



1 John 5:6-13
God Bearing Witness

We get to learn a lot about Jesus this morning. So, if you have questions about Him, about God, about eternal life, about being saved, and what that means, you are in the right place.

We're going to find the answers as we continue our study of the book of 1 John in the Bible. It's a letter really, the first of three, written by a pastor who was also one of Jesus' famous 12 disciples. He also wrote one of the four gospels, or biographies, of Jesus' life, and the book of Revelation, the last book in Bible.

John knew a lot about Jesus first hand, he had spent time with Jesus, years as a matter of fact, listening to what Jesus said, watching what Jesus did, He was even there on the day Jesus hung and died on the cross. He was a witness to Jesus' appearances after the resurrection and became a leader in the first Christian churches.

So, when it came to write about Jesus, he had a lot of things he could have shared. But he said in his gospel that he picked specific things for a specific reason. Toward the end of the book he says:

John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

So, if you want to know things about Jesus, if you want to know things about God, if you want to understand what it means to be born again and receive everlasting life, read the gospel of John. It's not that long, it won't take you more than a few hours, but it was written to change your life, actually, to change your eternity. That's kind of a big deal, don't you think? It's better than you can do on Netflix...

But then, after you have believed, John has even more for you to know. And part of that is found here in 1 John. Skip ahead with me to 1 John 5:13 where John once again tells us plainly why he's writing.

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God.

John's a very good, very clear, very direct communicator, isn't he? It's easy to find his purpose statement. If you had to write a book report on this, it would be pretty easy, right?

John wrote his gospel so that we would believe; he wrote this letter so that we would continue in our belief and have assurance – that we would *know* that we have eternal life.

Now think about that, because it's very important – some of you, or the people you know, need to know that the Bible says this. People need to know that the Bible says you can believe in the name of the Son of God and “[know that you have eternal life.](#)”

Too often people are a bit agnostic about it all – they're not sure if they're really saved or not. They're not sure where they stand with God or how everything will turn out. And they're not sure how anyone else could be so certain. But John says specifically, he sat down with a parchment and quill and wrote these exact words and phrases, these specific sentences and paragraphs, he made these points and told these stories SO THAT we can know Jesus is the Christ and that we can know that we have eternal life through faith in Him.

Friend, if you're confused about God this morning, read John's writings, and the rest of the Bible as well, and as you read, God *will* speak *if* you really want to hear. He will lead you into the truth and give you confidence in it. You can be certain about things that are plainly stated, and it won't make you presumptuous or proud, it will mean you've listened and understood.

So, let's listen to what else John has to say this morning.

We jump in at 1 John 5:6 where we find him telling us more about Jesus. He says,

[6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.](#)

Time and time again John talks to his readers about the importance of believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and now, he's telling us why Jesus is so believable: He came by water and blood and these, along with the Holy Spirit bear witness to who Jesus is.

OK, but what does all that mean? Well, some people read that Jesus “[came by water and blood](#)” and they think of it as a reference to His humanity, they think of the fact that before a woman goes into labor, her water breaks. A baby, in the mother's womb is surrounded by amniotic fluid, referred to as the mother's ‘water.’

We know it's not molecularly the same as H₂O but it's been referred to as ‘water’ since at least the days of Rome – there's a Latin term for it, so we keep it. And, for some, the idea of Jesus coming “by water” reminds us of the circumstances of His miraculous, but very real, human birth in a stable in Bethlehem.

And then, the fact that He came by “blood” would refer to His death. So, some see here the bookends of Jesus' life. Jesus came to earth like all human beings do through water, and then experienced death, which awaits us all. It's a way of emphasizing the Humanity He shared with us.

Others though, read that Jesus came “by water and blood” and see a reminder only of His death.

John told of the crucifixion in his gospel. He told of the events leading up to the cross: how Jesus was arrested and roughed up by guards. How He was whipped by professional torturers from the Roman government, and how those responsible for His mistreatment had a religious holiday to celebrate and needed Jesus to hurry up and die so they could get on with things and get back to their celebration. It’s appalling, but true. If you turn in your Bibles to John 19, we read:

John 19:31 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately **blood and water** came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, **so that you may believe.** 36 For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “*Not one of His bones shall be broken.*” 37 And again another Scripture says, “*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*”

John says “I was there, I testify to it, and this is what I saw: blood and water flowed from His side.” And I’m telling you all of this, giving you all the details of someone who was there, so that you may believe!

The water he says he saw come from Jesus is most likely pericardial fluid. Your heart sits inside a sac called the pericardium which protects it from infection, and gives it space to do all of it’s beating without rubbing against anything and causing friction because it’s sitting in this sack full of clear fluid – much like a baby in the womb surrounded by amniotic fluid. So, it is quite possible that the spear the soldier jabbed into Jesus would have pierced His pericardial sack as well as His heart releasing a flow of what appeared to be, “**blood and water.**”

It’s anatomically possible, and blood and water certainly flowed that day. But everything else the Bible tells us about the death of Christ focuses on His blood. No one but John ever mentions water at the cross.

So, when John says “**This is He who came by water and blood**” back in 1 John 5:6, he is most likely connecting “blood” with the cross, but the “water” he mentions is probably the water of baptism that initiated His ministry.

You know how at the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus went out to John the Baptist and was baptized by him. It freaked John out of course, he said, “You should be baptizing me, Jesus.” But he went along with it, and the Bible says,

Matt 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

This was like the Grand Opening of Jesus’ public ministry, and it was marked by water, by baptism. So, we could say it like this: Jesus came by water and blood - the water of baptism that marked the commissioning of Jesus’ ministry and the blood of the cross that represented the culmination of His ministry.

And these two symbols - water and blood are very common in the Bible. They’re regularly associated with cleansing and consecration, with being set apart for a special purpose for God. We see blood on the doorposts of the children of Israel during the Passover, saving their children from death, and then waters are parted for them to be able to cross the Red Sea. Later, blood and water were both used in anointing Jewish priests for service to God and the nation. And now, we’re told Jesus came by water and blood to cleanse us from our sins.

Water has a strong and obvious connection with cleansing – we understand how it could be seen to wash away pollution and the past, and making us clean. To this day Jews and Muslims, who do not look to Christ, still participate in various forms of ritual washing, cleansing their hands, feet, even their mouths before engaging in certain religious activities in an effort to present themselves clean before God.

Of course, the problem is, the stains of the soul don’t come off as easily as the dirt on our hands. And so God says it’s not enough just for us to be washed off, it’s not enough just for us to be cleaned up, we don’t need to simply be reformed, we need to be redeemed, because no matter how clean and upright we are today, we’ve still got a past.

So John says something very important

6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood.

Why does he do that? Why does he make that distinction? Why the double emphasis on the blood?

Because, it’s the blood that covers our sins.

Water may make us pretty, but the blood makes us pure. God established things this way from the very beginning. After Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked and they were ashamed and tried to cover themselves with leaves. But God did something interesting – He gave them clothes made out of skins - skins that came from an animal that was killed. Blood was shed to cover Adam and Eve.

They had done something selfish and wrong in eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and now something lost its life to help them with the consequences. It was the very beginning of the sacrificial system that Jesus would eventually fulfill and for centuries and millennia the history of people who worshipped God was a history of animals being sacrificed and blood being shed.

God established the principle with Moses as He was telling him how the people of Israel were supposed to live. He told Moses, blood was to be treated reverently

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'

God was very clear. Blood covers our sin. That's the system God made. If you don't like it, take it up with Him, but those are the rules, "the use of blood in sacrifice is a price-paying act."¹

And I think it was meant to offend. It was meant to seem extreme. It was meant to cause questions like 'how could this be helpful for me?' Because it was meant to help people see the seriousness of sin. It was meant to help us see: my self-centeredness means this lamb has to die. And now that it's dead, there's nothing I can do to bring it back, there's no amount of remorse that will bring it back, I can't say I'm sorry enough to bring it back. We're confronted with the immovable weight of our guilt and the fact that by sinning, we break something that we cannot, in our own power, fix.

And, this requirement for the shedding of blood also helps us see that we would need a thousand acres apiece to raise enough herds to even begin to think about covering all our sins. It's futile. We sin faster than we can sacrifice and at some point, if this were the only way, we would wipe out our flocks.

But God knew that, and that's why the Bible also tells us that the blood of bulls and goats was only ever intended to point us toward something else, Someone else – Jesus, the Lamb of God who came as the ultimate sacrifice in our place. That is why He came, "**not only by water, but by water and blood.**"

Today, Christians remember all of this through the two sacraments Jesus gave the church – baptism and communion. When we participate in baptism, we are preaching the message of Christ and what He has done, to everyone who sees us baptized. We proclaim outwardly what God has done inside of us.

So too with receiving communion, only receiving communion preaches the message of Christ to ourselves again. We don't sacrifice a lamb and then eat its meat with our family. We hold a cup that reminds us of the blood and a wafer that reminds us of the body of the

¹ EDT 2nd Ed., see "Blood, Sacrificial Aspects of"

perfect Lamb of God who was really born, and who really died, for the sake of my sin. Sin is real, the consequences are real, but so is the atonement.

And God wants to make sure we know all of that, so He takes great pains to bring us the message. He brings in witnesses, evidence, and testimony:

6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.
7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

The Spirit of God, God's Holy Spirit, drives this home for all of us. The water and the blood are inanimate, they are symbols, but the Spirit of God is alive and He comes to us and helps us see and understand all of these things. God has a message for us, He is a witness on the stand as we judge these spiritual things in our lives, and He says, "Listen to my testimony!"

God hunts you down, He stalks you, He brings you truth and makes it plain and inescapable. The problem is never that we can't find or know the truth about Jesus and ourselves; the problem so often is that we don't *want* to know it. We ask our phone or ask our friends for information all the time, and we believe what we receive, so why wouldn't we receive what God is telling us about Himself? Listen to what John says next:

1 John 5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

Would you marvel at the audacious humility of all this? God, as if He really were on trial, is bringing in witnesses to testify of His Son Jesus Christ and what He has done for you. But in reality it is you and I who have done wrong, we are the ones who have sinned, we are the ones actually on trial, yet God condescends to bring us witnesses and testimony proving that these things are true.

He actually allows us to sit as the judge. He turns the courtroom inside out and gives us the bench. It feels good to be in the judge's seat some times, doesn't it? It feels good to be in control. To be asking the questions, to be getting the information you want. Some of you have conducted investigations before, and especially if you have authority, you know what it's like to ask for more evidence, to ask for more data, to ask for more interviews and files. And to receive them.

But there's more to being the judge than just asking for evidence. At some point you need to make a decision – guilty or not? True or False? You must make the call. And that's what John says next – the consequence of God giving you all this testimony, the consequence of Him sending you the Holy Spirit as a witness is that sooner or later you have to make the call:

10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

So, is God a liar? Or are the things He says true? And if they are, what does that mean for you and your life?

God has tried everything to help you see that left to your own devices you will wreck your life. But God has sent His Son to save you from the death of your sin and to give you a new life. He shed His blood and offers to wash you with cleansing water – will you accept this life? Do you have this life?

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

So, there it is. Do you have the Son? Have you submitted your life to Him? If so, you have life. Eternal life.

Friends, do you believe that? Do you believe you have eternal life? I think most of us do intellectually, but we still stumble. We often find our eyes and our hearts wandering. We ask other things, and other people, to be our lives, we look all over for satisfaction and fulfillment instead of resting in God. We ask Jesus to sit silently on the couch while we plot and scheme over how we'll really achieve the life we're looking for.

What is wrong with us? Why don't we cherish our Lord? Why don't we esteem Him? Why don't we cling to Him with both hands? Friends, God says He wants us to know that we have eternal life and to continue believing. But we drift, we wander, we 'backslide' or whatever else you want to call it. We need to hear the testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood. We need to remember who we are in Christ and the access we have to our God.

Listen again to what John says:

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

Christian, this is God's testimony to us. This is what He wants us to know. This is what God says we should hear. And this is what He says we should continue in.

Now that won't always be easy. If life and faith and trust were easy, we wouldn't have all these witnesses and testimony – God wouldn't have had to do all that He has done if life was easy.

But He has, because He knows what's at stake. He knows there's a world full of things trying to keep you away from Him. And so He has made it possible for you to *know* that you have eternal life.

Do you know that today? And is that knowledge making a difference in your life?

Friends, if you have questions about who God is, who Jesus is, what He has done; if you want to understand sin, and your own heart, your place in this world and what is coming next, receive the witness and testimony of God. He's making Himself clear in the pages of Scripture, but we need to meet Him here and we need to accept the things He has to say. An incredible and eternal gift is being offered to us by a God who stoops down to speak to us. Will you believe Him and receive today?