

1 John 5 – Confidence in God

Read 1 John 5

Vs 1 How do you get born of God? By believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Anointed One, God's promised Messiah. Gen 3:15,22:18 John has often mentioned being born of God (as in 1 John 2:29, 3:9, and 4:7). Here he tells us how one is born of God: whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ. John's great emphasis has been on love in this Book, but he never wants anyone to believe they earn salvation by loving others. A person is born of God when they put their trust in Jesus and on His saving work in their lives. We also understand that John was not talking about a mere intellectual assent to Jesus being Messiah (as even the demons might have, as described in James 2:19). Instead, he means a trust in and reliance on Jesus as Messiah. If you love Him who "begot you", what else will you do? Love those who are begotten of Him. In other words, as we've already studied, you will love other Christians, no matter who they are. This is the common ground of Christians – not race, not class, not culture, not language, nor any other thing except for a common birth in Jesus Christ, and the common Lordship of Jesus. John 13:35

Vs 2 Here we have another "test". What is it? "How do you know you love the children of God?" What is the answer? You love God and keep His commandments. Just as much as our love for the people of God reflects our love for God (as expressed in 1 John 3:10, 17), so our love and obedience to God is a demonstration of love to the body of Christ.

Vs 3 What important point does John repeat here? If you love God, you will keep His commandments. By inference, what does it mean if you don't keep His commandments? You don't love God (even if you say you do or try to convince yourself you do – the proof is in what you do!). Are His commandments a burden? No! If they feel like they are, you need to examine your love walk. The word burdensome or grievous means *heavy in weight, severe, stern, cruel*. What did Jesus say about His yoke/burden? Matt 11:28-30 When we are born again, we are given new hearts which wish to please God. As part of the New Covenant, the law of God (His commandments) has been written on the heart of every believer (Jeremiah 31:33). John is not trying to say obedience is an easy thing. If that were so, then it would be easy for us to not sin, and John has already acknowledged that we all do sin (1 John 1:8). John is thinking of the contrast Jesus made between the religious requirements of the religious leaders of His day, and the simplicity of loving God and following Him. Jesus said all the rules and regulations of the Scribes and Pharisees were as heavy burdens (Matthew 23:4). Instead of the burdensome requirement the Jews had to keep (hundreds of little rules and regulations), Jesus simply says to us, "Love Me and love my people, and you will walk in obedience." Just as the seven years of Jacob's service for Laban seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for Rachel (Genesis 29:18), so obeying God's commands does not seem a burden when we really love Him.

Vs 4 What is another benefit of being born of God? You overcome the world! The word "overcomes" is an active, ongoing concept. It is not one and done. In the Greek, it means *to subdue, conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory*. There is zero chance for defeat! How does this victory come? By faith! This is a consistently abiding faith, an ongoing reliance and trust upon Jesus Christ and His finished work. Give examples. Faith to be healed, victory over sin, etc.

Vs 5 John is repeating verse 4, restating this powerful truth. This tells us we overcome primarily because of who we are in Christ, not because of what we do. We overcome because we are born of God, and we are born of God because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. John 16:33, 1 John 2:13-14, Rev 3:21,12:11

Vs 6 What certainty or witness does John give that Jesus is the Messiah? He came by water and blood. John 3:3-8. What do you think this means? John makes it clear that the Jesus he speaks of is not the Gnostic, "phantom" Jesus who was so holy that He had nothing to do with this world (a common belief in that day). The Jesus we must believe on is the Jesus who came by water and blood (was born of a woman). Jesus came in the flesh. 1 John 4:2-3, 2 John 1:7,1:14,Romans 8:3,Heb 1:3,2:14,1 Tim 3:16 Most likely, John means the water of Jesus' baptism, and the blood of His crucifixion. When Jesus was baptized, He was not baptized in repentance for His own sin (He had none), but because He wanted to completely identify with sinful humanity. When He came by water, it was His way of saying, "I am one of you." When Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross, He did not die because He had to (death could have no power over Him), but He laid down His life to identify with sinful humanity and to save us from our sin. John 3:5. What is the witness of these facts? The Holy Spirit of Truth. John 15:26,16:14

Vs 7-8 These verses are not on the original Greek texts. It was added sometime in the 1300s. Why? Because it helped clarify the trinity, which was largely misunderstood. What are the 3 heavenly witnesses to Jesus, the Son of God? The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. What is said about these three witnesses? They are 3 in 1 (a.k.a the Holy Trinity). What are the three earthly witnesses to Jesus, the Son of God? The Spirit, the water and the blood. Notice they are also in agreement.

While there is no explicit statement of the Trinity in the Scripture (such as these verses), it is woven into the fabric of the New Testament – we find the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together as equal, yet distinct Persons in Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 1:33-34 14:16, 26; 16:13-15; 20:21-22; Acts 2:33-38; Rom 15:16; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal 4:6; Eph 3:14-16; 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.

Vs 9 What is the point of clarifying all these witnesses? It is to prove if God witnesses it, we can believe it even more than if a man witnessed it. Everybody, everyday, receives the witness of men regarding various things. Therefore, we should have much more confidence in the witness of God when He tells us who Jesus is. John does not want us to believe with blind faith. Instead, our faith is to be based on reliable testimony from God Himself.

Vs 10 If you don't believe God's witness, what are you? A liar! Why? Because God is true. Rom 3:4 If you don't believe the truth, you believe a lie. When a person refuses to believe on Jesus, they reject the testimony God has given of His Son. Therefore, they call God a liar with their unbelief.

Vs 11 – 13 What is the subject of these verses? How to obtain eternal life. Summarize it. God has given eternal life to man through His Son, Jesus Christ. John states another purpose of writing this book. What is it? Those who believe in the name of the Son of God may KNOW they have eternal life and that they can continue in this belief.

Vs 14 – 15 Because of the previous verses and our relationship in Jesus, what can we be confident of in our prayer life? God hears prayers when we pray according to His will. Not only does He hear us, but we can have CONFIDENCE that God will respond to our prayers. In this, we see the purpose of prayer and the secret of power in prayer. Phil 4:6, John 15:7, 2 Cor 6:1 The most powerful prayers in the Bible are always prayers which understand the will of God, and ask Him to perform it. We may be annoyed when one of our children says, "Daddy, this is what you promised, now please do it," but God is delighted when we pray His promises. It shows our will aligned with His, our dependence on Him, and that we take His Word seriously.

Vs 16 – 17 These verses talk about intercessory prayer for a fellow believer. What are we to do when we see a believer sinning? We ask God to intercede. God promised to bless the prayer made on behalf of a brother in sin. Perhaps such prayers have special power before God because they are prayers in fulfillment of the command to love the brethren. Surely, we love each other best when we pray for each other.

What is the "sin that leads to death"? Because John wrote in context of a brother, it is wrong to see him meaning a sin leading to spiritual death. Therefore, he probably meant a sin leading to the physical death of the believer. This is a difficult concept, but we have an example of it in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, where Paul says that among the Christians in Corinth, because of their disgraceful conduct at the Lord's Supper, some had died (many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep). This death came not as a condemning judgment, but as a corrective judgment 1 Corinthians 11:32. Apparently, a believer can sin to the point where God believes it is just best to bring them home, probably because they have in some way compromised their testimony so significantly that they would do more harm if they stayed. It is important that we don't presume every case of an untimely death of a believer is because they sinned. When a Christian is being corrected in regard to a sin leading to death, there is no point in praying for his recovery or restoration as the situation is in God's hands alone. 1 Cor 5:5

Vs 18 What seemingly contradictory statement does John now make? We can KNOW that anyone who is born of God does not sin. And he is able to keep himself and the devil can't touch him. How can this be? John is talking about our spirit-man here. Our spirit-man is perfect and sealed, never sins, never can sin and has the mind of Christ. "Himself" is more accurately translated "Him". What John means here is that He who has been born of God (that is, Jesus Christ) keeps him (that is, the believer). John means that our spirit is kept by Jesus and protected from Satan by Him.

Vs 19 What two things does John say we know? That WE are of God and the WORLD is under the sway (influence) of the wicked one (the slanderer, satan). If we are born of God, we are set apart from the world. We are no longer under the sway of the wicked one, though the whole world still is. Knowing this means we can be free to be what we are in Jesus and separate ourselves from the world system that is in rebellion against Him.

Vs 20-21 What is true and what is false? Jesus is the truth. All other gods (idolatry) are false. In the conclusion of this letter, John returned to his major theme: fellowship with Jesus Christ. We must know Him, and the word used for know (*ginosko*) speaks of knowledge by experience. There is only one God, Jehovah, and through His Son we have eternal life.