

John's First Epistle
Week Five
1 John 5:1-21

Day One

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ²This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

5:1 – John was not inferring that Jesus was one way to the Father; Jesus was and is the **only** way to the Father. If anyone wants to have a relationship with the Father, that person must come to and through the Son of God. There is no other way. Perhaps those who had left the fellowship of the church that first received this letter had found another way, or so they thought. John was quick to dispel their conclusion, for believing that Jesus is the Messiah or Christ is the only true indicator that a person loves God the Father.

This of course leads to all kinds of questions about those who never heard the gospel or those who are sincere in their faith apart from Christ. This truth is why your work is so urgent: You must help broadcast far and wide that Jesus is the Christ, so that as many as possible can hear and turn to Him. The response to Jesus' being the Way isn't debate, but action! And the most appropriate action is to spread that good news to the ends of the earth. That is what Jesus knew and sent His disciples to do:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Are you involved in the work that Jesus gave us to do and that is taking the gospel message to the end of the earth? How can you be more effective?

5:2 – John was not interested in a theological debate, but in seeing those who loved God carry out His will. Jesus gave us many commands to follow, not the least of which was to love one another. That love is to be practical. As stated in a previous study, the early church understood this love and became radical in their care for one another. They did not debate who Jesus was or what His commands meant. They did the works consistent with faith in Christ and gave their lives bearing witness to the truth of who He was and what He said. That is your mission as well.

5:3&4 – God's commands are not burdensome. They are life-giving!

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).

Anyone who puts his or her faith in Christ has victory over the world and its ways because of that faith. Faith in Christ is enough to set you free from the bonds and limitations of this world system that is passing away into death. When you put your faith in Christ, you live!

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Are you free from the world system? Are you enjoying the victory that only your faith can provide?

Day Two

⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

5:5 – There is only one means through which anyone can escape the trappings of this world and its system. You cannot will to do it, or become a hermit and live in the desert, or mortify your flesh through elaborate spiritual schemes. The only way to overcome the world and its death traps is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. This does not mean you simply give mental assent to that truth by thinking, "Yes, I think it's true that Jesus is the Son of God." You must surrender your life to Him, bowing the knee to worship Him as God and then allowing Him access to your heart so that He can change you into the person He wants you to be, conformed to the image of God's Son. Faith is the only way to God!

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6).

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him (Isaiah 40:10).

5:6 – This verse that refers to water and blood directs our attention to when Jesus was found to be dead on the cross:

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe (John 19:33-35).

This verse also perhaps refers to the fact that Jesus came in the flesh, was baptized and then died on the cross. Keep in mind that some were obviously saying that Jesus did not really come in the flesh or that His death on the cross was not a real death that humans suffer. John was refuting the false doctrines that perverted Jesus humanity and sacrificial death on the cross.

What's more, anyone who wants to know the truth about Jesus has the Holy Spirit as his or her helper. The Spirit bears witness to the truth, so anyone who denies the truth is working against the Holy Spirit! Jesus was fully God and fully man and His death on the cross was agonizingly real. He came in both water and blood.

Day Three

⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

5:7&8 – The Spirit gives testimony to the truth about Jesus and His life on earth. The Spirit reveals and preserves the truth that Jesus came in the flesh, was like us in every way but sin, was obedient to the Father in all things, died on the cross and was raised to life. Jesus did not appear to die, and the Father did not withdraw His spirit right before His body died – both of those are heresies that have existed at one time or another.

John was an eyewitness of the truth he was protecting. He saw Jesus die and saw Him come back to life. John also witnessed Jesus' earthly ministry in all its glory, so John was obviously passionate to keep the truth from being distorted as some were trying to do. (and still do today).

People often ask how the Scriptures can be trusted since they were written so long ago. Many today offer textual or historical criticism that cast doubt on the reliability of the Bible accounts. My response is always the same: The Spirit who wrote and inspired the Scriptures is also capable of preserving the Scriptures. For its age, the Bible has been remarkably preserved, and I choose to put my trust in the God of the Bible who can insure that what I receive in faith is the "real deal."

5:9 – John pointed out that men receive the testimony of other men on a regular basis. That is the essence of history – the one reading was usually not there, but is accepting the report of someone who was, or who researched the account to some degree. The believers to whom John was writing had received his report. Yet John indicated that someone greater than a man provided the witness concerning Jesus and that person is the Spirit of God, who cannot lie!

As stated earlier, anyone who does not receive the truth about Jesus is resisting the Holy Spirit, even calling Him a liar! That is true blasphemy – to attribute the work of God to be a lie and of the devil himself:

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:30-32).

Day Four

¹⁰Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

5:10 – Here we read again what we discussed in yesterday’s study. If anyone has put his or her faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God bears witness in his or her heart that Jesus is the Son of God and came in the flesh, doing all that the apostles reported He did. Anyone who does not believe – and keep in mind that John was addressing those who had left the fellowship of the true believers to follow their own insights about Jesus – has called God a liar! **How can anyone know better than God?** Yet this is the dynamic that our parents, Adam and Eve, initiated in the Garden. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that gave them the ability to judge for themselves what was right and wrong. They were created to rely on God revealing to them that information about good and evil, but they wanted that job for themselves. John wrote about men and women who ate from that tree once again and came up with their own interpretation of who Jesus was and what God had done.

God has provided His Word and the witness of His Spirit to lead and guide you into the truth. You must learn to submit your mind and will to those two entities if you are going to reverse the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. It is not a matter of personal interpretation or choice of how you will come to serve God. It is an expression of man’s ongoing rebellion that he refuses to accept God’s way, but chooses rather to devise his own way to serve God.

5:11 – The testimony of the Spirit is that God has freely given man eternal life on one condition: faith in Christ. Eternal life is a gift, so man cannot be the one to set the terms for that gift. Only God can do that. Yet man consistently tries to reject and improve on God’s offer of a free gift of life in Christ. This is simply another indication of the depth of man’s rebellion that he would spit on God’s offer and come up with one of his own.

5:12 – John repeatedly addressed the question as to whether or not there are other ways to God other than faith in Jesus the Son. He consistently taught that there were not any other ways! If there were no other ways then, there are no other ways now. Jesus put it very simply and directly when He said:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Jesus did not say he was among the ways; He said He was *the* way. The way to what? He is the way to God, of course, because He is God!

Day Five

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

5:13 – John wrote so that the readers would have confidence and assurance that they had eternal life. There was to be no question, for anyone who puts his or her trust in the Lord Jesus has gained access to the blessings and grace of the Father. They have eternal life! Obviously someone was casting doubt on that truth and John wrote with the purpose of clearing up any and all confusion. Those who have faith in Christ will live with Him forever! That means anyone who does not have faith in Jesus will *not* enjoy the blessing of eternal union with the Lord.

Our role is not to debate whether or not this is true. Our objective is to declare this truth to include as many people in the family of God as possible! We are to invest anything we have to see the truth declared among the nations and ethnic groups of the earth. This work is called missions work.

Missions work can take place at home or abroad, but it must take place. You must play some role in that work, whether you give, pray or go. **What are you doing to see the message of the gospel reach others who don't know or have not heard? What more can you do? Do you see the urgency of this work, for if Jesus is the only way to the Father, then that is the good news that must be preached and broadcast?** This is why the early church was so passionate about declaring that Jesus was the Way!

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

5:14 – God hears you when you pray, not because you are praying properly or by the correct formula, but because Jesus has paved the way for you to be heard. God hears you because of the work Jesus did. When you pray in Jesus' name, it isn't a formula, but rather a reality. You come to the Father and He hears you because of Jesus. He answers your prayer so that Jesus may be glorified and the work of the Son verified as heaven's choice and favor.

Do you realize what John wrote here? When you pray, the Father hears you! Whether or not you get the answer you like, whether or not it feels like He hears you, the truth is that He hears you. You accept that in faith and you pray and keep on praying. The less you feel like He hears, the more fervently you should pray. Jesus told this parable and asked a question at the end. **How would you answer that question for your own life and family? If Jesus returned today, would He find faith in your “world”?**

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.

However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8).

5:15 – If God hears, then God grants. That is why you can pray and thank God for your prayer being answered before you see it answered:

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have **received it**, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

Are you regularly asking God for the same thing, or at some point do you begin to thank Him for what you asked? This isn't forcing or manipulating God into answering your request. It is a relationship with Him that enables you to know you were heard and then to thank Him for the answer. **Does that make sense?**

Day Six

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. ¹⁸We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.

5:16 – John urged his readers to pray for any in their spiritual family who are caught in sin. Yet he instructed not to pray for those who commit the sin that leads to death. We are not sure exactly what John meant there, but he must have felt his readers would know right away. Perhaps John had already explained that to them in one of his visits or by letter. In the context of this letter, it would seem that the sin that leads to death is denying that Jesus is the Christ. If someone denies that, then their sins are not forgiven

and that would lead to their death and eternal separation from God. Yet we cannot know for sure that this is what John meant when he wrote this verse.

We can take away from this verse, however, the need to pray for one another, especially those who are giving in to temptation.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load (Galatians 6:1-5).

5:17 – God is willing and able to forgive sin, if the basic requirement for that forgiveness are met. The basic requirement is that one put his or her faith in the Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world, and that Lamb is of course Jesus. So if someone refuses to accept those terms and put faith in Christ, that is sinful and refusing God's way. That sin must lead to death. It would be like a scuba diver refusing a tank of air when underwater. That mistake or decision would lead to certain death because the only means of life under that water would be the tank holding the oxygen. The only source of spiritual help for drowning mankind is Jesus. To refuse that lifeline and help is to accept certain spiritual death.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).

5:18 – Those who put their faith in Christ cannot continue to have peaceful coexistence with sin. That does not mean that they don't sin, they just can't make a living from it! The Spirit's presence will constantly work to make the believer conscious of sin and then give the grace to repent from sin, even if that repentance takes place over and over again.

There is also a sense that God is our refuge from the evil one! God is referred to as a refuge and strong tower in many instances, mostly in the Old Testament. When you understand the power of our enemy and our absolute dependence on God for salvation, you understand the truth of what John wrote in this verse.

- The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9).
- The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10).
- The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2).

Is God your strong tower and refuge? From what? Do you see how great your need is for Him and His gracious protective covering?

Day Seven

¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

5:19 – The whole world is under the control of our enemy! This provides all the more reason that we are to run into God’s “witness protection plan” for safety. We bear witness to the truth of Christ and then we stay under His Father’s umbrella of love and grace. This is a picture of how it was for Israel when they left Egypt. They were in hostile surroundings and God had to preserve and protect them by supernatural means on a daily basis. They would have died in the hostile desert, but God provided food, water, protective covering from heat in the cloud and protection from wild beasts. God was their only source and hope for survival. The same is true for you and me. We live in an equally hostile spiritual environment and we need Him to help and protect us every minute of every day!

5:20 – John here summarized both what he had written and his own life’s message for that matter: God is in control of our spiritual well-being through Jesus. Jesus is the source of all good things from the Father. God has given us knowledge of the Son and all that is pure and true. When we put our faith in what God has said, we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Jesus truly did come in the flesh and died a real death. Anyone who would not accept this truth or deny its reality was (and is) in serious spiritual trouble, for they were (are) calling God a liar!

There are those today who say that no one can know the truth or be certain of what is in Scripture. They want to cast doubt on the certainty of God’s revelation and the veracity of Jesus’ life and work. They have gutted the Bible and cast a negative light on all that John taught, maintaining that it is suspect and refutable. In some sense, we need this letter from John as much today as the early church needed it.

We can be sure of what God has spoken through His Word and through Jesus. God wants you to know the truth. He is not hiding it and He has not made it obscure. When you put your faith in Christ, you are in Him, which is the safest, most secure place to be. He will hold you close and protect you from all harm forever. That is a free gift of God in Christ.

Does that summary sound sufficient? Would you add anything to it?

5:21 – John’s ending seems abrupt and he mentioned that the readers should keep themselves from idols and false gods. It is possible to have a false mental picture of God

as much as to have a false graven image. Those who left the fellowship of the church then had pursued another God, one that John did not preach or teach. His final words in the letter were to avoid idols.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

Are there any idols in your life? Are there any false images of God as you want Him to be instead of who He is? There is only one way to deal with an idol and that is to repent and smash or destroy it. I trust you will do that and deal ruthlessly with anything that may be interfering with your worship of God in Spirit and in truth. Amen!