

What John Knew About the Christian and the World

1 John 5:19

Intro: The writings of John, especially in his epistles, are very simple Greek. If you take a course in the Greek New Testament, you would probably begin reading the Greek text either with 1 John, or possibly with the Gospel of John. And yet the Apostle John could pack a lot of truth into just a few words. In our text for tonight there are just fourteen words in the Greek text, and fifteen words in the KJ translation. But what an amazing amount of truth there is in this verse. What John was declaring was not only what *he* knew, but what *we* ought to know, and that this the reason he said, “And we know . . .” Although the word “and” has been added by the translators to connect this verse with the verse before it.

But just because we are supposed to know it, is no sign that we do. There are many professing Christians who don't know this, and if it is explained to them, they still have trouble believing it: “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” It probably should read, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” And “the wicked one” is not just some wicked man, but the Apostle John was referring to the Devil. The same word, although in a different case, is used in verse 18. (Read it.)

Now going back to verse 19, this is obviously a truth for the people who are in the family of God. To say this to the people in the world, as well as to some professing Christians, would make them think that we are crazy. But *we* know that this is true; both of these statements are true. And these expressions include the whole human race because everyone is either one category or the other. Either you are “of God,” or you are one of countless numbers of people lie in the Evil One. Some are identified with God; all of the rest are identified with the Devil. All of us who know the Lord need to understand this.

The Apostle John uses this expression several times in this epistle. Look with me at the first part of chapter 4. It is ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, lit. *out of the God*.

It is used in verse 1, 2, 3, 4, twice in verse 6, and twice in verse 7. The same phrase is found in 1 John 5:1. In verse 5 you have the opposite expression: ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου.

Now the question is, How did it come about that we are *out of God*, or simply *of God*? We find the answer in verse 1 of chapter 5. (Read.) And so we are “of God” because we are “born of God.” Our condition is not because of anything that we have done to ourselves, but it is all because of what God has done for us. Cf. John 1:12-13. We have God’s life in us, and we can truly say that we are the children of God.

This is the story of our salvation. God chose us in eternity past. He sent His Son to die for us. After we were born into this world, He called us, He drew us, and He saved us. And from that day to this He has kept us, and He has been working in us to make us like His Son. We can also say on the basis of Phil. 1:6 and Jude 24 and 25 that God will not give up on us, but will eventually make us like Christ. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we have the statement of what God is doing in our lives. We are the children of God now, but someday we are going to look like the children of God.

To say that we are *out of God* means not only that we can’t take any credit for what we are, but the Scriptures make it perfectly clear that we don’t deserve to be what we are. To say this is not to be said in a boastful fashion, but with the greatest humility, and thanksgiving to God. It used to be true of us that we were a part of this world (and I will explain more about that in a moment), but now we are in the family of God. Therefore, the world does not know us for what we are, because they did not know our Savior, the Son of God, for what He was. And Paul told the Corinthian church that if the princes of this world had known Who the Lord was, they would never have crucified Him. Even Paul claimed innocence on this. He did not know that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Son of God. He just thought that He was a religious impostor, and so, thinking that he was serving God, doing God a favor to try to do away with those who followed the Lord Jesus Christ.

“We are of God.” We are His people and His friends, even members of His family. God is our heavenly Father. We all have the Spirit of God in us. Everyone of us is a trophy of grace, God’s grace. For us to be able to say that “we are of God” means that God has done a creative work in us. “We are His workmanship,” we have complete justification with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord Jesus is even “the Author and Finisher of our faith.” We can’t even boast about our faith

because that also was a gift from God.

Say this over and over to yourself if you are really trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. Only instead of saying “we are of God,” say, “I am of God.” And every time you say that you should follow it with real thanksgiving to God for what He has done for you.

But now let us look at the second part of this verse.

It says, “and the whole world lieth in wickedness,” or, as I have pointed out, it is better translated *in the Wicked one!*

Now if people have a hard time believing us when we say, “we are of God,” what do you think will be their reaction when we add, “and the whole world lieth in the Wicked One.” They will not only laugh at us, but they will brand us as having something wrong with our minds that we would ever say such a thing. But people in the world don’t know this. They never have known it, and they won’t believe it even if you tell them. And if you try to explain it from Scripture, they still won’t believe it.

This word “lieth” is the same verb that is used in Luke 2:12 where the angel of the Lord told the shepherds, “Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Babies usually like to be in their cribs. They are happy to be there. That is where in the early days of their lives they spend most of their time sleeping.

But there is another thing about a baby lying in a manger; he couldn’t get out by himself even if he wanted to. In fact, if he is tired of being in his crib, he will cry because he wants someone to pick him up. What a picture this is of the people in the world. The difference is that the Wicked One, the Devil, is doing all that he can to keep you under his control. He tries to make us think that we are just as good as we need to be, or that we have the power to make ourselves better. It is the Devil talking when you hear someone say, “You can do anything that you want to do.” But the truth is that they are in bondage to the Wicked One. They can’t free themselves, and most of the time they are content to be the way they are.

Wherever you go in this world, regardless of what generation it might be, from the days of Adam down to the present hour, it has always been true since Adam sinned, that people, all people, regardless of what nation they

live in, or what language they speak, or the color of their skin – “the whole world lieth in the Wicked One,” under His power, blinded to the real trust, and unable to extricate themselves. You and I meet people like this every day. By man’s standards, some of them are very respectable people, and on the human level may do a lot of good, but they are living under the control of the Wicked One. They are blinded to the Gospel, and so have no place for God or His Word or His Son in their hearts.

So the greatest problem in the world is not poverty, although that is a terrible problem in many countries. Nor is the greatest problem disease, although that is dreadful in its proportions in many places. The lack of good schools is not the major problem of the world, even though we have to confess that it is a great need in our day. Even war, the war in Iraq, is not the greatest problem in the world. If we can honestly say that we know what this verse, 1 John 5:19, says is true, then we know that, by far, the greatest problem we have is sin, and the worst enemy that anyone can have, is this Wicked One whom the Apostle John was speaking about.

Some of us have gotten out from under his control although we have to deal with him constantly and with his wicked cohorts. How did we get out? Did we really want to get out? Not to begin with. Who showed us what our problem was? Well, it may have been someone else who was out of Satanic bondage, and they told us how to get out. But if we could look behind the scene as we are able to do from the pages of Scripture, we would see that God sent that person, or persons to us. Or it was God Who put His Word into our hands so that we could read on its pages truth that we can only find there. And we learned that Jesus Christ died on the Cross first of all to pay the penalty for our sins, but beyond that it was to defeat the Enemy of our souls and to set us free forever from the bondage of our sins. What is sin? It is anything that is displeasing to God. What is the penalty of sin? It is physical death – separation of our souls from our bodies. It is spiritual death – separation from God. And if no change takes place in a person’s heart, it is going to mean eternal death from which there will never be any possibility of escape. Yes, sin is so terrible in God’s sight that it leads ultimately to an eternal hell.

But remember. Hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels, not primarily for human sinners. But if the remedy for sin and the escape from judgment is not taken, that is where sinners will go too.

But that is where the Gospel comes in, the good news of salvation, the

message of forgiveness and eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord gave the message when he was talking to a Jewish Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. And many have found life through our Lord's words, some of the most familiar words in all of the Bible. I am referring to John 3:16.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not just one of many saviors. He is the only Savior. Through Him salvation is a gift, undeserved, but free. Paul, who at one time thought you could win God's favor by good works, wrote to Timothy, his younger brother in the Lord, and he said this:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Tim. 1:15).

The NIV translates the last of this verse, "of whom I am the worst." That is the way we all feel after we are saved, not that we are the best people that the Lord has saved, but that we are the worst.

Now in closing I come back to my text, and I am so thankful that I can say for myself what the Apostle John said about himself, and about all believers: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Do you wonder why our world, and our nation, is in such deplorable condition tonight? The answer is found in our text and many other places in Scripture. It is because man is a sinner, and he doesn't want to have anything to do with God, or with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible doesn't give us any hope that the whole world is going to be changed, but it does give us hope that through the preaching of the Gospel God will open the eyes of those who are spiritual blind, and open the hearts of stubborn sinners, drawing them to Christ, and saving them by faith. And so the Apostle John could write, as he did write:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).