

## THE APOSTLE JOHN'S WORD PICTURE OF A CHRISTIAN

1 John 5:1-5

**Intro:** This morning we come to the last chapter in this wonderful epistle which was written by the Apostle John to an unnamed group of Christians. Obviously the Apostle John was well acquainted with them, and he knew about the struggles they were having with their salvation. The one thing about salvation which many of them were evidently struggling with, was the assurance of salvation. He knew that many of them were asking, "How can I know that I am saved? How can I be sure that I am a child of God?" Perhaps some of them were troubled in their minds because they were still bothered with sin. And so they were inclined to feel that, although they once were saved, they could not be sure that they continued to be saved.

As I have reminded you many times it is here in chapter 5 that the Apostle John stated his main purpose in writing this epistle. It is in verse 13. The KJ translators have repeated the part of the verse which gives us these words, "that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God," but it only occurs once in the better manuscripts. Personally I believe that they did it for clarity, but the Greek text actually reads like this: "These I wrote," or "I have written unto you, in order that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe in the name of the Son of God."

The NASB renders it, "These have I written unto you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." They have rearranged the order of the words because it makes it flow better in English. But the point is that the Apostle John was writing specifically those who were believing in the name of the Son of God, that they might be assured that they had eternal life. He was not saying that everybody has eternal life. He was saying that those who believed in the name of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, had eternal life.

In the hope that the Holy Spirit would give them the assurance that they lacked, he gave them six tests which each of them was to apply to his, or her, own life. Let me remind you of what they were:

- 1) The test of sin.
- 2) The test of obedience to the Word of God.
- 3) The test of love for the people of God.
- 4) The test regarding the world.

- 5) The doctrinal test which focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6) The test of abiding in Christ, or our fellowship with Christ. This latter test had to do with the way they were living in anticipation of the return of Christ.

Now after going through these tests, he comes back to them, not in the same order, but emphasizing their importance again and again.

As we come to chapter 5, it seems to me that in the first 15 verses of this chapter the Apostle John was describing in words, that which is true of every person who really is a Christian. I don't think you will find anything in these 15 verses which we could call a command, that is, something for us to do. He speaks of faith, and he speaks of prayer, but not really as exhortations. He wants them to know what is true of every child of God. Salvation is a work of God. It is not a cooperative effort between God and us. It is His work. So we need to understand what He has done in saving us if we are to enjoy real assurance. *Salvation has nothing to do with what we do for God, but it has everything to do with what God does for us!*

Obviously we will be taking to many verses to cover in one service if we try to go through the first fifteen verses. So I am only taking five today; we will pick up the rest of them, the Lord willing, in the coming days.

(Read 1 John 5:1-5.)

Note the expression in verse 1:

### **I. "Born of God" (1 John 5:1a).**

Verse 1 would bear the translation, "All," or "everyone," who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." The original makes it even stronger: *has been born of God*. Now let me ask you: which comes first, believing that Jesus is the Christ, or being born of God? Or to state my question another way, Is it by believing that Jesus is the Christ, that I am born of God, or is it because I have been born of God that I believe that Jesus is the Christ? I think that you will see if you think about this for a moment that he was saying that the fact that you and I believe that Jesus is the Christ, is evidence that we have been born of God. By nature we are spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins. God gives us life, and it is He Who enables us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One

of God, the One Who came to earth to give His life for sinners, and thus to become the only Savior. When we are born of God, and God gives us life, we have no hesitation in saying that “Jesus is the Christ.” The Apostle John was saying here that you would never say that about Jesus of Nazareth if you had not already been “born of God,” and having received the gift of eternal life, thus being enabled by God to recognize Who Jesus Christ is, and declaring your faith in Him, a faith which is in itself, a gift from God.

The reason more people do not recognize Jesus as the Lord Jesus Christ, is because they have not been born of God. This is the doctrinal test which the Apostle John has mentioned more than once before. And the Apostle John is not speaking of simply believing a lot of good things about Jesus, but a deep conviction that the Jesus of the Gospel was none other than the Son of God Who became a Man to secure our salvation.

Notice how verse 5 ends on the same note upon which verse 1 begins.

Nobody can possibly be saved who is not clear about Jesus Christ. It is no credit to us that we believe in Jesus Christ. It is evidence that God has given us life so that we would know Him. The Christian life begins with the new birth. And you and I have no more to do with our new birth than we did with our first birth. God has given us life, has given us eyes to see and ears to hear, which is the result of our spiritual birth.

Now let's go on to see what the next thing is that the Apostle John mentioned.

## **II. Others who are born of God (1John 5:1b).**

Implied in what the Apostle John said in the latter part of this verse is the fact that deep in the heart of every true Christian, every true child of God, is a love, a growing love, for the One by Whom we have been born again. The Apostle John had told us in 4:19, “We love him, because He first loved us.” You see God loved us first, and we love Him because He loved us first. God has a special place in the life of every person who has been born again. It is a loving relationship that we have with God. Before a person is born of God, he is content to live without God. He is not interested in knowing God, and certainly not concerned about pleasing God. But being born again changed all of that. Now we know how much we need the Lord, how hopeless and helpless we were without

Him. But this is only part of what the Apostle John was saying. God has not only put in our hearts a special love for Himself, *but He has put in us a love for all other people who have been born of God.*

*You see, the fact that we love God, and that we love the people of God, is further evidence that we have been born of God.*

We live in a sin cursed world, and, consequently, a world filled with hate. And the more our nation turns away from God and from Christ, the more evidence we are going to see of hate. Hate easily turns to murder, like it did in making Cain kill Abel. But, oh how wonderful is the fellowship of the people of God. We have all been born into the family of God. God is our Father, and we are all his children. I am not saying that everybody is a child of God, but only those who are “born of God,” born into God’s family *forever!*

So the fact that you love the Lord’s people is further evidence that you have the life of God in you. And there are no exceptions to this. If you are born of God, you are not going to be satisfied to stay away from church for weeks at a time. And the more you love the people of God, the more you are going to want to be with them.

But we are not finished yet with these traits of a true child of God.

### **III. The commandments of God (1 John 5:2-3).**

But what is it that makes our love for each other as the people of God continue to grow. It is when our love for God grows, and our love for God is measured by God according to the way we obey His Word.

You know, there is something about sinful human nature that resent it when others tell us what to do. We live in a country in which we are going to destroy ourselves by our insistence that no one invade the area of our own rights. Children don’t like to be told by their parents what they should do. Students resent teachers. Citizens resent government. But what a difference it makes in a person’s life when he or she is born of God. The Bible becomes a lamp to our feet, and a light upon our path. We believe that it is a book which God has given to us. In it He has told us how He wants us to live. And we learn to seek by His grace to do His will. We “keep His commandments,” and we do it because we love God, and want to please Him. The Bible becomes when we are “born of God,”

the most important book that we have. We not only enjoy hearing it taught, but we read it every day, asking God to speak to us through His Word and to give us the strength to obey Him. And we all learn, as the Apostle John knew from his experience over many years, that “His commandments are not grievous.” Do you know what that means? It means that they do not make life a burden. That do not oppress us, and take all of the joy out of life. In fact, they are just the opposite. You can find plenty of Christians who regret when they have violated the Lord’s commandments, but you will never find one who regrets being obedient to the Word of God.

But the point that the Apostle John was making here is that keeping the commandments of the Lord, enriches our love for the Lord, and it does the same for our relationship with each other in the family of God. But we can’t do God’s will as it is expressed in His commandments in our own strength. He must work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

No Christian is perfect in any of these things that we have been talking about. We grow in our love for God. We grow in our love for each other. We grow in our delight in the Word and in our obedience to it. But these are the things that we need to look for. They are the evidence that we have been born of God, even though in these areas we may be weak. You will never find any of these in a person who is not truly saved. These are traits that indicate that a person has been born of God.

But there is one more point that the Apostle John made as he was giving us this word picture of a true child of God. And it has to do with:

#### **IV. The world (1 John 5:4-5).**

The Apostle John had written about “the world” that he has reference to here, and that was back in chapter 2, verses 15-17. He was not speaking of the earth upon which we live, which continually shows the glory of its Creator to those who have eyes to see. But he was speaking of the evil world system of which the Devil is its “god,” and which is the delight of the masses of people in the world. We all know what it is. We see evidence of the evil in the world in which we live, which daily is leading people into everlasting judgment.

How are we going to overcome it? Are we going to change it? Never. Then what did the Apostle John have in mind? He meant overcoming the

influence that the world can have upon us, leading us farther and farther away from the teaching of God's Word and a life of holiness.

Just this past week I was reading in a book written by a very godly man was dealing with the way we are all affected by covetousness. The world doesn't see anything wrong with being covetous. A covetous person is never satisfied with what he has; he always has a list of other things that he is intent on getting. Most people covet money because of the things that money can buy, thinking that then they will be satisfied. I have been reviewing a verse this week that tells us,

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5).

That sounds like a lot of nonsense to a non-Christian. They say why would you turn away from things that you can see for a God Whom you can't see, and probably doesn't even exist.

We overcome the world by not putting ourselves in situations where we are going to be tempted to sin. Note those words, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." What was the Apostle John talking about when he said, "even our faith." What is our faith? It is that trust in a loving and holy God which is continually strengthened by our time in the Word and with God, and our time with the people of God. Our faith is the way we trust God.

Finally at the end of our text in verse 5, the Apostle John raises the question, "Who is he that overcometh the world?" Actually there is only one kind of a person. I sincerely hope that you qualify. It is "he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Who is the person who "believes that Jesus is the Son of God"?

**Concl:** Who is the only person who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Who is the only person who loves God, who loves Christ, and who loves the people of God? Who is the only person who keeps the commandments of Scripture, and is even interested in that kind of a life? Who is the only person who can live in this world and overcome its temptations to live a life of sin? It is the person who is born of God. The Apostle John has described such a person for us, but it is God Who holds the key to all of our hearts. If you see these traits in your life, thank God, and seek to grow in His grace and in the knowledge of Christ. If you don't see them in your life, then pray to the Lord asking Him to give you a new life by the new birth, where old things pass away, and all things become new. Then you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and you will learn what it really means to be a child of God.