

Sermon Title:

“Resting Assured—Very Terrified, or What’s for Lunch?”

Text: 1 John 5:1–12

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Introduction

Good morning! I'm Mike, one of the lay elders here at FBC Nixa. It's great to be with you this morning. How's everyone doing?

We've been walking together through the book of 1 John for several weeks, and today we come to chapter 5, verses 1 through 12—a passage that really gets to the heart of John's message and asks a very personal, even sobering question:

Should you rest assured in your salvation—or be very terrified?

Now that's not just a clever sermon title. That's the dividing line in today's passage—between those who have eternal life and those who don't. And the text doesn't leave much gray area.

Personal Context

Before we dive into the text, let me give you a little background on my preparation.

It's a bit intimidating to follow our other pastors and elders. Most of them have seminary degrees, and lots of pulpit experience. I don't have that. I'm a recovering engineer, a sales executive, and a problem-solver from the business world. And as far as I know, there's not a 12-step program for recovering from that background!

Also—I'm a Baby Boomer. That means some of my references or analogies might sound a little old-school. Just for fun—let's do a quick poll:

- Greatest Generation? (1901–1927)
- Silent Generation? (1928–1945)
- Baby Boomers? (1946–1964)
- Gen X? (1965–1980)
- Millennials? (1981–1996)
- Gen Z or Alpha?

Thanks for humoring me.

Now here's something interesting: The Apostle John—yes, the author of this letter—was likely born around 6 A.D., possibly the youngest apostle, and outlived all the rest. Scholars believe he wrote this letter sometime between 85 and 95 A.D., making him somewhere between 70 and 90 years old when he penned these words.

So in generational terms—he would have qualified as a Baby Boomer. And if he visited FBC Nixa today, he might be in my Connect class—especially if Garry and Lynn McGhee greeted him at the door!

There is something about growing old that forces us to get to the point. It's hard to explain but I've noticed it in my life as well as in others. Maybe it comes from the realization that our time on the planet is coming to a close, and we want to make the best of it. I'll reference the famous quote from Shakespeare: "brevity is the soul of wit", which suggests that cleverness and intelligence are often expressed through short, clear statements.

And the bible confirms in this way:

Ecclesiastes 5:2: "Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few."

Proverbs 10:19: "When words are many, sin is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise." (I've seen that in the sales world for sure.)

Proverbs 17:27-28: "He who has knowledge restrains his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."

As many of you know, John MacArthur, one of my heroes of the faith, and the pulpit, passed away recently. Pastor MacArthur had a profound influence on my theology and understanding of Scripture. I am so grateful for his ministry and archive of sermons and teaching. There were times in my journey that I would have starved biblically without access to his verse by verse expository preaching. Pastor MacArthur's sermons were always straight forward and to the point. And never brief, and always thorough. I believe he took almost 10 years to preach through Matthew verse by verse. And he could reduce concepts to force you to make choices. He famously said in one of his sermons: "the Holy Spirit ministers to two categories of people, the only two categories there are: the saints and the ain'ts, the people who know God and the people who don't." In another sermon he said "there are only two religions: the true one and the rest".

He also helped me to understand that the bible will not contradict itself, and to always look for other scripture to confirm your understanding of a passage.

So, as we dive in to 1st John Chapter 5, we can observe this.

The Apostle John is writing to a church he deeply loves, and as an elder statesman of the faith, he's laser-focused on what matters most: The true necessary gospel versus false teaching. Who truly belongs to God? Who has eternal life? And how can we know?

Purpose and Structure of the Text

Most commentators divide 1 John 5:1–12 into two sections:

1. Overcoming the World (vv. 1–5)
2. The Testimony Concerning the Son of God (vv. 6–12)

We'll begin by reading the verses 1-5 with the heading **"Overcoming the World"**. You'll notice I've emphasized certain words in this passage. As I read this passage, I want you to consciously think about whether these words refer to you, personally, or not.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Let's walk through these sections together and consider the implications for our assurance—or our terror.

I. Overcoming the World (1 John 5:1–5)

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God..." (v.1)

This section begins with a description of how someone is born of God by believing that Jesus is the Christ. The Pathway Bible Study Guide notes that this ties back to earlier sections like 2:28–3:12, where being "born of God" is linked with righteous behavior and love for others. But here, it's linked most clearly with faith in Jesus.

A. Faith Produces New Birth

This isn't just mental assent—it's the kind of faith that leads to transformation. As Colin Kruse puts it in his commentary *The Letters of John*, being "born of God" is not a natural event but a spiritual rebirth—a work initiated by God, effected through the Spirit, and tied to faith in Christ.

This transformation begins our sanctification journey. and does not produce perfection, but direction. If you are a professing Christian, and cannot honestly see progress in Christlikeness, this passage is for you as well.

Colin Kruse explains it this way:

Here the Apostle reintroduces a theme he developed earlier in the letter, reminding his readers that only those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are born of God. This is something the secessionists denied, but true believers acknowledge.

1 John 2:22-23

22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

In 1 John, the concept of "secession" refers to individuals who were once part of the Christian community, but who have departed due to false teachings and a rejection of fundamental Christian beliefs. The author, John, uses the term "antichrists" to describe these individuals and their teachings.

Kruse goes on to say: "the meaning of the concept 'born of God' is...to be found in two places in the Fourth Gospel (John 1:12-13; John 3). Both places make very clear that being born of God is quite different from natural birth. It is something initiated by God and effected through his Spirit, and it takes place in conjunction with faith in Christ.

Gospel of John 1:12–13

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

and Gospel of John 3:3–6.

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So, the foundation of salvation as well as assurance is sincere faith in the truth about Jesus the Christ, which will be evident in our love for other believers.

B. Faith Results in Love and Obedience

(v. 2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments."

This is an inversion of what John said earlier—that if we love God, we'll love His children. Here, he says that loving God and obeying His commands is how we know we love His children rightly. We will love as Christ loves.

As Jesus said in the Gospel of John 13:34:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Christlike love requires discernment. This love is not an enabler of destructive behavior, but an enhancement of a life journey as others encounter and interact with you. A good reflection question: are they better off now than before you "loved" them?

R.C. Sproul in his book "The Hunger for Significance", says this: "in biblical categories, love functions more as a verb than a noun. It is concerned more with doing than feeling; it is defined by action. Love may or may not include warm feelings of affection. When affection is present, that is a bonus, but love can perform without those feelings."

Sproul summarizes with these key points:

- **Love Acts:**
True love shows itself through kindness, patience, forgiveness, and sacrifice. It's not passive—it moves toward others.
- **1 Corinthians 13 Shows Us How:**
Love is patient and kind. It's not proud, rude, or self-centered. Paul gives us a checklist—not of feelings, but of actions.
- **God's Love Is Holy:**
God's love is perfect—sacrificial, yes, but never soft on sin. It's grounded in His holiness and justice.
- **Love Doesn't Cancel Justice:**
God doesn't set aside justice to love us. He shows love **through justice**—by sending His Son to bear the penalty for our sin.
- **Love Always Sacrifices:**
Real love costs something. Whether it's God giving His Son or us giving our time, comfort, or pride—love lays itself down.

Love is not just what you feel—it's what you do.

And in Christ, we see love at its fullest: holy, just, and self-giving

So what does obedience look like? John defines it in verse 3:

(v 3a) *"This is the love of God: that we keep His commandments.*

Remember 1 John 3:23 “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.”

John 13:34–35

Jesus said “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Matthew 22:37–40

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

It sounds like the Lord had a “to do” list in mind here. Don’t you think?

(v3b) And His commandments are not burdensome.”

Why aren’t they burdensome? Because we’ve been born of God. His Spirit lives within us. We’ll come back to this later, take God at His word.

C. So, How do we overcome the World?

(v. 4) For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

Let’s take a moment to understand what overcoming looks like scripturally.

To overcome in the biblical sense is to remain faithful, resist evil, and stand firm in Christ—trusting that His victory is yours by faith. The one who overcomes is not the strongest, smartest, or most disciplined—but the one who clings to Jesus and keeps believing.

MacArthur explains it this way:

“We are over-comers. This is a descriptive term. If you would like another term you could use the term victors. If you want yet another term that may be a little more contemporary, you could use the term winners. We are the winners. – very descriptive.”

Gospel of John 16:33

33 “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

An Overcomer is a victor. At the close of that great eighth chapter where Paul is speaking about the unconquerable position of Christians in Christ, he says, verse 37, “*In all these things we are more than conquerors.*”

If we are in Christ, we are sharing in his victory by faith.

Let that settle in for a moment. We get credit for Christ's overcoming!

Overcoming what? Over coming the “world”. Our Faith in Jesus the Christ gives us victory, the text says, over the world.

Kruse explains that the “world” here refers not to the planet but to the system of values opposed to God—what John defined earlier:

1 John 2:15–17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

John is telling us that we need to be consciously aware of:

- The lust of the flesh
- The lust of the eyes
- The pride of life

These cravings and worldly ambitions once ruled us, but no longer. Through faith in Christ, we overcome them. We're freed to love, to obey, and to live differently. As Christians on this journey we need to constantly remind ourselves who we are in Christ: through the whole counsel of Scripture, through the elements of prayer, and with the help of the church body.

If you are looking for an “either or” question, try this: are you a Promise keeper or Pleasure seeker?

The second half this passage is labelled:

II. The Testimony Concerning the Son of God (1 John 5:6–12)

6 This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

This section shifts focus to the testimony God has given about His Son—the very basis of our assurance.

(v. 6) *“This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood.”*

A. What Is the Testimony?

(v 7-8) For there are three that testify: John identifies three witnesses: Why Three witnesses? The Old Testament law required "the mouth of two or three witnesses" to establish the truth of particular matter, see Deuteronomy 17:6, chapter 19:15. Also see Gospel of John 8:17-18 and 1st Timothy 5:19.

(v 8) *the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*

1. Water – perhaps referring to Jesus' baptism, where the Father affirmed His identity (Matt. 3:17)
2. Blood – Referring to His atoning death on the cross Matthew 27:54, *Heb 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*
3. The Spirit – Who testifies inwardly and truthfully (Mark 1:12, Luke 1:35, Acts 10:37-38)

These three agree. As Kruse notes, this triad was meant to counter false teachers (likely early Gnostics, Docetists) who denied the true humanity of Jesus Christ asserting that his physical body and suffering were mere illusions. They wanted to separate Jesus' divinity from His suffering and death. But John insists: the Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood.

B. God's Testimony Is Greater

(v. 9) *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater...*

The Father Himself has testified to the Son—through Jesus' baptism, His crucifixion, his resurrection and ascension, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

(v 10a) *“Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.*

Romans 8:15-16 Says this to confirm:

15 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* **16** *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (and Galatians 4:6)*

(v 10b) *Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.”*

Hebrews 6:18

18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

To reject this is not a matter of opinion—it is, as John says in verse 10, to call God a liar. If this is where you find yourself, you are in a very dangerous position.

C. Blessed Assurance or Unmitigated Terror

(vv. 11–12) And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

It's that simple.

If you have the Son, you have life.

If you don't, you don't have eternal life.

Conclusion: Rest Assured—or Be Very Terrified, (or What's for lunch?)

This passage doesn't leave us with fuzzy feelings. It draws a hard line:

Gospel of John 5:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

- Do you believe in Jesus as the Christ, the eternal Son of God?
- Has that belief led to new birth, evidenced by love for others and obedience to God's commands?
- Do you receive the testimony of God or reject it?

If your answer is yes—you can rest assured. You've been born of God. You have overcome the world. You have eternal life in the Son.

But if not—if your life shows no evidence of faith, love, obedience, or belief—then John says it plainly: You are rejecting the very testimony of God. You do not have eternal life. You should be very terrified.

v. 12) Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Hebrews 9:27-28 ESV. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

So what does not having life through the son mean? Judgement and sentencing. The Gospel Coalition summarizes this way:

“The punishment of hell will be in keeping with divine justice. The all-knowing God will assess each individual life, counting exactly the extent of abandonment to sin, the influence of others to sin, and the light and privilege abused, and he will assign punishment accordingly—exactly fitted to each person.

Surely this thought ought to capture the conscience of sinners such that they would restrain their sinning! Furthermore, this thought ought to drive any sinner to run to Christ and be saved! And surely this thought must drive every believer to humble, yet glad praise for our Redeemer who took all of our sin to himself and paid its price in full, absorbing the full wrath of God in our place in order to make us his.”

Reflect and Respond

Friends, John wrote these things, as he'll say in the very next verse (v. 13), *“that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

If you don't have the son, and you are beginning to understand the consequences of fearfully facing the absolutely perfect judgement of your crimes against the Creator, that could be the beginnings of your conversion. Don't ignore this realization. Talk with me or one of the other pastors after the service.

Also consider this: The most dangerous category of the unbeliever or even the professing Christian, is complete spiritual indifference. To intentionally “tune out” the preaching of God's Word continually is a dangerous sign. Perhaps you should hit the “reset button” and take more seriously your sanctification as I did not so many years ago, or maybe it's time to begin to ensure your understanding of the Christian faith.

One of the most sobering passages in Scripture is Matthew 7:21-23 where Jesus warns us:

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

So I'll close with this question:

Do you have the Son?

If you do—rest assured.

- Continue your journey towards Christlikeness. Be amazed and awestruck, and adore the Triune God.
- Confess and be convicted to repentance by your shortfalls and transgressions.
- Gain confidence and comfort through God's promises in Scripture.
- Be thankful and rejoice in the gift of your saving faith.
- Be bold but reverent to petition God to supply your needs and the needs of others.
- Humbly love God and love one another.

If you can't sincerely say you have the Son, —Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 11:25-29

25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Let's pray: Our Father, as we think about your words of Scripture today, I'm concerned about the person here today who has total indifference to your words? So sad the unbeliever is unmoved. Even sadder, when the professing believer is apathetic. But Lord we know that fear or terror is the beginning of wisdom, so you can use that as well. And Father we ask the Holy Spirit to convict the believing Christians here to respond in Christlikeness. In Jesus name we pray. Amen