



Daily Devotionals

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1 JOHN 5:18-21 ONLY JESUS

18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. 19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 20 We know also 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—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

The Church is the outpost of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdom of the world. The citizens of the world live under control of sin, and therefore, remain in their sin. To the contrary, the citizens of the kingdom of God are no longer controlled by sin because God keeps them safe from enslavement to sin. He does this by providing them with a Savior - the "one who was born of God" - and that One is Jesus Christ. He is the Word among the people of the Church.

Although we do sin, because we cannot be so pure on our own not to live into our fallen human nature, we are not hopeless in our sin because when we confess we have One who will deliver us from our sin and provide us with his righteousness. In Christ is our freedom from bondage to sin and our guarantee of eternal life. When we believe in him we are born into a new citizenship in God's kingdom through the waters of baptism.

Not only does Christ's presence among us give us access to the Father, but it is only through Jesus that we can even know that there is a God and his true nature. God sent his Son to the world as a human being not only to save the world but also to reveal his true nature to the world in terms that human beings can understand - human terms and a human existence. So, for the Church, Jesus is the true God and the way to eternal life.

If we claim to be in the Church but refuse to believe that Jesus the only Son of God and the sole way to eternal life, then we are guilty of idolatry because we are replacing the true God with a god of our own making. This always has been and always will be a temptation for human beings, both in the Church and the world. There is nothing other than Jesus that is necessary and sufficient for eternal life with God. Our rules, liturgies, doctrines, ethics, and acts of social justice may all be aids to growing in our relationship with Jesus, but if we raise any of those to the status of being necessary for salvation we have created an idol. Therefore, it is fitting that St. John ends his first letter with the admonition to avoid idols.

Only in you, my Lord Jesus, can I live as a citizen of your kingdom. Give me eyes only for you and a mind that is disciplined against being distracted by every opportunity to add something I can do to assure my salvation. Preserve your Church by your presence and empower us as your witnesses through your Spirit. Amen.

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