

Victory in Jesus

(1 John 5:1–12)

What is True & What to Do:

God testifies that Jesus is His Son; And, God's testimony is greater than the testimony of men. So, faithfully trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and take part in the only victory that overcomes the world.

Background: ¹

We have learned that John had at least three purposes for writing the letter of 1 John. He wanted to encourage Christians in their salvation. He wanted to counter false teaching and explain the historical doctrines of the faith concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. And lastly, John sought to explain Christ's new commandment of love.

In chapter five, John brings together what he has said thus far in the letter concerning genuine Christian faith. John combines the three tests he has already mentioned—righteousness, love, and truth—indicating that ultimately it is impossible to genuinely have any one marker of Christian faith without all of the others also being present too. Love for God is not separate from keeping His commands or adhering to the truth. Knowing God in love changes human attitudes, bending them toward God's desires and making what was once a burden light and easy to carry (Mt. 11:30). Adhering to truth and loving others becomes joyful.

In chapter 2 and continuing through chapter 4, John discussed each of the three tests twice. John discussed the moral test of righteousness in 2:3–6 and 3:4–10. He discussed the social test of love in 2:7–11 and 3:11–18. Finally, in 2:18–27 and 4:1–6, John discussed the doctrinal test of truth and error, which is described as the belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. The link that holds the tests together is the new birth, being born again of the Spirit, which is mentioned in verses 1 and 4.

On what basis does John proclaim Jesus as the Son of God? In v. 6–12, he explains that Jesus is the Son of God based on evidence found in the testimony of multiple witnesses to Jesus (where the Father's testimony is present). God's testimony is greater than the testimony of men, and John says three give testimony to the truth: God's Spirit, the water (baptism), and the blood (atoning death on the cross). **The Spirit ... testifies** through John's witness to the meaning of these events (baptism and crucifixion) in Jesus's life; in this, the witnesses are reliable (Dt. 19:15, 17:6). How? John was present at both the baptism and the crucifixion of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus promised John and other believers the Holy Spirit to aid their understanding (Jn. 16:13).² Further, several witnesses met mosaic law.

1.) **Victory in Jesus: Believers Conquer the World by Faith (v. 1–5)!**

- True believers display evidence of being God's children, including the right beliefs about God and holy living before God. Here we see righteousness, love, and doctrinal truth required together:
 - ❖ Evidence #1: Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (i.e., the correct Jesus, who is fully God, fully man) *is a sign of the new birth and not a consequence of the new birth.* John 1:12–13 makes it clear that faith is the condition of the new birth.
 - ❖ Evidence #2: Love of the Father and fellow believers (v. 1, 2)
 - ❖ Evidence #3: Obedience to His commandments (holy living)
 - ❖ "Every day of our lives, we face three [enemies]: the world, our own flesh, and the devil. [...] John says daily victory comes from recognizing that faith teaches [us] how to overcome the world. Read Hebrews 11 and be reminded *seventeen times* that the great men and women of the Old Testament won the victory "by faith." Not by intellect, not by power, but by faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world."³
- ✓ **Application:** "Am I doing what God says? Are his commands too hard to keep? Sometimes Christians may find the commands of the Bible difficult and burdensome. Why do you keep the commandments, anyway? The answer to that question is vital because it reveals your spiritual maturity or lack thereof. Is your Christian life a duty you must force yourself to fulfill? Do you feel that if you don't keep God's commandments, you are afraid of what he might do if you don't? Or do you genuinely desire to obey God's commands? When John says God's "commandments are not burdensome," he indicates that the world considers them onerous. *But real Christians don't think that way.* The primary motivation for keeping God's commandments should be our love for Jesus, the one who gave them in the first place!"³

2.) **Victory in Jesus: the testimony of others (water, blood, Father, Spirit, "whoever" believes, and the apostle John) declares that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, Jesus (6–12)!**

- "**Water,**" referring to the baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist immersed Him and raised Him up. The heavens opened, and there was a sign of a dove that descended on Him. A voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Lk. 3:22; Mt. 3:16).

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 130.

² Robert W. Yarbrough, *1 John*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1999.

³ David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 213–214.

- **“Blood,”** referring to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary’s cross. The blood of Jesus testifies to His death.
- **By saying “water and blood,”** John refutes false teachers of his day like the Egyptian Cerinthus, who erroneously claimed that the divine Spirit departed the man Jesus prior to the crucifixion.

The heretics like Cerinthus believed the Messiah, the Son of God, was united with the human Jesus only for a period. But this view, in effect, denied the Incarnation. Thus, they had said “No” to God’s salvation. The Christological understanding of the heretics is perhaps most clearly outlined in 5:6. They could agree that Jesus “came by water,” which refers to Jesus’ baptism. But John emphasized that Jesus came “not by water only, *but by water and blood.*”⁴

The ultimate heresy from John’s perspective was to say the unity between the human and the divine was only temporary in Christ. It was not only the man Jesus who died on the cross but the God-man Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For the false teachers, Jesus’ death did not matter at all.⁴

- **“Spirit,”** refers to the living person of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. In 1 John, Jesus is referred to as the Son of God (5:5), He is the foretold ‘Christ’ or ‘anointed One’ (5:6). The Spirit of truth, whom John wrote extensively about in His Gospel of John, points people to Jesus as savior. The Spirit bears witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.
- **“God” the father:** testimony in v. 9–10; From the beginning, Christ Jesus, God’s Son, was the plan of Salvation from the Father—the Holy One to come to earth and pay the penalty due for human sin.
- **“Whoever”** (all believers) vs. “Whoever” (non-believers) in v.10; The person who believes receives the gift of eternal life and therefore also testifies from within themselves. Those who reject the Father and Spirit’s testimony call God a liar because they do not believe God offers eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- **“Apostle John”** (led by the Spirit), as the author of this letter, must be remembered as someone strongly motivated at nearly 100 years of age to write about Jesus Christ as the Son of God. John was there when Jesus died for our sins at the cross. John was a first-hand eyewitness (1:1-4). John personally saw the empty tomb. John was there in the upper room a week after Jesus’ resurrection when he appeared to the twelve disciples. John was there when Jesus ascended to Heaven. From that day forward, John kept on telling people about Jesus! John wrote five books of the Bible about Jesus as the Son of God (John, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation). John believed

that whoever has the Son as his Savior possessed eternal life. Those who don’t will spend an eternity apart from Jesus in a place called Hell. Apostle John testifies that eternal life is a gift. It cannot be earned. You cannot work for it, and you can’t buy it. Jesus paid the price for your sins. “How do you get eternal life?” John says it is received. Whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life. Only in Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

- **Why should you believe?** It determines whether you go to heaven or hell when you die physically. God Himself has told you that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior of the world. His testimony is not merely that of a man, although He came to earth as a man. God the Father has revealed to humanity who Jesus Christ is as God’s Son and as the One who makes forgiveness of sins possible. Scripture declares that Jesus is God’s final Word, and that Jesus was the Word in the flesh (John 1). If you refuse God’s testimony about Jesus, 1 John 5:10 says you are so bold as to call God a liar (yet God does not lie, Num. 23:19). Either you repent and believe God’s testimony about Jesus, or the consequence of disbelief will be loss of eternal life.
- The last living apostle testifies that there is ample evidence to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The problem is not with evidence. The problem is with sinful and unbelieving hearts.

Application:

- ✓ Conquer the world through faith in Jesus! Cultivate a relationship with Jesus and do not love or be conformed to the world.
- ✓ Reject false doctrine. The barbarians are not just at the gate, they have entered some churches! “The blood” of Christ must remain central to what Christians believe and preach. Proclaim Christ crucified, as the message of the cross is God’s wisdom and power unto salvation (1 Cor. 1-4)!
- ✓ What does your lifestyle say about God?
- ✓ In Deuteronomy 17:6, we read that there is truth on the evidence of two or three witnesses. In the words of C. S. Lewis, “your choices as to who Jesus is are limited.” Given what Jesus has said about himself, what God has said about Jesus, what the water and blood and the Holy Spirit have said about him, what other believers have said, and what the Apostle John has said, “Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. You have no other options. If he is a liar, then dismiss him. If he is a lunatic, then dismiss him. But if he is Lord, repent of your sin, believe in him for salvation, and fall at his feet and worship him because he is worthy of your life’s devotion.”⁵