

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

1 John 5:1-5

In this chapter we come not only to the last chapter of this book but also the last description of the character of God offered by John. If you recall, in the first part of **1 John** we were introduced to the fact “God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” (**1 John 1:5**) This is a reference to the Holiness of God. Actually, John is saying there is not even one little speck of darkness or sin connected to the God of the Bible who is the Father of Jesus Christ.

In **1 John 3** we were introduced to the fact that the love of God has been “bestowed upon us...” **1 John 3:1**. Then we are told by John that “God is love” in **1 John 4:8** and that statement is repeated again in **1 John 4:16** in order to emphasize this wonderful truth about the character of God.

It is in **1 John 5** where we will learn God is life. We will also learn those who are partakers of the life that originates in and comes from God will also manifest the love whereby God loves me and you.

The chapter begins in **verse 1** by telling us: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:” That is an amazing statement on many levels! For instance, this verse tells us no one who chooses to believe will be excluded from the family of God. It plainly tells us if any man, woman, boy, or girl places their trust and faith in the fact Jesus is the Christ, they will be saved! In essence it proclaims salvation is available for all to partake of. It is reserved only for those who will believe. It is just that simple. All a sinner has to do in order to be saved is to believe Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. (Although unwritten here, I know there is more to being than what I have just stated. I know a sinner must be convicted of his sins, realize he is a sinner, come to God with a broken spirit and a contrite heart, and place his faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary.)

Once again, John takes a clear stand against the teaching of the Gnostics. Once again, John declares, in truth, Jesus was/is the Christ of God. Once again, he proclaims Jesus of Nazareth—the virgin born son of Mary—was truly both God and man existing in one body. He was God from the beginning and became man through a virgin birth in order to “seek and save that which was lost.” (**Luke 19:10**)

Let’s not forget it was the Gnostics who denied Jesus was both divine and human. They refused to believe the divine could co-exist with a human body. They

believed the “Christ” or the divine came upon Jesus at His baptism by John in the river of Jordan and that it departed from Him at the crucifixion. How wrong they were in their thinking although they claimed to be superior in knowledge to everyone else.

Notice John states in **verse 1** that “Whosoever believeth Jesus is the Christ” is the means whereby “man is born of God.” This is where John introduces us to the fact God is life and the life God gives is in His Son. The kind of life God gives to all those who believe, is eternal life. Eternal life is what we receive from God the moment we trust Christ as Savior. It is a result of the new birth experience. It is life which has no end. Isn’t that what Nicodemus learned about and experienced personally in **John 3** as a result of his conversation with Jesus?

Not meaning to get ahead of ourselves, let’s read what John says in **verses 11-12** of chapter five. The passage reads as follows: “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Being “born of God” refers to the new birth Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about. The new birth is not a physical re-birth, but rather a birth of another kind. Actually, it is a birth from above. Those who are “born of God” do not experience a reformation of the old nature, but rather experience the creation of a new nature birthed in the heart of the one believing on the work Christ performed at Calvary. It is produced by the Holy Spirit when the sinner by faith receives Christ as their Savior. It is the way and means by which a fallen man becomes a “new creature (in Christ)” **2 Corinthians 5:17**. It is the way and means by which a man becomes a “partaker of the divine nature” **2 Peter 1:4**. It is the way and means by which a sinner can become a participant in the life of Christ. How gracious God is!

In **1 John 1:1** the Apostle brings his teaching about the importance of loving others who are part of the family of God. Again, John is telling us plainly, if we are “born of God” we will love the brethren. The idea is, I believe, in light of the fact we are born of God, it will result in our loving others who have also been born of God. If such love is missing, then maybe a new birth is missing as well. Maybe the new birth has not taken place. You see, love for others in the family of God is a birth mark of the new birth. It is an undeniable testimony or witness of all who are a part of the family of God. John is quite plain and certain on this matter. As in other places in his epistle, he is at once plain and concise in what he says.

In light of what we find in **verse 2**, I think we would be prudent to be honest about our love for those of the family of God. Notice what the verse states: “By this (i.e. loving or not loving) we know (have the assurance) that we love the children of God, when (here is the evidence) we love God, and keep his commandments.”

Before commenting too much here, let’s add **verse 3** to our thinking. It reads: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What an amazing statement! John is telling here us we can know whether or not we are saved, whether or not we are a son or daughter of God by being honest about how we feel and think about obeying God and keeping His commandments. John is not referring to the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament but rather those commandments we find in the New Testament. I’m talking about those commandments given to those who name the name of Christ. They are not commandments by which one is saved, but they are things which testify to the fact that one who professes Christ as Savior is saved. Several of those commands may be found in **1 Thessalonians 5:12-28**. There are other places where similar commands are given, but hopefully this reference will suffice for an example.

If you are wondering how keeping God’s commandments is not a “grievous” thing, the answer is love. As a poor illustration, I pray will prove to be helpful, allow me to ask you a simple question. Have you heard of something known as “child’s play”? Child’s play refers to the work a child is doing during its developmental years. From infancy on, as they do what we refer to as “playing” they are in reality, working. As we observe children playing, we are actually watching them work as they develop a variety of skills set and strengthen the many different muscles groups necessary to do those skills. As they play, they are actually doing work although we think all they are doing is playing. To them, it is play because it is a pleasure for them to do. But they are, in reality, hard at work. Although they are doing something they are having fun doing and would never call it work, that is exactly what they are doing: working. When we find ourselves doing something we love to do, it doesn’t feel like work: it feels like “child’s play.” I believe this is how keeping the commandments of God feels like to those who are truly in love with the Lord and who desire to obey Him.

I think this principle may apply to what John is saying in **verse 2-3** as well. When we love the God of our Salvation and the Son whom He sent to die in our place as we should, we discover the commandments are not grievous. We find the commandments He has given us are not like work we must perform, but rather are like “child’s play” which brings joy to our hearts when we obey them.

Before we move on, let me be clear, this is not to say the commandments are not at times challenging, demanding, and difficult to keep. But it is to say they are not some dreaded thing we must do or choose to do out of fear of receiving some negative reprisal from the Lord. Rather they are something we enjoy doing because we love the Father (knowing the Father loves us) and our desire is to please Him. We do not choose to obey because we fear Him. We choose to obey Him because we love Him.

In **verse 4** John makes a significant point that all who belong to God's family would benefit from understanding. In this verse he tells us two important things. First, he makes a declarative statement: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world..." This is specific. It is, actually, a declaration that those who are born again are victorious or overcomers. Second, he tells us how to be victorious. He states: "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." How wonderful is that?!

The declaration he makes is clear. Those who are born of God "overcometh" (notice the suffix "eth" which speaks of continual action once begun) which refers to the world and all that is associated with it. The world he is referring to is not the planet on which we live. It is a reference to the system and all those multitudes of people and things associated with its doings and dealings. If you remember, Jesus in His High Priestly prayer recorded in **John 17** says, in **verse 11** "these are in the world" and in **verse 17** "they are not of the world." The world and its system is what denied Christ, brutalized Christ, and crucified Christ. It is what is against any and all of those who are associated with Christ. That same system is as much against us who know Christ today as it was against our Lord in His day. Although the players have changed since the days of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Caiaphas, and Pilate, the rules by which they play have not.

Notice John says "whosoever"!!! How good is that?! He is not just referring to those who are strong in the faith with no hope for those who are weak in the faith. No! God forbid! Perish such a thought! He is referring to *all* those who place their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. If they have enough faith to be saved they have enough faith to be an overcomer! You see, *it is not the amount of their faith that is important: but the place where they deposit their faith is important.* When it is deposited in Christ, it is enough! Period!

As if what he had said was not sufficient in **verse 4**, John carries the same thought forward into **verse 5**. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Once again John takes aim at the heart of the

Gnostic's teaching. Although the Gnostics feel they have a superior knowledge above everyone else (and they are not ashamed to make such a claim), John states that instead of their being superior to others as they claim, they are actually a victim of arrogance and a victim of willful ignorance. The knowledge they claim to have does not give them a superior position, but rather it places them in a doleful one. Instead of being envied, they are to be pitied in light of the fact they have deliberately chosen to ignore the truth about God's one of a kind Son who brought God close to man in the body He lived among men in.

In our next two studies, we will learn something of the importance and power of a witness. In fact, we will learn God has provided three things which witness to us and a part of the Godhead which witnesses in us who know Christ personally.

Our loving Heavenly Father wants us to live confidently in this life and the witnesses He has given to us enables us to do just that.

Thomas Price, 2020