

## Lesson 14, Faith, Testimony, and Life , 1 John 5:1-12

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*<sup>5</sup>Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him. <sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments aren't burdensome. <sup>4</sup>For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?*

*<sup>6</sup>This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup>the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. <sup>9</sup>If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. <sup>10</sup>Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

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In our passage this week, John brings together the strands of right belief in Jesus Christ, love for God and one another, and obedience to God's commands and weaves them into a single tapestry of assurance for believers. As we've read through the epistle to this point we've seen that these three tests of assurance must work together, and now John will draw them together, that we may know that we have the victory that overcomes the world—our faith. "What John is at pains to show is the essential unity of his threefold thesis. He has not chosen three tests arbitrarily or at random and stuck them together artificially. On the contrary, he shows that they are so closely woven together into a single, coherent fabric that it is difficult to unpick and disentangle the threads."<sup>1</sup>

And John and his fellow apostles aren't the only ones testifying to this gospel of Jesus Christ, but God himself and the Holy Spirit testify to the eternal life which we have been given in Christ. If we believe the testimony of the apostles, as we have already established we should, how much more ought we believe and trust the testimony of God himself?! John also writes of the testimonies of the "water and the blood," and we will search out what many trusted theologians believe John means.

### Victorious Faith

1 John 5:1-5 deals specifically with the object, author, and effects of the Christian faith. If it seems repetitive, it's because he has covered these themes before, and it must be important for us to get a deeper understanding of the nature of our faith, so let's review what it is that John has taught us about the object of our faith, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Stott, 171.

1.) Christian, what do you believe about Jesus?

2:22; 4:2; 5:1

2:23; 4:15; 5:5, 10

3:5, 8b

2:1

2:2; 3:5; 4:10

1:3

1:7; 2:12

2:24; 3:24; 5:20

1:2; 4:14; 5:11-12

2.) Which comes first, according to verse 1: belief that Jesus is the Christ, or the new birth?  
(hint, follow the grammar)

3.) Is the new birth visible? [John 3:8]

4.) What, then, are the 'visible' effects of the new birth? [1 Jn. 5:1-2]

5.) John asserts that, if we love the Father, we *must* also love other Christians [1]. John seems to really be pressing this point throughout his entire epistle, and here he lays the obligation to love—even the 'given-ness' of our love for one another—directly next to a reminder that those we are to love have, *like ourselves*, been 'born of God.' What difference does this reminder make?

- 6.) John seems to flip his formula on its head in verse 2. How does love for God prove that we love the children of God? [1:5-7; Matt. 22:36-40]
- 7.) How is it that Jesus' commandments aren't burdensome? [Matt. 11:30; Rom. 6:16-18; 8:1-2]
- 8.) What burdensome commandments—not from Jesus—have you been laboring under?
- 9.) John's declaration that Jesus' commands aren't burdensome is followed by John's explanation for why they aren't burdensome in verses 4-5. To what does John link the ease of keeping Jesus' commandments?

In verses 4-5, 'overcoming' is not the same as "we have overcome because Jesus overcame the world," but is directly linked to our faith in Jesus which is demonstrated by our right belief in him, our love for one another, and our keeping of his commandments. We have overcome the world and because we believe the truth, love one another, and obey God's commandments, all of which result from our faith- which is a free gift, because we are born of God.

### **The Testimony**

In verses 6-12 John launches into an explanation of the historical verifiability that Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God based on the trustworthiness of the threefold testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood. If that seems confusing, there's good reason for that: it is confusing. John is speaking of the elements of water and blood as bearing witness to Christ. The Gnostic heretics of John's day denied that Jesus the man was also and always 'the Christ': the God-man Jesus Christ. They held that the divine nature came upon him at his baptism and left him before his death.

Theologians down the centuries have pondered what John meant by "the water and the blood," and have come up with different theories. What was needed, was "to find an interpretation of the phrase which makes water and blood both historical experiences 'through' which [Jesus] passed and witnesses in some sense to his divine-human person."<sup>2</sup> The most likely explanation, according to every commentary I consulted, is that the water refers to the Baptism of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, and the blood to his death, in which his work was finished.

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<sup>2</sup> Stott, 177.

10.) What happened at the (water) baptism of Jesus as a testimony to who he already was and what his mission was to be? [Matt. 3:14-17; John 1:29-34]

11.) How does Jesus Christ's blood testify? [*This is a progressive explanation- read the verses in the order given.* Hebrews 9:18-22; 9:11-14; 10:12-14]

Read Hebrews 12:22-24, and step into Heaven's justice chamber and see those assembled in the courtroom of the Great High Judge of all, even God Almighty, as Jesus brings his own blood before the bar of justice as a witness to his own finished work and the inauguration of the new covenant.

12.) John opened his epistle emphasizing the apostolic testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ, who does he now cite as an even more credible and authoritative witness? [9]

13.) How trustworthy is God's testimony? [John 3:31-33; Heb. 6:13, 16-18]

14.) What was and is now the nature of God the Father's testimony of his Son? [Matt. 17:1-6; John 5:36-37; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 2:3-4]

15.) What is the nature of the Holy Spirit's testimony? [John 15:26; Acts 5:32; Romans 5:5; Heb. 10:15-17]

The Spirit is the one who bears witness to an individual that the apostolic teaching of the gospel is true and trustworthy.<sup>3</sup>

16.) In 5:1, John declares that Christianity is available to everyone who will believe, without distinction. And yet there, as in verses 10-12, he makes it clear that Christianity is, if you will, an exclusive club, allowing only one kind of person. What is the single 'membership requirement' to Christianity? [5:11-12; 2:23; John 6:68, 14:6; Acts 4:12]

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<sup>3</sup> Jobes, 221.

## The Covenant Thread

In lesson 13 we investigated the character of God’s love and found that it is a holy love. As such, God cannot, indeed—will not—compromise his holiness by allowing sin into his presence. Yet, because of his holy love he calls sinful creatures to himself, promising to cleanse them from their sins so that they may enter his presence, and he establishes this relationship and confirms his promise by means of covenant. The old covenant, established with Abraham, and confirmed with the addition of the law with Moses, was a shadow of the new covenant to come, pointing forward to the Christ who was to come and fulfill all righteousness. The old covenant was a bloody covenant, with daily and annual rituals that emphasized the death which our sins deserved. In this lesson, we have looked at the testimony of the blood of Christ, shed in the death which we—not he—deserved, upon the cross, by which we are cleansed, forgiven, redeemed, perfected, reconciled, and brought into covenant with God.

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord... And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Exodus 24:3-8)

Hundreds of years of observing these rituals brought the people no closer to peace with God through their own obedience. There is a sacrament which we now observe, as Christians, which does not serve to pardon our sins, but to remind us of how our sins have been pardoned.

- 1.) As he shared the Passover meal with his disciples, how did Jesus describe his impending self-sacrifice on the cross, and what, therefore, is the benefit to us of observing the Lord’s Supper? [Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26]

What is the meaning of the Lord’s supper as a Christian partakes of the holy elements?... We experience Christ’s presence at the communion services... It is a time of reflecting, rejoicing, and thanksgiving. As we experience the spiritual presence of the Lord at the table, we with the church of all ages and places fervently pray *Maranatha*, “Come, O Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

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<sup>4</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1993), 395-396. (paraphrased)