decided to be the meaning of the passage, then they have to decide what the unpardonable sin looks like. What is the unpardonable sin? Some people say it's saying words against the Holy Spirit.

Some say it's simply neglecting to turn to Christ in your lifetime. There's all these different ideas, none of which are explained plainly in the Bible. But the assumption is

this must be referring to a sin, unlike other sins, which inevitably results in death.

That must mean spiritual death because all sin leads eventually to physical death because the wages of sin is death and everybody dies. Everyone sins and everyone dies. So, this must be talking about some peculiar kind of sin that leads to a different kind of death.

And that would be, they say, an inevitable loss of salvation or failure to attain salvation. One way or another, it's spiritual death. And if someone has sinned that kind of sin, I don't say you should pray for that, John says.

Now, if you see someone sinning and they haven't done that sin, pray for them and God may give them life, God may restore them. People who are sinning can be restored and you should pray for them, petition for them. But not if they've sinned unto death, he says.

That, don't bother with. So, on this view, and this is probably, my judgment is from reading commentaries, this seems to be the majority view and I don't think it's the correct view. But on this view, you should pray for people you see sinning, but not if they sin an unpardonable sin.

Well, what's the problem with that particular bit of instruction? In order to follow it, you have to know whether someone has sinned an unpardonable sin or not. In order to know that, you have to know what an unpardonable sin is. What does it look like if someone's committed an unpardonable sin? You might say, well, they blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Well, I know people who think they blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They said bad things about the Holy Spirit when they were unbelievers, but then they repented later and became good Christians. I know a number of Christians who say before they were Christians, they said blasphemous things about God.

Apparently, it wasn't the unpardonable sin because they later came around and repented. So, how do you know if someone has committed an unpardonable sin? This is the serious problem, I think, with this interpretation. John assumes that his readers can follow these instructions because he's giving very explicit instructions.

If you see someone who has not sinned unto death, pray for him. If you see someone who has sinned unto death, I'm not saying you should pray for him. But, how, John, do I know if someone has sinned unto death if this means some kind of undefined, not clearly defined anywhere, sin which who knows who's committed? How do I know if I should or shouldn't pray for a person unto these circumstances? Now, my own view is John's instruction is much simpler than that.

I would take death here to mean death, physical death. You always know if your friend has died that way or not. You know if someone has sinned unto death if they have sinned

without repenting until the time they die.

Unto death, of course, could mean until you die. There's a statement that Jesus makes to the church of Smyrna in Revelation 2.10. He says, be faithful unto death. What does that mean? That means be faithful until you die, right? Be faithful unto death.

What if someone sins unto death? Doesn't that mean they sin until they die? If you see someone who sins, that is, they don't repent, they don't follow Christ, they're living in sin until they're dead, don't pray for them. It's too late, they're gone. But if they've sinned but not unto death, that means they're sinning but they haven't died yet, there's still hope for them to keep praying for them.

It's really that simple. He's basically saying, do pray for your friends who are sinning, but not if they're dead. If they've died in their sins, there's nothing more you can do for them.

If this is what John means, of course, it brings up serious doubts about the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory because that doctrine teaches that people who've died and gone to purgatory, you can pray for them and benefit them somehow through your prayers. Of course, the Bible doesn't teach anything about that subject, that is, it doesn't mention purgatory or any of those things, and it would seem, if I'm interpreting this correctly, that this would be kind of a contradiction of that. Once they're dead, don't pray for them, there's nothing, no more sense in that.

But if they've sinned not unto death, they're on a course of sin, they're rejecting Christ, they're not for Christ, they're living in sin. If they're alive, pray for them, they could still change. If they've died, find someone else to pray for, for whom there's some hope and your prayers can help.

To me, that makes it a fairly simple instruction and easily carried out because you know if your friend has died or not, you don't know if he's committed some nebulous, unpardonable sin or not. And so, I'm thinking that commentators make this too difficult and very unnecessarily because, to me, to sin unto death sounds like it means simply to sin until you die. And if that's what he means, the passage makes perfectly good sense, at least so I think.

Now, finally, verse 18, it ends this epistle with three affirmations of what we know. Now, some commentators think that we here means the apostles, we apostles, John and his friends, John and his associates in the ministry. Others believe that we simply means all of us Christians, no.

I'm not really sure that an awful lot of difference is made by choosing whether he's himself and the apostles, making some kind of special claim for them as apostles, or whether he's talking about Christians in general. I don't know that deciding that point

has much impact on our benefiting from the passage. He said, We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. Now, it says that whoever is born of God does not sin, in verse 18, but we know that that kind of language has been used in a couple of places previously, and what it means does not practice sin.

And when he goes on to say that he who has been born of God keeps himself, and that wicked one does not touch him, the word himself, almost all scholars prefer a reading from the Greek that says, keeps him. And he who has been born of God is thought to mean Jesus, keeps him, that is, the believer. Now, the way it reads in this version, it sounds like the believer keeps himself.

There's nothing wrong with that. After all, the very last line in the book tells the believer to keep himself from idols. I remember I debated a pastor once in Oregon.

He challenged me, so what could I do? We debated in his church. He wanted to debate eternal security, and in the course of the debate he said, nowhere in the Bible does it tell us to keep ourselves. Really? Didn't Jude say, keep yourselves in the love of God? Didn't John say, keep yourselves from idols? Keeping yourself is an obligation.

It also says that God keeps us as we keep ourselves. It says, in fact, in 1 Peter 1.5 that we are kept by the power of God through faith. So, the power of God keeps us through our faith.

If we have trust in God, he keeps us by his power. But we have to keep ourselves in the faith. We have to keep ourselves in the love of God, Jude says.

We have to keep from idols. We have to be loyal to him. He is faithful to us, but we are also called upon to be faithful to him and not be drawn away after false gods and so forth.

Now, therefore, there's nothing really wrong with saying that the person who has been born of God keeps himself. That's what we're supposed to do. But most scholars would say it should read, he that is born of God, that is Christ who is born of God, keeps him, not himself, but him, the believer.

The believer is kept by Christ. And the wicked one does not touch him. But what does does not touch him mean? Certainly, it must be a hyperbole because Christians are

attacked by the devil.

The Bible says we have to wear armor. We wrestle against principalities and powers. How do you wrestle without touching? How do you fight without contact? There is contact.

In fact, Paul said that he had received a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. Seems like he got touched. So what does it mean that the wicked one doesn't touch you? I think it probably is simply a hyperbole that means he doesn't gain the advantage over you.

It's as if he can't lay a glove on you. You're keeping yourself or more likely Christ is keeping you. If so, it's like he can't touch.

He can't touch you. Well, he can't touch you. It's like the law can't touch you.

It's a figure of speech. It's not that the devil can't ever do anything to a Christian. Even Paul, an excellent Christian, had the devil afflict him.

And the Bible does say we wrestle against these demonic powers. So we have to be careful about this can't touch you kind of thing being taken in more of a sense than the Christians would mean it. But in any case, he's saying that if you're born of God, you've got Christ himself watching over you, protecting you from the devil.

Now, this doesn't mention any possibility of falling away. But remember, everything that John says is absolutized in his statements, but has is, you know, qualified by other things. He says, you know, everyone who loves is born of God.

Well, that is, of course, everyone who professes that Jesus the Christ is born of God. But you have to do both. You know, he'll take one thing and state it as if it's the only thing.

And likewise, when it comes to our security, we are secure because God keeps us. That he affirms. It's also we're secure because of verse 21, we keep ourselves from idols.

That's an obligation. That's a command. So there's a keeping both ways.

We keep ourselves from idols. God keeps us from the wicked one. And both are in the same passage here.

And both are true. He says, we know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. Christians are born of God.

He teaches we're born again. We're God's children. The rest of the world is pretty much at the mercy of the and he doesn't have much mercy.

They don't have much. They don't have any power over him. They don't have any

illumination against his deception.

We are the ones who have been delivered from that. The rest of the world is in still in darkness and still under his sway. And then he says, and we know that the son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.

And this could be very much a reference to the fact that the Gnostics who had departed from the church and were resisting the apostles teaching, they claim that they knew that's what Gnostic means a knowing one. They believe that salvation comes from knowing the mysterious things that only the initiated in that cult knew. John says, now we know we God has given us an understanding so we can know him.

And the one we know is the one who's true. And not only do we know him, we are in him. The intimacy is greater than just knowing about him and knowing him.

We are joined with him. We are in him that is true, even in his son. Now he says at the end of verse 20, this is the true God.

Who is? Him that is true and his son or just his son? The the antecedent to this would appear to be Jesus Christ. And saying his son Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life. It sounds like he's saying Jesus is the true God, which isn't a surprise to Christians because that's part of our doctrinal kit anyway.

We already know that. But that is controversial. Most cults deny that Jesus is God.

But this sounds like a fairly clear affirmation. And it's not the only clear affirmation John makes in his writings. John is full in his writings of declarations that Jesus is God.

But this one is seemingly unambiguous. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. He's just said Jesus is the true God.

Idolatry is worshiping any God other than the true God. So remain true to Christ, the true God. Don't go after other substitutes.

Accept no substitutes. He's the true God. The rest are the false gods.

Keep yourself from them. Probably suggesting that those who are teaching Gnostic heresies are presenting an untrue God, a different God. Indeed they did.

The Gnostics taught that the true God is not the God of the Old Testament. Not the one that Jesus said was his father. They taught another God out beyond that God, the one who created the world.

That was the Demiurge, almost the devil God, according to Gnosticism. They were teaching other gods, not the true God. John said we know the true God.

He's made himself known to us. We are in him and we are abiding in him. And this defends us from false notions and false gods.

Keep yourself from those false gods. Keep yourself from those idols. Amen.

And thus he closes his exhortation, the book of 1 John.