

**1 John 5:20 (NKJV)** (Where understanding comes from)

**<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

John is summing up his letter to these believers. He has just talked to them about the problem of living in this world, the problem of **evil**. He is making it very clear to them that they are going to be in a tremendous struggle as long as they are in this world. And the struggle is because of the nature of the kingdoms. There is **God's kingdom** that He is building on earth. God is bringing people to Himself and growing them up in the faith. And there is the **kingdom of the devil** that is always completely dedicated to destroying anything that God loves. The devil has got to get at God through people since he has no power to attack God directly.

That is the nature of this life in this world. And that truth is not pleasant. Now John loves these people he is writing to. He regards them as his **little children** as we will see in the next verse. And he is giving his parting words to them.

Now what will give his little children **ammunition** in their struggle against flesh and the devil? How can we stand up against this world that is directed against God? How can he help His children make it?

What He points to, like so much of scripture, is an orientation to **who we are in Christ**.

And remember, he is pointing to CERTAINTY. He is pointing to **what we know**. I hope we are doing business with this. If we are to have joy in this life we **MUST** focus our minds on that which we have **certainty in**. And John tells us over and over what those things are.

Let me ask a question here to illustrate what I mean.

What effect has meditating on what John **says is certain** had in our lives this week?

What do you feel when you meditate on

**1 John 5:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.**

**<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

**<sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

## 1 John 5:18-20 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> **We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.**

<sup>19</sup> **We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*.**

<sup>20</sup> **And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

How do you feel when you think about those certainties? How does it change your mood? What happens to you when you think of the hundreds of wonderful statements about how God loves His people? How do you feel when you bring to mind His promises? God gave those things to us as fuel for living. We live in a battleground. But we have **God's word** and **God's presence** with us. How do we feel when we train our minds to come back to His truths over and over again?

My point is that these truths, over time, considered over and over again, lead to joy. That is John's point in writing. He wants us to be **certain** about them so we can have Joy, **here and now** and **into eternity**. That is what he says. How do you feel when you think about the things we are certain about.

Ok, let's contrast that. How do you feel when you fixate on what **might happen**, or what **could happen**, or what will **probably happen**, or what you **fear will happen**?

How do you feel when you imagine the bad things that could happen to you, or your spouse, or your children, or the church, or our society? How do you feel when you allow the fears you hold to **be regarded** as if they are certainties? How do you feel when you cannot allow for **anything good** to come from the **circumstances** God has put you in?

Do you feel miserable? Do you feel dread? Do you feel fear? Do you feel anxious. Well we probably should. All of our psychological equipment is working properly. When we don't orient our world according to trust in God, when our minds do not run to the truths we are certain of, we are **supposed** to feel bad. It is **logical** that we would. We live in a battle ground, not a luxury cruise. When we focus on uncertainty our joy is stolen. But we can be comforted. There is nothing wrong with our feelings. There is nothing wrong with our psychological processes. In that state we are not mentally ill. The parts are working correctly. It is our **focus** that is distorted. It is our obedience that is wrong.

Now guess what the Bible says the **problem is** and the **answer is** when we are in that state. The problem is **unbelief**, and the answer is **belief**.

**Certainty in the truths of who we are in Christ will bring joy.**

Belief in those truths is the **condition** of that Joy.

**Unbelief** in the promises of God produces something other than Joy.

That is a general truth from God's word that we can depend upon.

If anyone has another theory, I would sincerely like to see the support for that shown in scripture.

Now, might we sometimes have feelings that are not produced by our thinking? Yes. We know that there are many conditions that produce feelings that have **nothing to do** with our thinking. Maybe there has been no unpleasant event that has triggered it. We were not thinking about an unpleasant thing that caused it. Everything is the same as the day before and it just happens to us. This happens.

We know there are points in the brain that a tumor can press upon that will create very predictable emotional reactions. There are hormones that can be placed in our blood stream that can produce emotions that we did not think our way into. There are drugs that will change our emotions. Steroids, for example, often make people very agitated. Even a change in blood sugar levels can drastically change a person's mood. So yes, there are surely all kinds of things that can affect our emotions devoid of thought.

But all those things happen to us in such a way that our thoughts are irrelevant. Before we believe we are having an abnormal emotional reaction, that we are victims of how we feel, we should ask some questions.

What is coming out of my mouth?

What is my mind thinking?

What just happened in my life in the last day or two?

Is my emotional reaction connected to some life event?

If what I am saying, or what I am thinking about, or how I am responding to a life situation is about some uncertainty in life, our problem is not related to something that is happening to us. Our problem is in what we are thinking, what we are believing. Most of the time we are not a **victim** of our feelings. We are **creating** them. Our unbelief, our failure to take our thoughts captive, are at the heart of most of our emotional problems.

Now while sometimes we feel negative things out of the blue with no relationship to reality, there is another category of things we feel that are negative.

Sometimes we are **supposed** to feel negative things because we are **experiencing** a negative reality. And that negative reality was given to us for some good purpose that we might, or might not, know.

**Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that *is* the end of all men; And the living will take *it* to heart.**

**<sup>3</sup> Sorrow *is* better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.**

**<sup>4</sup> The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.**

David said **Psalm 119:71 (NKJV)**

**<sup>71</sup> *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**

Jesus said Blessed are those who mourn their spiritual condition.

We are not to understand that Joy is the **only thing** a Christian should feel.

We cannot have continual unbridled happiness and live a true life in this world. Jesus was a man of **sorrows**. When we love people we open ourselves to deep hurt when we lose them or when they hurt us. There are a thousand realities that will cause us pain. And those feelings are not spiritual **defeats**.

They are part of living on planet earth. But hope sees past them. Hope does not allow **their** reality to supersede a **greater reality**. The foundation for the truths that **bring joy** exist in the presence of those things that **cause us pain**.

We can believe God in those situations. Or we can act like God lied to us and shortchanged us. We do **one of those**, or sometimes **both**, every day.

There are two general truths that I believe to be true most of the time. It helps me to make sense of **what I feel** and **what others feel**. These are not absolutes. But they are general. They are this.

If someone else were to think like I think, they would feel like I feel.

And if I think myself **into** emotional distress, a correct change in thinking will **correct how I feel**, over time. If a thought is responsible for how I feel, there is nothing **wrong with me** or **how I feel**. There is something wrong with **how I choose to think**.

Now some people may be gifted with being more sensitive. I say gifted because those who feel more extremes can empathize more with others.

When they share the comfort that they have been comforted with, they know what they are talking about. And there are some thoughts that one person **can think** without any harm, that **another person cannot think** without it doing them harm. That only stands to reason. Some people can have a drink

of wine and other people can't because of their disposition. The same is true of thoughts.

I say all of this because I think this is where we all live. All of us experience all kinds of emotions. I sometimes feel impending doom, or extreme dread, or anxiety when facing the things I know I need to do. And it is easy to think that those feelings are telling me something true, or that I am a victim of those feelings, or that I need to do what those feelings tell me to do. But the problem is, my default condition is flesh. And so is yours. And flesh lies. Our feelings do not always tell us the truth. Feelings are not adequate indicators of truth. Only God's word tells us the truth. If I allow myself to shape my belief primarily by what I feel, I am in a very bad state. I am headed for a ship wreck. But if I primarily believe God and simply experience my feelings, I am living as I am supposed to.

Now are the feelings a problem? Should we flip out if we feel things that we believe we should not feel? No. There is a relationship between what we believe and what we feel. But it is not always immediate. And sometimes there are exceptions.

So what do we do when **what we feel** is not congruent with what belief in God **should create in us**? What if our **belief** does not result in **Joy**? First we tell the truth about what we feel.

Sometimes we are mourning a loss, or mourning our own sin. Sometimes we are feeling deeply for the situation of another. Those things may often take front stage in our emotional state. And that is not unusual in scripture. David brought us into his emotional extremes in Psalms. And we can often relate to him.

But what if there is really nothing like that? Or what if those things escalate and keep absorbing us inordinately. Then we should look for anything we are believing or thinking about, or fixating on, that would **create** the things we are feeling. If we find nothing, if we are not talking about things, or thinking about things, that are focused on what **might** happen, or what **has** happened, then we can relax and focus on the certainties John provides us with. And we can be confident that the feelings will eventually line up with our beliefs. It may take time. But we do not have to **fear** our feelings. All we can do is **change our thoughts**. That is all we have control over. And our feelings will normally eventually align. Unless there is something strange going on with our body. Then we might need the professional help that deals with such things.

But I think we should be very slow to believe that **what we feel** is just **happening** to us, that we are a victim to our emotions. Most of the time we are **not** victims of our emotions. We are unknowingly **creating them** by our beliefs. Most of the time we think our way into our emotional state and we can believe our way out of it. But it requires faith, even when our feelings are telling us something else.

A good question for those friends or family we trust would be, do you see anything about me that would be causing this emotional state. Often those who know us best can tell us what we cannot see ourselves.

OK

Let's look at our text again.

<sup>20</sup> **And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true**

Here again we are looking at a point of certainty. We know that the Son has given us an understanding. We know this. There is no doubt. It has happened.

These are the kinds of truths that **lead to joy**.

Now, how is it that any of us come to a **real saving understanding**? How is it that we know Christ? How is it that we come to God?

Notice the wording here. Did we arrive in an understanding? Did we work our brain cells, or as Tyler says, our three brain cells, until we reached an understanding, until we made a logical conclusion based on all the facts? That is not what this is saying. We may do that on any number of other things. But that is not how we come to Christ.

We were **given** an understanding. Notice it does not say that we were given a message or that we were given the facts? No. It says we were **given** an understanding so that we could know God through Christ.

What do other scriptures say about this?

Well first off it is interesting to note that it is always things that faithful people **knew** and **believed** that caused them to do what they did.

Look at Heb 11. We see each of the things they did was **by faith**. What is faith? It is trust in the character of God to the place that you believe what He says and do what he tells you. It is understanding. And that understanding makes all the difference. What these people all did was different. But **why** they did it was the same. They **understood** something. They **believed** something. And that changed everything.

Then we see this in Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 31:31-33 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup> **"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new**

**covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--**

**<sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.**

**<sup>33</sup> But *this is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**

Here we see God promising to do something to His people. And what is it? He promises to make a supernatural change to His people. He does not say that He will respond to **their** sincere change of heart. He says that **HE** will change their hearts in a way that **they** could never accomplish. He will make them **want** to obey Him. They will hear the law and they will respond to it **differently** than a human outside of Christ. They will **want** to hear from God and when they hear it they will **want** to do it. That is not a change of mind a human can accomplish.

Then let's look at what scripture says about our innate capacity to choose God or to live for God.

#### **Ephesians 4:17-18 (NKJV)**

**<sup>17</sup> This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,**

**<sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;**

Now what would happen if information were given to this blind heart? What if the gospel is presented? What do blind people do with signs placed in front of them? They have no effect. This kind of understanding cannot just come by explanation. It must come from a change of heart that God introduces.

#### **Acts 16:14 (NKJV)**

**<sup>14</sup> Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.**

Here is where evangelistic success comes from. It is not due to the excellent words of Paul. He could present the same message to a thousand people with no result. And knowing Paul, he probably did just that. But here the Lord opened her heart. Then she could heed what Paul said. She could understand it. She could take it in.

Now let's look at what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

### **John 3:1-21 (NKJV)**

**1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.**

**2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."**

**3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

**4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"**

**5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

**6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

**7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**

**8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**

**9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"**

**10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?**

**11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.**

**12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**

Do you see the problem? Nicodemus could not see the truth that Christ was telling him. And the problem is that Nicodemus had to be born again prior to his seeing the truth. A person has to be born of the water and Spirit prior to seeing, prior to entering the Kingdom of God. Understanding is a miracle. It is not something a natural human being is capable of.

Let's look more

### **1 Corinthians 2:7-12 (NKJV)**

**7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory,**

**8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

**9 But as it is written: "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who***



*love Him."*

**<sup>10</sup> But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.**

**<sup>11</sup> For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**

**<sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**

This is exactly what 1 John is talking about. God reveals these truths through His Spirit. It is a supernatural work He does in a person to reveal them. We **receive this gift** so that we might know the great gifts we have been given by God. We don't **aspire** to them. They are given to us. We **respond** to them by receiving them. But we have to be **enlightened** to want them. We have to be **changed** to have a desire to receive them.

**1 John 2:20 (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup> But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.**

**1 John 2:27 (NKJV)**

**<sup>27</sup> But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.**

The anointing we receive from God is what gives us this inside information. This is not natural. It is **supernatural**. We understand things. But we do not understand them naturally. We understand them **supernaturally** by the Holy Spirit. We may not have a dramatic conversion from **our** perspective. But everyone has a dramatic conversion from **God's** perspective.

So we see the truth in John's quote.

**<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

Christ has given us an understanding so we can know God and know Christ. We can know Him who is true- God and His Son Jesus Christ. And this Son is not a son in that Christ is less than God, but He too is the the true God and eternal life.

We must **know** this to overcome the evil one. We must **know** this to walk in an evil world yet remain true to our savior. We must know, **not only the facts** about Christ. Oh, we must know the facts. We must know that He truly has come from heaven to earth to do the ministry He did to us. But we must know

**more.** We must know **God**. And we must know that **we are in God** because of Jesus Christ His son.

This is truly remarkable. This is theology. But this is more than theology. We are in a personal relationship with a fearful and wonderful God. Apart from Christ we should be scared out of our minds to approach such a Holy God. We should quiver in our boots with our imperfection and all of our past track records. We should run for the hills knowing our certain doom. But instead we call out Abba Father, fully expecting that our God loves us and will come to our rescue. And how can such a thing be true?

**WE ARE IN CHRIST. AND CHRIST IS IN THE FATHER.** Christ made us family. That is what we must know. And we know it because Christ has changed us to the place that we **understand** this. His Spirit has moved upon us and we know what He has done **in us** and **to us**.

This is how we overcome the evil one. When we are faced with the world in our face, when we are faced with the wickedness of the world on the outside, when we are faced with the daily temptations of the world to do that which most easily besets us, and for each of us that is probably different, in the face of **all that** we are to realize that which the Holy Spirit has taught us and made us understand. We are in Christ. And we are in God.

How absolutely amazing that is.

Do you know it this morning? Do you know that you are in Christ? Do you know that you have tasted new birth in Christ? Have you had that miracle happen to you?

When the temptation calls out to you that is so hard for you to refuse, talk back to the devil. Tell him that you are **not his child**. You are born of God. And as such he has **no claims** to you. Tell him you know he is a liar. You know that what he is offering you is **counterfeit**. It is not his. He did not make it. And you are in close relationship with the God who **made the good stuff**. You won't accept his poison laced offerings. Because he is the enemy of your Lord. And you are on to him and his tricks.

No we have an understanding. And our understanding teaches us that we **have Christ**. And because we **have Christ**, we have a good relationship with God. And since we are **different people** from a **different domain**, the devil's appeals are recognized as only lies. And we no longer want to be lied to. God has provided us wonderful ammunition to face whatever it is He is putting in our lives for us to face. He has given us all the foundational truths for us to **have hope**. And having hope, we will **have joy**. He has given us the ammunition we need to stand against the devil and the world and our flesh.

We truly do have everything we need for life and godliness. If something is stealing our joy, it is time to take it back for the glory of God. We know how.