

**19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**

This is the second of the three “We know that” (Οἶδαμεν ὅτι) statements with which John summarizes and closes his epistle, given to assure his readers and us, that those who have truly exercised faith in Yeshua and His work on behalf of those given to Him<sup>1</sup> need never fear of falling under the condemnation due to the wrath of God against sinners. As Paul asserts:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom 8:1–2)

What is more, we know this, not only as a matter of established fact since it is the very statement of God in the Scriptures themselves, but we know it personally as well, for the Ruach HaKodesh witnesses with our spirits that we are, indeed, the children of God.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:16–17)

Thus, “we know,” not only intellectually but also personally, through the in-dwelling presence of the Ruach. This does not mean that, in the weakness of our flesh, we never have doubts or even question the reality of who we are in Yeshua. But what this does mean is that inevitably the work of the Ruach in the life of every true child of God, will continue to affirm a settled affirmation of one’s true identity as a child of God—as a member of His family—and therefore as having eternal life in the Son.

This personal and individual knowing or affirmation of one’s own identity within the family of God is emphasized by the fact that John casts our verse in the first person. In the previous verse (v. 18), he uses the third person (“We know that no one who is born of God sins”), but in our verse he writes: “We know that we are of God.” In the first of the “we know” verses, the knowledge is of an external reality, but here in our verse the knowledge is of oneself. Thus John emphasizes the truth that one who is truly saved by God’s grace through faith in Yeshua can

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John 17:12, 24; 18:9.

have genuine assurance of their own eternal salvation.

This is what John means when he writes “We know that we are of God.” This summarizing statement reiterates what John has already stated in 3:1.

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1Jn 3:1)

The fact that he adds the words “and such we are,” puts, as it were, an exclamation point at the end of the sentence. Not only has the revealed word of God proclaimed that those who are in Messiah are children of God, but those who are born from above likewise know within themselves that they are God’s children.

And this is what John means when he writes that “we are of God” (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ), literally, “out of God.” Having been born by the power of God, as the previous verse states, we recognize that God is, in fact, the source of our spiritual life and of our being.

But it is not only the witness of the indwelling Ruach by which we are assured of our being children of God, but also by the changed life we live. John has emphasized in this epistle the truth that one who truly is born from above does not live a life characterized by sin (1:7; 3:4–9; 5:18) but rather repents and seeks forgiveness for sin (1:8–10; 2:1, 12). As F. F. Bruce notes,

To claim to belong to the family of God is one thing; to exhibit the marks of His family, in the light of the criteria of obedience, love, and perseverance, is another thing. In the case of John and his ‘little children,’ these criteria have been satisfied. As for those not included in the family of God, they belong to the godless ‘world’ (in the sense of 2:15–17; 3:1), which lies in the grip of ‘the evil one,’ called in the Gospel ‘the ruler of this world.’ (John 14:30).<sup>1</sup>

... and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. – John uses the word “world” (κόσμος, *kosmos*) in a number of different ways in this epistle.

1. Sometimes *kosmos* simply denotes the created universe, and the abode of mankind in general. Thus he speaks of false prophets having “gone out into the world” (4:1), the spirit of

---

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *1John*, pp. 126–7.

anti-Messiah has already come into the world (4:3). But also the love of God is manifest in that He sent His Son “into the world” (cf. 4:9, 17).

2. Other times *kosmos* is used by John to simply describe the physical world and the things it contains, as that which is temporal but also necessary. He writes “But whoever has the world’s goods...” and does not help his brother in need by giving to him, raises the question of whether or not that person has the love of God abiding in him (3:17). Likewise, John reminds us that “the world is passing away” (2:17).
3. Most often, however, John uses the word *kosmos* to describe that which is contrary to God and that which should have no part in a believer’s life.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (2:15–16)

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (3:1)

Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. (3:13)  
You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. (4:4–5)

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God? (5:4–5)

It is this use of *kosmos*, “world,” that John intends in our verse, for the “whole world” as he describes it “lies in the power of the evil one.” That he emphasizes the “whole world” as in the power of the evil one<sup>1</sup>

---

1 It seems quite obvious that τῷ πονηρῷ, “the evil (one)” should be taken as masculine, not neuter (which would yield the sense of “evil” in general), since in the previous verse ὁ πονηρὸς is masculine and clearly refers to the devil.

means that the world in its totality has been and continues to be affected by the evil one, Satan. John does not write that the world is “of” the evil one, for God as Creator owns the universe, having created it all of His own sovereign and omnipotent power.

Yeshua Himself, in teaching His disciples, refers to Satan as “the ruler of the world” and states:

I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here. (Jn 14:30–31)

When Yeshua stated that “he has nothing in Me,” He is affirming that the evil one has no authority over Him, and thus His obedience to the Father is what brought Him to the cross, not the schemes or success of the enemy. And this is the foundation of great comfort for all who are “in Yeshua,” for all who are born again as children of God are safe in Him and are assured of sharing the ultimate victory with Him. Just as the enemy has no authority over Yeshua, so he has none over those who by faith are united with Him in His death and resurrection. As John stated earlier in this chapter,

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. (5:4)

Those people who are still dominated by the standards of the world do so because such worldly domination suits their fallen disposition. They are not coerced into their worldly lifestyle but choose it willingly. It is interesting to see how John has characterized the world by stating that it “lies in the power of the evil one.” The Greek word translated “lies” is *κεῖμαι* (*keimai*), and can be used with extended meanings such as “to exist; to be appointed, set, destined; to occur, appear, “ etc. But most often in the Apostolic Scriptures it carries the sense of a reclining position, particularly of a person lying down. With this in mind, Stott, speaking of the fallen world, writes:

It is “in the evil one,” in his grip and under his dominion. Moreover, it lies there. It is not represented as struggling actively to be free but as quietly lying, perhaps even unconsciously asleep, in the arms of Satan.<sup>1</sup>

How clearly John paints the verbal picture of mankind, showing

---

<sup>1</sup> Stott, *1John*, p. 193.

the stark contrast between those who are children of God by faith in Yeshua and those who lie comfortably in the bed of worldly passions willfully led astray by the evil one. And surely, while there are varying degrees in which the unbeliever is entangled in the ways of the evil one, as far as John is concerned, and his inspired words teach, there is no neutral ground. Either a person is a child of God, reborn into the family of the redeemed and thus possessing the indwelling Ruach, being united with Yeshua and thereby growing in likeness to Him, or they are of the world and live under the domain of the “ruler of the world,” the evil one, Satan.

Again, John’s use of “the world” represents human society under the power of evil and at war with God and his people. “The evil one does not ‘touch’ the Christian, but the world is helplessly in his grasp.” [v. 18] There are only two possible positions. Everyone is either “of God” or “under the control of the evil one.” Neutrality is not possible.<sup>1</sup>

This clear and graphic contrast which John gives us in this text ought both to encourage us in the abundant grace of God by Whom we have been rescued from the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13), and energize us all the more to give the gospel to those who are enslaved to sin, following the ruler of this world in the blindness of their disposition. Truly, the gospel centered in Yeshua and His infinite work of salvation, is the power of God that results in salvation to all who receive Him by faith (Jn 1:12; Rom 1:16). And it is to this foundational character of the Gospel that John now concerns himself as that which every believer knows to be true.

**20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Yeshua Messiah. This is the true God and eternal life.**

This is now the third time John has introduced his summary statements with the declaration “we know” (*οἶδαμεν, oidamen*), and each time he casts the verb in the perfect tense. As we have seen, John seems to use the perfect tense in order to state that an event which took place in the past continues to have its ongoing affect in the present. Thus, when using this form of the verb in these concluding verses, he is reminding his readers of that decisive moment in their life when they

---

1 Daniel Akin, *1John*, p. 213.

heard the message of the Gospel and put their faith in the Savior that it proclaimed. But he is likewise emphasizing that their initial coming to faith was that which transformed their lives by being born again unto a new life in Yeshua, a life that is eternal and kept by the very power of God Himself. John knows nothing of a “salvation” that can be lost, regained, and lost again. Salvation belongs to the Lord and He is the One Who keeps all who are His.

This final affirmation of John as he brings his epistle to a close, is that which is fundamental to all that he has written, and deals a final blow to the heretical theology which the dissenters were teaching and attempting to persuade others to their errant ways. For those who had fallen into the trap of Gnosticism and were attempting to “know” God through mystical experiences and secret knowledge, they had dismissed the most important truth, that Yeshua Himself is one with the Father in all aspects, that He came in the flesh as the incarnate Son of God, Immanuel, Who is God with us. Some, it would seem, attempted to refashion Yeshua as either a figment of man’s imagination or as a “mixture” of divine and human which ended up being neither, in an effort to explain the mystery of the incarnation in rational, philosophical terms. Others simply rejected Him outright as a fraud or as just another man who had led people astray.

This enemy did not confine his use of this “intellectual” weapon against Yeshua to the 1st Century. In every era since the appearance of Yeshua, the inexplicable truth that He, the Son of God, came in the flesh and lived among us as a man, worked miracles, died and rose again, ascended to the Father, and Who therefore proved beyond doubt that He is the Son of God, has constantly been dismissed by unbelievers as simply impossible. Therefore, John, who began this epistle as one of many eye-witnesses of Yeshua, ends it with this affirmation of truth which is at the very center of our faith in Him and therefore of that which is saving faith. To deny that Yeshua is the Son of God, God come in the flesh, is to deny that He could, in fact, pay for the sins of all those who would be saved. For only an infinite life, one without beginning or ending, and yet a life that in every manner shares the life of mankind, could be given to redeem those of mankind who are marked by sin and thereby estranged from God.

Thus, whenever John refers to Yeshua as “the Son of God” in this epistle (3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 5:10, 12–13, 20), it is clear that he is affirming the divine nature of Yeshua as well as His human nature. And he does so in this final summary and conclusion of his epistle. To deny the mystery of the incarnation of Yeshua by denying that He is God in the flesh, is to unravel the very warp and woof of who God is, and His way of saving

sinner.

Further, John states in this opening line of our verse that “we know that the Son of God has come.” We know it because the Scriptures promised through the words of the prophets, and through the many eye-witnesses of His coming, some of whom (like John) were borne along by the Spirit of God to write the inspired words of Scripture that would forever proclaim this truth. And thus, having had the eyes of our hearts opened to the truth, John calls us to engage the battle for the truth, against the evil one and his lies, and the darkness of the world that lies under his power. Thus, having been girded about with God’s truth, and having the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, we know that we will be successful through the power that God gives us.

As the children of God are assailed on every side, he [John], as we have said, encourages and exhorts them to persevere in resisting their enemies, and for this reason, because they fight under the banner of God, and certainly know that they are ruled by his Spirit; but he now reminds them where this knowledge is especially to be found.<sup>1</sup>

*... and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true –* Now John goes on to more fully define what he means when he writes “we know the Son of God has come.” He uses two more words which connect to the concept of “knowledge,” i.e., “understanding” (*διανόια*, *dianoia*) and “true” (*ἀληθινός*, *alēthinos*).

We should first note that such “understanding” (*dianoia*) is something God gives, not something that a person acquires on his own or by his own strength or intellectual powers. The understanding of Who God is, what He has done as Creator, Savior, Sustainer, and King, is that which must be revealed as well as given the ability to receive, accept, and confess it as true. This is what is meant by “understanding.” Surely this involves a person’s diligent desire and effort to know that truth. But the desire as well as the ability to receive what is true and to make it one’s own through faith in Yeshua, this is purely the gift of God. This same truth is also reinforced by Paul.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:8–10)

---

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *1John*, pp. 272-73.



The crux of the opening line (v. 8) is to determine the antecedent of the demonstrative “that” in the phrase “and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Since both of the words “grace” (χάρις, *xaris*) and “faith” (πίστις, *pistis*) are feminine nouns, we might expect Paul to have used the feminine demonstrative “that” to refer to “grace” and “faith.” But instead, he uses a neuter demonstrative. Why? Because he intends us to understand that both the grace of God as well as the faith to receive His grace, are a gift of God. Thus, in all aspects of our salvation, beginning with our initial confessing of Yeshua as our Savior and Lord, we were moved upon by the Spirit in accordance with God’s sovereign grace.

Thus God has given to all the elect, those who are eternally saved, the ability to grasp the truth to the end that all who are His would have full understanding that He, and He alone is the one and only true God. It is significant to recognize that John utilizes the adjective ἀληθινός (*alēthinós*, “true”) rather than ἀληθής (*alēthēs*, “to be truthful, honest, etc.) when he writes “so that we may know Him who is true.” Surely it is true that God is the source of all that is true, but in this text John is emphasizing that God, revealed in His fulness to mankind in the incarnate Son, is the one and only true God in distinction from the imaginary and demon “gods” (i.e., idols) put forward by the fallen imagination of sinful mankind. As Calvin notes:

By true God he does not mean one who tells the truth, but him who is really God; and he so calls him to distinguish him from all idols. Thus true is in opposition to what is fictitious; for it is ἀληθινός, and not ἀληθής.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that God revealed Himself in truth from the very beginning, for the creation itself manifests the Creator, as Paul teaches:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:18–20)

Yet, as John emphasizes here, the ultimate and final revelation of God is vested in the appearance of His Son, Yeshua. From the very beginning of creation, God promised to Chavah that One would come from

---

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *1John*, p. 273.