

*Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas*  
*Fredericksburg Bible Church*  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**A0450 -- Dec. 12, 2004 – 1 John 5:3b-6 – Faith: The Weapon that Overcomes**

If love for God boils down to obeying His commandments, then how can we do that? Isn't it difficult or even impossible to obey His commandments? This is the natural question we all have at this point in the text and which John now turns to answer.

**Greek Text 5:3b** kai ai entolai autou bareiai ouk eisin.

**Translation 5:3b** **And His commandments are not burdensome**

I finished last week with 1 John 5:3a because that is the true end of the sentence. The beginning of the next sentence begins with the words of 1 John 5:3b **And His commandments...** The verse division is unfortunate. The beginning of verse 4 should start with **because** rather than **for**. Open your bulletin and let's read the entire sentence so you can see the flow of thought. It reads, **And His commandments are not burdensome because whatever has been born of God overcomes the world.**

If loving God and one another is basically summed up in obeying God's commandments, then many of us naturally conclude, "But obeying His commandments is hard. How can we do it?" John says that **His commandments are not burdensome because whatever has been born of God overcomes the world.** First, the word **burdensome** in the Greek is *barus* and it means "heavy." Jesus Himself also said something similar in Matt. 11:30 when He said, "For My yoke is easy and My burden light." John, once again, is repeating what Jesus said, "the Christian life is not overwhelmingly burdensome."

*Greek Text 5:4* hoti pan to gegennemenon ek tou theou nika ton kosmon: kai aute estin he nike he nikesasa ton kosmon, he pistis humon.

**Translation 5:4** because whatever has been born [perfect passive participle] of God overcomes [present active indicative] the world [the world system that is anti-God]. **And this is the victory that has overcome [aorist active participle] the world [the world system that is anti-God], our faith [MajT reads "your faith"].**

The reason that the Christian life is not **burdensome** is simply **because whatever has been born of God overcomes the world**. It is interesting that John does not say **whoever has been born of God** (a personal reference) but **whatever has been born of God** (an impersonal reference; neuter in the Greek). This indicates that there is something inherently “world-conquering” that occurs in the act of being **born of God**. What it is that is “world-conquering” comes next: **And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith**. **Faith** in Christ is what has given us **the victory that has overcome the world**. “Faith in Jesus as the Son of God is ‘part of the assault which inflicts defeat on the world.’” Each time a person has faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the world is inflicted with a serious and permanent defeat. The **world** in John’s writings refers to “the world system that is anti-God.”

Who presently rules this **world** system? According to many Scriptures this world system is presently ruled by Satan (Gen. 3; John 12:31; **2 Cor. 4:4**; Acts 26:18; **1 John 5:19**; et. al.). Satan is actively engaged in veiling the gospel from those who are perishing. “*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*” (2 Cor. 4:3-4) When a person is born again, he has been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13). That is, our membership has been transferred to the Messianic Kingdom. We do not enter the Messianic Kingdom immediately, but we now have membership in that Messianic Kingdom. We will inevitably be in that Kingdom. The moment we are born again, we have been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). Clearly, all this takes place through faith. Therefore, the Christian life is not burdensome because we know how to defeat the world system. We already had victory over the world through faith at the moment we believed (1 John 2:12-14). To have further victories requires the same mechanism, living by faith. Faith is the means of victory over the world (at salvation) and over the schemes of the world (sanctification). Now you know the weapon of victory in the Christian life: faith. Trying hard to live the Christian life and working hard to live the Christian life are not the way of victory. Just like you cannot save yourself, you cannot live the Christian life. You are saved by faith and you must live by faith if you are to have victory over the world and avoid being burdened by His commandments.

Let’s back up in v. 4 and deal with some of the details. He begins by giving us the reason the Christian life is not burdensome. He says it is **because whatever has been born [perfect passive participle] of God overcomes the world**. **Has been born** is a perfect

participle meaning you were **born of God** at a past point in time with ongoing results. You are **born** again at the moment of saving faith with the ongoing results that you remain born again (no loss of salvation). And this participle is passive in voice, meaning you were acted on. You did not regenerate yourself, but God regenerated you (review of active, middle, and passive voice). *Therefore*, the one who **has been born of God overcomes [present active indicative] the world [the world system that is anti-God]**. The verb **overcomes** is present active indicative, meaning that we continue to overcome the world after salvation when we live by faith. It is kind of like you are in a battle and there is a decisive turning point in the battle. At that point, you have won the battle; you have victory, there is nothing that can change that. But then you start to chase after your opponent. You have got him on the run and you trample him down and destroy him. That is what the present tense here is saying. Don't just draw out the weapon of faith for that decisive turning point, keep your weapon drawn and slaughter your enemy. Put another way, the present tense here of **overcomes** indicates that even though you have won the decisive battle and have your opponent on the heels, you keep going after him, chasing the enemy down one by one and slaughtering them. Now, that is the picture of salvation plus sanctification. The battle turns at the moment of salvation; you have a decisive victory, but then you should proceed to finish off your enemy. You have won the battle over Satan and his world system by faith, but then you should proceed to crush Satan and the world system by living by faith.

Verse 4b says, **And this is the victory that has overcome [aorist active participle] the world [the world system that is anti-God], our faith [MajT reads "your faith"]**. This part of the verse is talking about the once-for-all victory over the world at the moment we exercised **faith** because the participle **overcome** here is aorist active. Point action in the past, the point in the past when you exercised **faith**. Some Christians win this victory but then do not live a life by faith; and so, they make a huge and permanent dent in the world system, but they don't inflict all the damage they could have. They didn't trample down the enemy and wipe him out of their lives.

**Greek Text 5:5** Tis [de] estin ho nikon ton kosmon ei me ho pisteuon hoti Iesous estin ho huios tou theou;

**Translation 5:5** **But who is he who overcomes [present participle - substantival] the world if not he who believes [present participle - substantival] that Jesus is the Son of God?**

Verse 5 defines who the **overcomer** is: the one **who overcomes the world is he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God**. At the moment you **believed that Jesus is the Son**

**of God** you became a “world-conqueror.” That Jesus is the Son of God means that He is the heir of God and therefore equal with God as 1 John 5:20 explicitly states. This verse is referring to the decisive turning point in the battle. You become a “world-conqueror” at the moment you believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Most Christians do not think of Christianity as a victorious, crushing defeat over the world system. We are the victors of the world. We are the world conquerors and yet most of us sit in front of the television day after day living a meager half-hearted existence, letting the world trample us and run us into a corner. The only reason this happens is because Christians are not living by faith. They won the decisive victory at salvation and then put away the weapon of faith. Being a world conqueror can continue if you live by faith. John is going to deal with this a little more thoroughly in 5:12-13 but his point now is to say that the key to salvation is faith and the key to the Christian life is faith! The key is faith!

What is faith? If faith is the key to victory, then what is faith? Knowing what faith is, is like knowing your weapon in the military. In the military, you know your weapon by being told about its parts and then you practice assembling and disassembling your weapon over and over until you can do it in just a few seconds. To learn how to live by faith you must know what faith is. You must study the manual on faith, the word of God. There are two basic definitions of faith. (1) The biblical definition is “having confidence to trust someone or something.” Confidence to trust God comes from hearing the word of God. It is therefore rational and has content. (2) Biblical faith is not a “leap of faith” as we commonly hear. The term “leap of faith” was coined by the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, and what Kierkegaard meant was that “faith is blind.” You don’t have any justification or reason for believing, you just have to believe blindly. This is not biblical faith. Faith comes from hearing (content) and hearing by the word of God (rational) (Rom. 10:17). Read excerpt from Francis Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, “Faith versus Faith” pp. 99-100.

Now, when John expresses that the key to the Christian life is faith, he is teaching the same thing that Paul taught. Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by **faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). Many Christians have the idea that they are saved by faith but then they have to live the Christian life. In other words, many think that you are saved by **faith** and you are sanctified by **works**. If this is you, then you will think that His commandments are **burdensome**. How could you not think they are burdensome if you are the one who has to **work** them? Christian friend, you must understand sanctification. No one can live the Christian life. That is why Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **faith** in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). You are saved by faith and you live by faith in the Son of God. Faith is the key! If

you are trying to live the life, if you have this idea that you are *saved* by **faith** but you are *sanctified* by **works** then you are in the same predicament Paul was in in Romans 7, and I encourage you to read Romans 7. But don't stop in Romans 7, continue on and read Romans 8. That should clear up this issue. Remember, that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Faith is not blind and you cannot work up faith. To live by faith requires spiritual nourishment, and spiritual nourishment comes by taking in the word of God. If you take in the word of God, I promise you will grow spiritually and you will learn to live by faith and His commandments will not be a burden to you; because when we follow His commandments, it is really not us living anyway, but Christ living in us. When we live by faith, He produces the works! All good finds its source in God!

**Greek Text 5:6** outos estin ho elthon di udatos kai aimatos, Iesous Christos, ouk en to udati monon all en to udati kai en to aimati: kai to pneuma estin to marturoun, hoti to pneuma estin he aletheia.

**Translation 5:6 This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water only but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is truth.**

There are several questions here in v. 6 that we must answer. *First*, what do the **water and blood** refer to? There have been several interpretations. Some say the **water and blood** refer to the piercing in Jesus' side while on the cross. Not only did **water** come out, but **water and blood** (John 19:34). But this is probably not correct because the order is backwards and it does not fit the context very well. The best and most ancient interpretation is that the **water** refers to Jesus' baptism, which formally started His earthly ministry, and the **blood** refers to the cross, which formally ended His earthly ministry. So, we have the baptism and the cross being referred to here.

Since the **water** refers to Jesus' baptism, we need to understand Jesus' **water** baptism. Dr. L.S. Chafer says, "No phase of the life of Christ on earth is more misunderstood than His baptism."<sup>1</sup> Most Christians think that we should undergo the ritual of water baptism *because* Christ was baptized. In other words, we are following in Christ's footsteps by being baptized. But Christ's baptism has nothing to do with the Christian ritual of water baptism. Christ's **water** baptism is a unique event. It is important that we understand this phase of the life of Christ on earth and so today we have time to ask the two most important questions regarding Christ's baptism: (1) Who baptized Christ? (2) Why was Christ baptized? Turn to Matt. 3:13-17.

Who baptized Christ by water? The answer is given in many passages to be John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13-16; John 1:31). Who was John the Baptist? John the Baptist was the son of a priest, Zacharias, and his mother, Elizabeth, was a descendant of Aaron, who was a Levitical priest (Luke 1:5). What does it matter that John was the son of a priest? Because Christ had to be ordained into His priesthood by a priest. Remember, the Messiah was to be a Prophet, a Priest and a King. And He has to be ordained into these offices. At this baptism Jesus was being ordained into His office of Priest. John the Baptist was the divinely appointed priest to ordain Christ into His priestly office. Remember, John was baptizing people in the Jordan for repentance. But Jesus had nothing to repent about. He was sinless! His baptism by John, then, was something unique. And if you recall, the Jews didn't like John baptizing, so they sent out priests and Levites to ask him who he was and why he was baptizing, if he was not the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet. John responded by saying "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD.'" In other words, John was divinely appointed by God to be the last prophet of the Old Testament. Every king has a king-maker, and John the Baptist was the one who paved the way for King Jesus. He was, therefore, baptizing those who would accept the Messiahship of Jesus when He was revealed. They were being baptized because they were proclaiming that they would accept the Messiah as the King when He was revealed. It was at this baptism that the Messiah was revealed. But before He was revealed by God as the Messiah through the voice from heaven, He was water baptized by John the Baptist. And the reason He was being baptized was to be ordained as Priest of God Most High. Even though John the Baptist was not formally a priest, he was of a priestly line and he was, therefore, appointed by God Himself to fulfill the priestly task of baptizing Christ. He was also the last and greatest prophet of the Old Testament (Matt. 11:13). Indeed, he was more than a prophet according to Christ, and among those born of women no greater than John had arisen.

Why was Christ baptized by this priest? If you remember John the Baptist shied away from baptizing Christ. He said, "I have need to be baptized by you." But Christ replied, "*Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" Christ had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Clearly, to fulfill all righteousness refers to the righteousness of the Mosaic Law. We are not in the dispensation of grace yet. Jesus' baptism was, therefore, related to the Mosaic Law and His priestly ministry. Under the Mosaic Law, for Christ to be a priest he had to be thirty years old (Num. 4:3), which the text mentions he was (Luke 3:23), and He had to be ordained into that office by another priest, namely, John the Baptist fulfilled this role. Therefore, the purpose of Jesus' baptism was to be ordained into the priestly office by God's appointed priest, John the Baptist. The baptism of Christ is therefore the formal revealing of Israel's Messiah and the ordination

of Christ into His priestly ministry. So, you can see that “Christ’s baptism was an official, legal matter,” whereas our baptism is quite different from an official or legal thing.

Therefore, in 1 John 5:6 **He is the one who came by water** means that **He is the one who came** at the moment He was ordained by God into the priestly office through **water baptism**. Interestingly, He did not come by **water only but by water and blood**. That He came by **blood** of course refers to His *death*. The death of Christ was when he started exercising the office of priest. A priest is one who mediates between God and man. Christ was our mediator on the cross. Therefore, the **water and blood** refer to the two focal points of Christ’s earthly ministry: its beginning and its consummation. Why does John add this explanation **not by water only but by water and blood**? Because of the Revisionists/antichrists that went out from Jerusalem into the world to spread their false doctrines (1 John 2:18-19). These antichrists believed that material was inherently evil and immaterial was inherently good (a dichotomy). They therefore taught that Jesus was just a human (material and evil) and that the Spirit, which they identified with the Christ, was immaterial and good. They taught that the Christ/Spirit descended on the man Jesus at his baptism but departed from him *before* his death on the cross. Therefore, Jesus’ death on the cross was just the death of a man. If this is true, then the whole plan of salvation is down the tubes because Jesus could have died only for Himself and not for anyone else. The God-man had to be on the cross to die for all men, not just a man.

These two events constitute two of the three witnesses mentioned in verse 7. The final witness is the Holy Spirit. When Christ came up from the water at His baptism by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and rested upon Him, testifying that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:32-34).

Verse 7 says that **there are three witnesses**. And those three witnesses are named together in verse 8 as the **water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit**. This is important that we have multiple witnesses. Two witnesses are historic events (**His baptism and His death**) and one is a living witness (the **Holy Spirit**). Under the Mosaic Law there had to be two or three witnesses in a court of law (Deut. 17:16; 19:15). A single witness would not hold up in court of law. So here, John mentions three witnesses.

Notice also that verse 6 closes by saying that **the Spirit is truth**. What is truth? Truth is usually defined as a proposition that accords with the actual state of affairs, conforms to reality, or is correct. But the Christian notion of truth is actually much more than this (although it does include this). Essentially, Christianity defines truth as something that “conforms to the mind of God” (cf. Ps. 111:7-8; John 14:6; 16:13). Thus, the Bible applies

the term not only to the facts (Deut. 17:4; Eph. 4:25)—since they are all predetermined by the mind of God (Eph. 1:11; Isa. 46:9-11; Matt. 10:29-30)—but also to what is eternal and absolute (e.g., John 6:3, 35; 15:1; Heb. 8:2), as well as to what is ethically right (e.g., Ps. 26:3; John 3:21; 2 John 4).”<sup>ii</sup> God’s word, which reflects God’s mind, is not contradictory. Propositions that correspond to God’s mind therefore always cohere with one another. Since the Spirit is God, then the **Spirit is truth**.

---

<sup>i</sup> Chafer, L. S., *Systematic Theology: Vol. 5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 56.

<sup>ii</sup> Bahnsen, Greg, *Van Til’s Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998), 163.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)