

Preventing Momentary Amnesia

1 John #14

1 John 5:18-20

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

I watched a most interesting situation unfold in the lane right next to me while heading east on route 60 while stopped at the corner of 58ave this past week. The lady in the Nissan to my left was minding her business, listening to her music, and having a good ole time waiting for the light to turn green. But everything changed when the gentleman directly behind her started beeping his horn, flashing his lights, and waving at her to go even though the light was still red. My immediate response was, "I'm no B.F. Goodrich or Dale Earnhardt, but I know that when the light is red, it doesn't mean go." Unfortunately, the lady in the Nissan forgot that elementary driving lesson, especially as the pressure from the driver continued. She ran the red light, as did Bob the Beeper, who was very pleased. But there was one person who witnessed the whole thing several cars back in the turn lane of 58th about to head east on route 60 who wasn't pleased. Not at all. He was Mr. Unmarked Police Car Man. And he pulled them both over.

My immediate response was "what a picture of what Christians in our world are facing right now." We know red means stop and green means go. But the pressures of the horn beeps, the flashing lights, and the waving hands cause us to develop momentary amnesia while in route to our destination. The beeps, the lights, and the hands cause us to momentarily forget what we already know. And when that happens, God sends a patrolmen armed with a \$200 ticket in his hand to remind us.

In the first century, John's message to the believers in his day was crystal clear: This is not a time to develop momentary amnesia. This is not a time to forget what you already know. And ladies and gentleman of the Genesis Church of Vero Beach, 20 centuries later the message is the same: This is not a time to develop momentary amnesia. This is not a time to forget what you already know. Instead, it is a time to say, in the midst of the horn beeps, the flashing lights, and the hand motions, "to this I hold, my shepherd will defend me. For my life is wholly bound to his. Oh, how strange. How divine. I can say "all is mine." Yet not I, but through Christ in me."

The surest way to prevent momentary amnesia is to hold fast to what you already know. John tells us how to do that in 1 John 5:18-20.

¹⁸ We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. 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 by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Remember That You Know:

1. Who Protects You (18)

- **Martin Luther:** (1) Once upon a time, there was a man who lived in Germany who dared to suggest that people in the pew have the right to read the Bible for themselves. It nearly got him killed. But, determined, he escaped to a castle in Wittenberg, Germany and translated the NT from Greek to German. While in that castle, he looked at the defensive bulwark built of massive stones and also wrote something else: "a mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our shelter he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing." 3) His name was Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation. There was no momentary amnesia for Martin Luther. He knew Jesus was his protector. We better know that too in times such as this.
- **John's Three Statements About the Shelter/Safety of God:** (1) John makes three statements in v18, all of which are connected and deal with the theme of the safety/shelter of God. It will help you to understand his reasoning if you add the word "because" after the first one and the word "therefore" after the second one. (2) We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin (because) the One who was born of God keeps them safe and (therefore) the evil one cannot harm them.
- **What We "Know" About the Shelter/Safety of God from Those Statements:** (1) If you are born again, you know that, while you are far from perfect, you are also far from the person you used to be. Contrary to the Gnostics who taught what you do with your body doesn't matter because the flesh is evil anyway, the born-again Christian does not continue to sin as a lifestyle. If he/she does, that person isn't born again. (2) The reason you don't continue to sin as a lifestyle is because God loves you too much not to protect you from trouble, including the trouble you cause. He loves you too much to keep letting you walk down a dark path. He might let you walk down it for a while. But he will turn you around because Jesus, the One who was born of God, keeps them safe. (3) Weapons designed by the evil one to harm you will form against you. It's guaranteed. But no weapon that is being formed against you will prosper because the evil one cannot harm you (i.e., do away with). God limited Satan's ability to do away with Job. So also, with you because you are born of God. (4) These things we know!

2. Who Controls You (19)

- **That New World Order Guy:** (1) You've got one of those friends that thinks everything is part of a gigantic conspiracy. "Look at that new Tesla truck right there. It looks like a spaceship." "No, it's the New World Order." "Can you believe the price of chicken nowadays?" "Oh yes. New

World Order.” (2) The strange thing is, I’m actually starting to believe him. (3) Though we know God controls those he saves in this world, it sure seems the devil has his hands on it right now.

- **John’s Two Statements About How the World is Controlled:** (1) The first one deals with God’s work in the world: “we know that we are children of God.” In this world right now, we know we are a child of the King. That’s good news. But the good news about Jesus’ control of us in the world is followed by bad news in the second statement: “the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” In Job 1, Satan roams the earth looking for those whom he can devour. Here he’s successful on a grand scale. (2) But the verse is meant to be an encouragement and it is when both statements are read together, and you put the word “in” between the statements: We know that we are children of God (in) a whole world that is under the control of the evil one.”
- **What We Know About Spiritual Forces In Control in Our World:** (1) The only time there will be more people controlled by Jesus in the world than there are people controlled by the devil is when Jesus comes back, Satan is defeated, and a New Heaven and New Earth comes into being. Therefore, do not be discouraged or surprised at the direction the world seems to be going. The worse the world gets, the better the news is for us because that means Jesus is closer to coming back. (2) There is a reason the devil controls more people in our world than Jesus. It is this reason: Jesus’ kingdom comes one soul, one person at a time. It’s not mass conversion. It’s individual conversion. It’s not mass world change. It’s individual world change. It doesn’t start large. It starts as small as a mustard seed. That’s what Jesus has always been up to in the world. And that’s what he will always be up to. (3) Eleven of the Twelve Disciples became the change they wanted to see in the world because Jesus changed them. He still works the same way. We are called to be about individual redemption that leads to the Christian influence God desires, not trying to make the people in the world value what you value. Only God can do that. And he will, one heart at a time. (4) These things we know!

3. Who Teaches You (20a)

- **The Difference Between Wisdom and Knowledge:** (1) Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. But wisdom is not putting it into a fruit salad. (2) Knowledge is knowing Brussel Sprouts are good for you. But wisdom is substituting green beans cooked with ham hock for them. (3). Knowledge is knowing the information. Wisdom is applying the information to the situation armed with the knowledge that you absolutely, positively, do not know it all.
- **John’s Assault on People Who Thought they “Knew It All” But Didn’t:** (1) What I love the most about this closing passage (the last verse, 5:21, is a closing statement, not passage) is John’s subtle rebuke of the Know-It-Alls in John’s day. (2) Notice how many times the word “know” is used: We know, we know, we know. Over and over. The heretics in John’s day were Gnostics. They got their name from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosko*. (3) John’s original audience of born-again Christians would have read this understanding fully the meaning: the Know-It-Alls know nothing. The born-again Christians do!
- **John’s Three-Fold Encouragement to Christians in His Day:** (1) Is found in verse 20: Jesus has come, and his regeneration of our hearts has given us understanding. And this understanding gives us wisdom when we apply it correctly. (2) Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom therefore come only through Christ. And we, who know Jesus, have the first two because he has saved us. The wisdom to know what is true is up to us. We have to apply that knowledge.
- **It’s Not Enough to Know and Understand. You Must Also Apply:** (1) Knowing and understanding God’s forgiveness isn’t enough. You have to have the wisdom to apply. (2) Knowing and understanding how to pray isn’t enough. You have to have wisdom to apply it. (3) Knowing and understanding that God works from the inside out, one heart and soul at a time isn’t enough. You must have the wisdom to ask God to do it in your life.

4. Where You Reside (20b)

- **What It Means to Be in Christ According to Saint Patrick:** “Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.”
- **What It Means to Be in Christ According to the Whole Counsel of the Scriptures:** (1) In the Bible, the dwelling/residence of God is a predominant theme. He resided with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He resided in the Tabernacle. He resided in the Temple. Then, in the OT, God departed his residence at the Temple and Ichabod was written on the doorposts. (2) In the NT, the residence of God returns when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen His glory. Now he resides not in a building made with human hands. But in your heart and mine. And at the end of the Bible, we will see His face and dwell/reside where he dwells/resides, in heaven, forever and ever. (3) That’s what it means to be in Christ according to the Bible.
- **What It Means to Be in Christ According to John:** (1) Is an extension of what the whole counsel of the Scriptures says about residence. (a) We are in Him who is true (in other words, we are in God) because we are in His Son Jesus. Because we are in Christ, we know we have eternal life.
- **What It Means to Be in Christ According to Paul:** “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:27)
- **What It Means to Be in Christ According to Us:** “When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but through Christ in me.” This we know! Now and forevermore, Amen.