

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 5:1-5

Overcoming the World

INTRODUCTION

As we approach 1 John 5, it is essential to ground our study in the overarching flow of the letter thus far. We need to ensure that we maintain a fresh perspective focused on the text itself rather than presuppositions or traditions. This letter, penned by an apostle who walked with Jesus from the beginning, serves as a fatherly plea, guiding its readers through thoughtful engagement with truth. Its form employs rhetorical repetition, variation in phrasing, and deliberate contrasts to draw believers into alignment with Apostolic doctrine about Jesus Christ. The function is to realign a community of believers who have been infiltrated by antichrists promoting the heresy that Jesus is not the Messiah (1 John 2:22, 4:2-3). These false teachers, once among the Apostolic circle but revealed as "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10), have sown doubt and division, leading some to stray from the foundational message heard "from the beginning" (1 John 1:1, 2:24).

In chapter 1, the author establishes the authenticity of the Apostolic witness to the "word of life" (1 John 1:1), emphasizing fellowship with God and one another through walking in the light and rejecting the darkness of doctrinal error. Chapter 1 is not about personal sin management but highlights the group's collective failure to confront the heresy. Forgiveness and cleansing rest solely on Jesus' propitiation (1 John 2:2), grounded in God's faithfulness. Based on this truth, the children (teknion), that is, the whole group, must agree together about the sin in the camp and deal with the issue appropriately.

Chapter 2 builds on this by urging readers to abide in Christ, where the one who knows Him correlates with keeping His commandments. This is defined not as moralistic rules but as believing in Jesus and loving the brethren (1 John 3:23). The author distinguishes spiritual maturity levels (1 John 2:12-14) while exposing the antichrists as deceivers who deny the Son (1 John 2:22-23). Assurance comes from the anointing, which is Apostolic truth (1 John 2:20, 27), which gives believers the tools to overcome the antichrists and have confidence (1 John 2:25).

Chapter 3 intensifies the contrast: children of God, born of Him through faith, identified as ones who do righteousness, while antichrists are of the devil, they do the lawlessness and do not know God (1 John 3:4-10). This is not a fruit inspection to identify who is saved, nor is it an introspection to see if you are in fellowship with God; rather, this is about the contrast, an identity rooted in doctrine, affirming Jesus as the Christ. Love emerges as the command's fulfillment (1 John 3:11, 23), exemplified in Christ's self-sacrifice (1 John 3:16), calling believers to active deeds toward needy brothers rather than the antichrists' self-serving deception.

By chapter 4, the focus sharpens on testing spirits—evaluating messages against Apostolic teaching (1 John 4:1-6)—affirming that believers have overcome through Him who is greater (1 John 4:4). Love, sourced in God's nature and manifested in sending His Son (1 John 4:9-10), is completed as we understand and believe the Love of God and this obligates us to love one another. Completed love is characterized by confidence before God and having no fear before Him.

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This cumulative foundation, doctrinal fidelity, abiding assurance, and brotherly love set the stage for 1 John 5, where the author synthesizes belief in Jesus as the Christ and overcoming the world. From the very onset of this chapter, we will once again see the repetitive layering. Let's make sure we approach understanding the letter's rhetorical intent: this is not merely informational, but a thoughtful engagement with truth.

1 JOHN 5:1-5 – EVALUATION

Everyone who believes (articular participle) that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten from God, and everyone who loves (articular participle) the one who begot (articular participle) also loves the one who has been begotten (articular participle) from him. In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. Because everyone who has been begotten (articular participle) from God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome (articular participle – noun of apposition) the world, the faith of ours. Who is the one overcoming (articular participle) the world if not the one believing (articular participle) that Jesus is the Son of God?

The Articular Participles

The articular participles function as identifiers that frame the author's central ideas. As we have seen previously in both this letter and 1 John, articular participles highlight contrasts, reinforce relationships, and force the reader to reflect rather than establish causation. This is not what is happening; this is what is.

Verse 1 introduces four articular participles: *ὁ πιστεύω* ("the one believing"), *ὁ ἀγαπάω* ("the one loving"), *ὁ γεννάω* ("the one having begotten"), and *ὁ γεννᾶω* ("the one having been begotten"). The first two serve as subjects in parallel clauses, presenting belief and love not as actions but as identity, how God sees believers. The perfect passive verb *γεννᾶω* ("has been begotten") anchors this identity in a completed action by God whose effects continue in the present. The latter two participles—both accusative—operate as direct objects: God as the begetter and believers as the begotten. The writer very methodically demonstrates the connection between the one begotten and the one who begets. And if you love the one who begets it is natural to love the one begotten.

In verse 4, the articular participle *ὁ γεννᾶω* serves as the subject of *νίκη* (overcomes/conquers), asserting that whatever is begotten by God inherently overcomes the world. This grammar demonstrates this theological truth: victory/overcoming is not an achievement but a state of being tied to being begotten, to believing in Jesus Christ.

Verse 5 begins with *ὁ νικῶν* ("the overcoming one") and *ὁ πιστεύων* ("the believing one"), anchoring a rhetorical question. This restates and climaxes the passage's logic: who overcomes the world? The one who believes Jesus is the Son of God. The participial forms here emphasize not

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causation but correlation and identity. To believe is to overcome—not because belief causes conquest, but because the believer belongs to the conqueror. This reflects the author's argument throughout the letter, affirming identity while challenging the world's system and the dangers of false teaching with the true Apostolic Doctrine.

In 1 John 5:1–5, these articular participles allow us to see how the author identifies spiritual identity rather than procedural steps. They define the believer not through what one does but through who one is in relation to God. This brings us to one solid truth. We are an overcomer because Jesus is the overcomer, and we are in Him.

Who is “The one begotten of Him” in verse 1?

In 1 John 5:1, we have this phrase “the one begotten of Him.” It is attractive because it is a singular masculine articular participle to think this is about Jesus, but this is about believers in general. Throughout the Gospel of John and 1 John, whenever Jesus is called the “begotten Son,” it’s done with very clear, unique language—usually the phrase “only begotten” or “only Son”—highlighting that Jesus’ relationship to the Father is one of a kind. In contrast, the author often uses language about being “born of God” to describe everyone who believes in Jesus; it’s an identity shared by all believers.

The immediate context of 1 John 5:1 supports this understanding as well. Just before and after verse 1, the author is explaining how believing in Jesus connects the believer to God and to each other. This is a layered repetition of 1 John 4:20 – “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

The focus is on our spiritual family, encouraging readers to love one another as siblings born from the same Father. So, the phrase “the one begotten of Him” is a way the author describes any and all believers. The message is that loving God is directly correlated to loving one another.

1 John 5:2 – What is going on here?

In examining 1 John 5:2 within the context of John's writings, the verse's structure and conjunctions warrant close scrutiny, as they contribute to its apparent dissonance with surrounding patterns.

The verb “we know” (γινώσκω ginosko) is experiential and communal knowledge, echoing its use in 1 John for relational understanding (e.g., 2:3: “we know that we have known him”; 3:14: “we know that we have passed out of death”; 3:19: “we will know that we are of the truth”; 3:24: “we know that he abides in us”; 4:6: “we know the spirit of truth”; 4:13: “we know that we abide in him”). This suggests a mutual recognition within the community, not an introspection.

The ὅταν clause in the second half of the sentence acts as an appositional correlation to the knowing, similar to ἐάν clauses in 1 John, which elaborate on knowledge, love, and

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observing/keeping His commandments. This verse appears to be an inversion compared to other Johannine passages on love, where loving the brethren correlates with loving God.

Here is my thesis on this verse: Loving God, loving the brethren, and observing/keeping His commandments are all part of a circular continuum of thought. They are all correlated, and the author is leading the audience into a deep logical train of thought that trains them how to think and leads them to only one conclusion: love for the brethren is the only logical conclusion for the believer.

- John 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- John 15:12-13 - This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
- John 14:15 - If you love Me, you will keep My commandments
- John 14:21 - He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.
- John 15:10 - If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.
- 1 John 2:5 - but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him
- 1 John 3:11 - For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another
- 1 John 3:17 - But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?
- 1 John 3:23 - This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us
- 1 John 4:12 - No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
- 1 John 4:20 - If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.
- 1 John 4:21 - And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Syntactically, the ὅταν clause functions conditionally, akin to ἐὰν in 1 John 1:6-10, which we have stated that these are not causative formulas but correlations: all of these ideas work in tandem. The three components that we have seen, loving God, loving the brethren, observing/keeping His commandments, are not causing one another but are part of a logical conversation. The author continues a perpetual circular reasoning and repetitive layering.

Burdensome –

Why are the commandments not burdensome? Let's remind ourselves of something in John's writings. The word for commandments "ἐντολή entole" in the Book of John and the letter of First

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John does not refer to the 10 commandments or the Law, but the instruction that Jesus was giving directly to the Disciples. In this context, it is to believe in Him and love the brethren.

Then he makes the statement, “And His commandments, they are not burdensome.” In this sentence, this is again not a result of the love of God nor of being an overcomer, but they are correlated, and we have seen how this works. The love of God, understood and believed, gives us instruction, an example, a point of reference, and motivation to love one another.

Here is a question—is believing God, specifically Jesus, and loving the brethren burdensome?

“**βαρύς** *barus*” is an adjective that means heavy, weighty, stern, harsh.