

1 John 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

Analysis

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

John returns to earlier themes with assuring conclusion. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (oidamen hoti pas ho gegennēmenos ek tou theou ouch hamartanei)—this restates 3:9. The perfect participle emphasizes completed regeneration's continuing state. The present tense "sinneth not" indicates that the born-again believer doesn't practice sin as a lifestyle. This doesn't claim sinless perfection (contradicting 1:8) but that habitual, willing sin is incompatible with regeneration.

"But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself" (all' ho gennētheis ek tou theou tērei auton). The aorist participle emphasizes the point of birth. Tēreō means to keep, guard, protect. Some manuscripts read "He (Christ) keeps him" rather than "he keeps himself." Both are true—believers guard themselves through vigilance and discipline, and Christ guards them by His power. Self-keeping isn't independent of grace but Spirit-enabled faithfulness. We work out salvation that God works in us (Philippians 2:12-13).

"And that wicked one toucheth him not" (kai ho ponēros ouch haptetai autou). Ponēros (the evil one) is Satan. Haptomai means to touch, grasp, or harm. Satan cannot ultimately harm the regenerate believer kept by God's power. He may tempt, accuse, and attack, but he cannot snatch believers from God's hand (John

10:28-29). This provides assurance—those born of God are protected from Satan's destroying power, securing their eternal salvation despite ongoing spiritual warfare.

Historical Context

The doctrine of perseverance of the saints (Reformed theology) or eternal security teaches that those genuinely born of God cannot lose salvation. This doesn't mean Christians cannot sin but that habitual, final apostasy is impossible for the regenerate. God who began the good work completes it (Philippians 1:6). Those who ultimately abandon faith demonstrate they were never truly born of God (1 John 2:19).

This contrasts with Arminian theology teaching that genuine believers can lose salvation through sin or unbelief. John's teaching that those born of God don't practice sin and are kept from Satan's harm supports the Reformed view. However, this doesn't license presumption—those who presume on grace while living in sin show they were never regenerated. The doctrine provides assurance to struggling believers while warning false professors.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse provide assurance that your salvation is secure despite ongoing struggles with sin?
2. What does it mean to 'keep yourself' in the context of being born of God—how do human responsibility and divine preservation relate?

3. How should knowing that Satan 'touches not' those born of God affect your response to spiritual warfare and temptation?

Interlinear Text

Οἴδαμεν	ὅτι	πᾶς	ό	γεννηθεὶς	ἐκ	τοῦ	Θεοῦ
We know	that	whosoever	G3588	he that is begotten	of	G3588	God
G1492	G3754	G3956		G1080	G1537		G2316
οὐχ	ἀμαρτάνει	ἀλλ'	ό	γεννηθεὶς	ἐκ	τοῦ	Θεοῦ
not	sinneth	but	G3588	he that is begotten	of	G3588	God
G3756	G264	G235		G1080	G1537		G2316
τηρεῖ	έαυτὸν,	καὶ	ό	πονηρὸς	οὐχ	ἄπτεται	αὐτοῦ
keepeth	himself	and	G3588	that wicked one	not	toucheth	him
G5083	G1438	G2532		G4190	G3756	G680	G846

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:9 (Sin): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 5:4 (References God): For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

1 John 5:1 (References God): Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Jude 1:21 (References God): Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

1 John 3:3 (Parallel theme): And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Jude 1:24 (Parallel theme): Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

James 1:27 (References God): Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

1 John 2:29 (Parallel theme): If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

1 Peter 1:23 (References God): Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Psalms 119:101 (Evil): I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

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