

“Let us teach the New Testament!”

# First Epistle of John

**Lesson 15, 1 John 5:18-21**

1john.currah.download September 2019

## Introduction

In this last of 15 lessons on the New Testament Book of 1 John, we shall deal with these ten topics:

1. 1 John 5:18-21 in the *English Standard Version* (2016)
2. 1 John 5:18-21 SBL *Greek NT* (2010) with English interlinear
3. Greek textual variants in 1 John 5:18-21
4. Parallels between 1 John 5:18-21 and the Gospel of John
5. Analytical outline of 1 John 5:18-21
6. Important vocabulary and historical meanings
7. Greek grammar: The definite article with singular nouns
8. Teachable points from 1 John 5:18-21
9. An historical Christian doctrine: Knowing God
10. Practical applications of 1 John 5:18-21 for Christians

## 1. The *English Standard Version* (2016) text of 1 John 5:18-21

<sup>18</sup> We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

<sup>19</sup> We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

<sup>20</sup> 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 Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

<sup>21</sup> Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

## 2. Interlinear Greek-English Text of 1 John 5:18-21

<sup>18</sup> We-know that everyone who having-been-born of the God not sins,

<sup>18</sup> Οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει,

but he who-was-born of the God protects him, and the evil-one not touches him.

ἀλλ' ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ.

<sup>19</sup> We-know that from the God are, and the world whole in the evil one lies.

<sup>19</sup> οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται.

<sup>20</sup> we-know And that the Son of-the God has-come and has-given to-us understanding,

<sup>20</sup> οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἦκει, καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν

that we-may-know the True-One; and we-are in the True-One, in the Son his

ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμέν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ

Jesus Christ. This-One is the true God and life everlasting.

Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

<sup>21</sup> Children, keep yourselves from the idols.

<sup>21</sup> Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων.

## 3. Manuscript Variants in 1 John 5:18-21

**5:18** From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, three manuscripts read, “protects him” whilst others read, “protects himself.”

**5:20** From the 5<sup>th</sup> century, some manuscripts replace the conjunction *de* with *kai*. Both conjunctions translate, “And.”

From the 5<sup>th</sup> century, some manuscripts read, “gave” instead of “has given.”

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, some manuscripts replace “we may know” with “we know.”

From the 5<sup>th</sup> century, some manuscripts replace “know him who is true” with “know the true God.”

**5:21** From the 4<sup>th</sup> century some manuscripts alter “yourselves” from a neuter pronoun, which agrees with the neuter noun “children,” to a masculine pronoun. It is hard to know which the original form was, yet the meaning remains the same.

Download from [1john.currah.download](http://1john.currah.download) a more complete list of textual variants.

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4. Parallels between 1 John 5:18-21 and the Gospel of John

Many of the first readers of 1 John knew John, the Gospel of John, and his teaching, his vocabulary and his expressions.

1 John	Gospel of John
The evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 5:18-19	I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 17:15
The Son of God has come, and has given us understanding that we may know him who is true in his Son Jesus Christ This is the true God and eternal life 5:20	Your Son ... this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent 17.2-3

5. Analytical outline for preachers, teachers and groups leaders.

**Part 4: The Source of Our Confidence 5.6-21**

**XV. Reasonable conclusions 5.18-21**

**A. We hold to three convictions 5.18-20a**

1. We are born of God 5.18

- a. We no longer sin habitually
- b. We keep ourselves and the evil one cannot touch us

2. We belong to God 5.19

- a. We remain with God
- b. The world remains with the evil one

3. We know the True God 5.20a

- a. By Jesus Christ who came
- b. He has given us understanding

**B. We know Jesus Christ 5.20b**

- 1. He is True God
- 2. He gives us everlasting life

**C. We keep ourselves from idols 5.21**

## 6. Important terms and their historical meanings in 1 John 5:18-21

Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition, 2001.

**idol** εἶδωλον *eidôlon*

**1** cultic image/representation of an alleged transcendent being, image, representation...

**2** through metonymy ... fabricated/imaged deity, idol...

Keep oneself from deified illusions or ghosts (i.e. views of God that are divorced from the truth of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ; in contrast to this [truth], the [idols] are but phantoms in the Greco-Roman sense of the term ... 1J 5:21.

**lie** κέῖμαι *keimai*

**3** In a variety of transferred senses involving especially abstractions *to exist, have place, or be there* (for something)...

**d** find oneself, be, in a certain state or condition... The world lies in (the power of) the evil one 1J 5:19.

**touch** ἅπτω *aptô*

**5** to make contact with a view to causing harm, touch for the purpose of harming, injure...

The evil one cannot harm him (or cannot even touch him...) 1J 5:18.

**true** ἀληθινός *aléthinós*

**3** pertaining to being real, *genuine, authentic, real*...

Of God in contrast to other deities, who are not real ... J 17:3 ... 1J 5:20.

**understanding** διάνοια *dianoia*

**1** the faculty of thinking, comprehending, and reasoning, understanding, intelligence, mind as the organ of [thinking]...

Insight 1J 5:20.

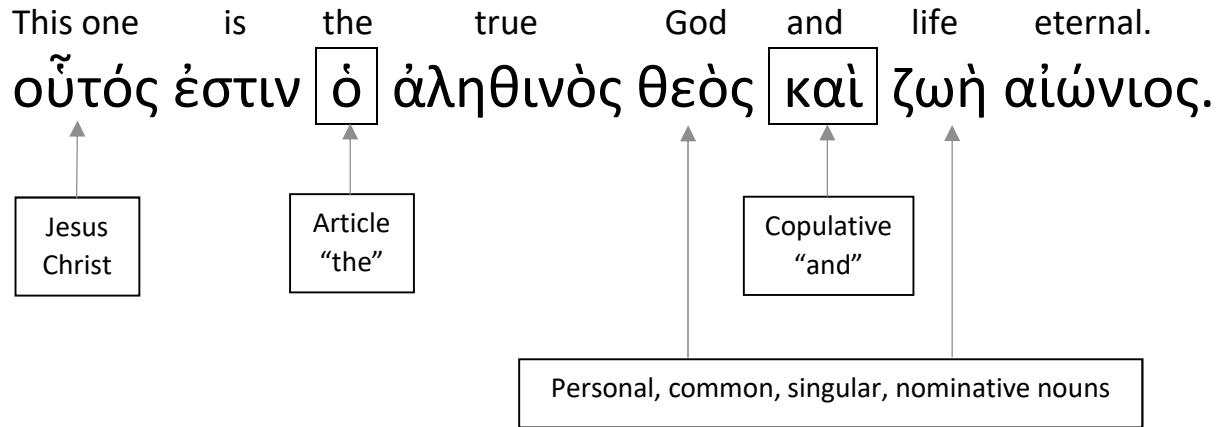
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## 7. Greek grammar of 1 John 5:18-21. The article with singular nouns

In Greek grammar, when two singular, personal substantives (nouns, participles or adjectives) (1) have the same case, (2) have only one definite article "the" and (3) are connected by "and", both substantives refer to a same person.

Thus, in 1 John 5:20, if the antecedent of "he" is Jesus Christ, then he is both true God and eternal life. This seems to be the case, because 1 John 1:2 states, "the eternal life ... was with the Father and was made manifest to us." (See the diagram on the next page.)

See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.



## 8. Teachable points from 1 John 5:18-21

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you teachable points from the passage. For example:

### Three reasonable conclusions

1. Those born of God do not sin 5.18
2. Christians are of God 5.19
3. The Son of God has come and given us understanding 5.20

### About God

1. God gave human birth to Jesus 5.18
2. God gives spiritual birth to Christians 5.18
3. Christians belong to God 5.19
4. God's Son has come 5.20
5. Christians know God 5.20
6. Jesus Christ is the true God 5.20
7. God has no idol 5.21

### About Jesus Christ

1. Jesus was uniquely born of God 5.18
2. Jesus protects those who are born of God 5.18
3. The Son of God has come 5.20
4. He has given us understanding 5.20
5. We are in God's Son Jesus Christ 5.20
6. He is the true God 5.20
7. He is eternal Life 5.20

### About the evil one

1. The evil one cannot harm us 5.18
2. He rules over the whole world 5.19
3. We must keep ourselves from idols 5.21

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Instead of reading or talking about all of these points, have learners form tiny groups. Have each group read a few verses of 1 John 5:18-21, looking for the topic. It is not necessary to find or to report all of the items. After a few minutes, ask someone in each tiny group to tell two or three items that the group members found. Thank all for their cooperation.

### 9. An historical Christian doctrine: Knowing God

*Knowing God.* Christian believers experience a constant sense of the presence of God with them. Through confession of their sins and by acts of worship, they experience a heightened sense of joy. God works in them a conscience to discern right from wrong, and truth from error. They learn both to speak to God and to receive replies from him.

By reading or hearing messages from the New Testament Scriptures, they increase their understanding of how God works, and of how to think, to believe and to behave in the world. Over time, the Holy Spirit transforms their character and grants to them ability to speak about God and to serve one another.

### 10. Practical application of 1 John 5:18-21 for Christians

After someone or several have read or recited 1 John 5:18-21 in small gatherings of learners, pose queries such as these, and let anyone reply:

- What have you learnt from this passage about God?
- What have you learnt from this passage about Jesus?
- What have you learnt from this passage about sinning?
- What have you learnt from this passage about the evil one?
- What have you learnt from this passage about eternal life?

Whilst preaching, teaching or leading, recommend ways in which to apply the passage, putting it into practice. For example:

- Invite everyone to form small groups and to pray together, thanking God for eternal life, asking Jesus to defeat Satan in each one's home and personal experience.
- Plan with believers to cleanse their homes of idols, pagan symbols, false religious books, and pornographic materials and software. Arrange with them to come burn all such objects in a bonfire.

### Conclusion

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