

## 1 JOHN 4:7-5:21 THAT YOU MAY KNOW YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

We come to the last part of our series on the first epistle of John. John has used a series of basically three tests all throughout this letter. They have been dealing with truth, righteousness, and love. Again, we will see the same tests as John repeats himself, only in a slightly different angle.

A prevailing theme throughout the epistle is assurance, and we certainly will see this in this section again. John wants the believers to know they have eternal life. If they have reason to doubt, then it would be good to test themselves what they truly believe about Christ, how they live the doctrine, and their love for God and people.

Of these tests, which one is the most important? This is an unfair question if it allows us to minimize one of them. If we say doctrine is the most important, then righteous living and loving others becomes less important. Or, if we say love is so important that we don't need doctrine or obedience, that would be wrong. But there is validity to what the most emphasized aspect is. That would be love. That does not minimize the importance of doctrine or obedience but John knew they had doctrine right in that they resisted error of the Gnostics. They did not abandon truth or right living. One can be doctrinally correct and have the right outward behavior but not love for others. Nowhere does John stress the need for love more than this chapter 4. We have seen it in chapter 2 and then in chapter four. These helped build up to the crescendo or the summit, of which we are now at.

John starts off in verse 7 exhorting his readers to love one another. We see that in verse 7, 11, and 12.

### 1. GOD IS LOVE, SO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS 4:7-21

John has such a concern, he gives reasons why.

#### A. REASONS TO LOVE

7-12

##### 1. Nature of God

7-8

God the Father emphasized in verses 7-8. Each one of the members of the Trinity is involved in this section. The very nature of God demands us to love. God is the source of all love. If one does not love, he does not know God. God *is* love. This is God's own nature. He is also light and spirit.

You look at common grace, you look at the compassion of God, you look at the warnings in the Bible, you look at the extensive way in which God has mandated the gospel, "Go to the ends of the earth and be preached to every creature," and you see the all-encompassing general universal love of God for man. That's the expression of His nature. He is by nature a loving God. That love has its limits in the sense that it doesn't transcend this life.

There's another kind of love in which God loves His own, this is a marvelous love.

His love for His own is that perfect love, that forgiving love, that blessing love, that life-giving love, that perfect love.

##### 2. Gift of God

9-11

This is the second reason why Christians are to love others.

God the Son emphasized in this section of vv9-11.

a. Son was given 2 Cor 9:15 God gave the best there was to give.

b. To die He came not to be just an example or a good teacher, but to die the death of a criminal.

c. For sinners

he came to die not for the lovely people, but His enemies.

Our duty to love is demanded by the immensity of the sacrifice of the Father in the giving of His Son.

Propitiation—HILASMOS—The Father was satisfied in the sacrifice of the Son

##### 3. Ongoing activity of God

12

He has the continuous activity of love for us presently.

God the Holy Spirit is emphasized

a. God abides in us

God lives in us via the Holy Spirit

- b. God's love is perfected in us  
His love is made complete in us. God can be seen in  
the people He abides in.

**B. LOVE AND SOUND DOCTRINE** 13-16

1. Gift of God's Spirit 13

Believers know that they dwell in God and God in them  
because of the Holy Spirit whom God has given them.

How do you know you've been given the Holy Spirit? How do you know you've received the Holy Spirit? Not because you have some mechanism that causes you to feel His impulses, not because you hear voices, not because you feel promptings. Here is how you know that you've been given the Spirit. "Because you believe the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world and you confess Jesus is the Son of God." In other words, it is your belief in the gospel that is evidence of the ministry and presence of the Holy Spirit, right? Because you couldn't know that apart from the Spirit, is that not so? Sinners are dead in trespasses and sin, Because I believe what can only be believed if it is revealed by God. We have beheld. And John could say that from his own life experience.

2. Evidences of God's Spirit 14-16

Is God at work in my life? The evidences are seen in love  
and sound doctrine.

a. Confession of Christ

It's at the point of confession that the Christian life may  
properly be said to begin. This statement that John made  
would be directly at the Gnostic heresies of devaluing  
Jesus.

By this we know we have come to know Him." How do we know it? Because we profess it, because we confess it? No, if we keep His commandments. Verse 4, "The one who says I've come to know Him and doesn't keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in

b. Dwell in love

To love is a duty but it is also an evidence of the Spirit's  
activity.

**C. LOVE'S PERFECTION** 17-21

He returns to the perfection of love and explains what he means  
practically.

The emphasis is not so much of love that God has for Himself,  
but upon our love for God and one another.

Perfect means whole or mature. It is the state of mind the  
Christian is to find himself when the love of God within him  
expressing itself in the believer's own love, has accomplished  
that which God fully intends it to accomplish.

that is the experience of the love of God in all its fullness, all its completeness,

The fullness of God's love is available to us.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans, he says in chapter 5 and verse 5, "The love of God has been poured out," the idea is fullness, lavishness, "within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." When you were saved, a floodgate was opened and the love of God was poured out into your heart. The fullest expression of that love granted to us comes when we are obedient to the Lord, chapter 5 of 1 John verse 3, "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments." We know and experience the full richness of that love in obedience.

1. Boldness in light of judgment 17-18

Man does not like the idea of being accountable to God.

Man tries to dismiss judgment or hopes it just goes away.

But judgment is the most logical idea that awaits all men

If you are a Christian you have no fear of judgment and eagerly wait for Christ to come back.

It just looks at the end and says you can live your life with no fear, never fearing the coming of Jesus Christ, never fearing standing before the throne of God, before the judgment. In fact, it says here in verse 17, "You may have confidence," *parrhesia*, a boldness it actually means, boldness.

2. Love of the brethren 19-21

This perfection refers to the love for the brethren. Unless  
we are really loving our brothers we are deceiving ourselves  
in what we consider to be love for God. We learn to love  
God by loving others who we see.

And then in verse 20, for the seventh time in 1 John, "If someone says..." Seven times John deals with claims and every time he gives a warning. "If someone says," in this case, "I love God, I'm a Christian, I'm a believer, but is characterized by hate toward his brother, he's a liar. He doesn't love his brother whom he's seen, he can't love God whom he's not seen." Y

**2. THE THREE TESTS** 5:1-5

**A. LOVE** -----SOCIAL TEST 1-2

We sometimes restrict our love to only those who are in our  
own group. We are very denominational and sometimes rigid  
in our own theological in our own persuasion. Our love to  
others should extend to all who of give evidence of being

true children of God.

Born of God—Which comes first; faith or life? The child of God is first made alive by God as a result of which he comes to believe on Christ, pursue righteousness, and love others.

Believe is a present tense indicating a continuous action. Born of God is a past event with continuing activity.

Stott says " Our present continuing activity of believing is

The result and the evidence of our past experience of new birth by which we became children of God. We first, were made alive.

God is the one who takes the initiative as He begets His children.

He chose to give us birth.

James 1:18, John 1:12-13, 1 Peter 1:23

Children exhibit the characteristic of their father.

- B. OBEDIENCE –MORAL TEST 2-4  
The commandments are not burdensome.
- C. FAITH --DOCTRINAL TEST 1,5  
It's impossible to love or obey without faith.
  - 1. Victory is from God  
Nikao is the word for victory or conquer.

Playing against the background of that kind of thinking in the ancient times, it was a pretty stunning thing to assign to Christians the kind of unconquerability that belonged only to the gods in that culture. We like that word even in English. The United States military forces have for many, many years called their missiles Nike Missiles. And then of course we have Nike shoes that are supposed to lead you to triumph in whatever athletic endeavor you're engaged in.

The word is used by our Lord Jesus Himself in [John 16:33](#), He uses the verb form when He says, "In this world you shall have tribulation, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" Romans chapter 8. 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," that's the Authorized. The NAS says, "We overwhelmingly conquer world."

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world, is continually overcoming the world." Present tense...is continually overcoming the world. Very important that the Greek uses that tense. It is habitual, it is permanent, it is ongoing. We are permanently triumphant,

#### 2. Victory is faith

It is your believing that proves that you've been begotten. What you received at salvation was a permanent faith, not a temporary one. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is...what?...the gift of God." God gave you a permanent faith.

"Well what about people who stop believing?" Well John dealt with them, didn't he? Back in chapter 2 verse 17, "They went out from us because they were not of us, if they had been of us they would have continued

It is our faith in the true faith, isn't it? We talk about Christianity as the true faith, don't we? And we're not talking about a subjective faith, we're talking about an objective body of truth. Jude calls it "The faith once for all delivered to the saints, the Christian faith."

#### 3. Victory is faithfulness

### 3. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD 5:6-13

How does one arrive at such a conviction or confession? It is based on evidence in the testimony that is given to him. That is God's testimony.

#### A. THE THREE WITNESSES 6-8

We run into some difficulties here.

##### 1. The textual problem

The words, Father, Word, and Holy Spirit appeared first in Latin manuscripts and passed into the text, being added to the Vulgate about 800 AD How did this error get into our English texts based on Greek? Erasmus put together a Greek text which these words were missing. Erasmus was criticized for omitting the passage. The words were not in the Greek manuscripts. He was pressured to add it into the text. His text became the basis of the Textus Receptus.

There are only three Greek manuscripts known to contain the passage, one from the fifteenth century, one from the sixteenth century and one from the seventeenth century. And so we would conclude that it wasn't there before that, added later. And that's why it's not included here. Enough said. So the text stands as it is in the NAS and I think every edition of the Bible makes a notation of this important treatment of these words.

There is nothing wrong with these three heavenly witnesses but they were not in the text that John wrote.

## 2. The Spirit, the water, and the blood

There are many interpretations of this such as what came out of Christ's side, sacraments, baptism and death, Word of God

Whatever, John emphasizes that there are three witnesses

Now we said there are these three. Water refers to...what?...His baptism. Blood refers to His death. The third one, the Holy Spirit, referring to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through His life.

and we will there find the Father's testimony and how that testimony unfolded. Matthew chapter 3 verse 13, "Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan, coming to John to be baptized by him." At the height of John's baptizing ministry, John the Baptist, of course, is in view here, and why was John the Baptist baptizing people? It was a baptism basically of repentance. It is called a baptism of repentance.

You're going to have to see yourself as unclean and come and make a public confession of that reality of your uncleanness and be willing to be baptized like an outcast is when he comes into the land to be a part of Israel. And people did it because they wanted to be a part of Messiah's Kingdom. It's while John is doing that that Jesus arrives from Galilee where He's been with His disciples and desires to be baptized by him, by John.

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were opened. And he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him." John saw the Holy Spirit coming down, not a dove...the Holy Spirit didn't come as a dove, He was descending as a dove might come down and land. This coming down in some visible form and resting on Jesus.

And then verse 17, "Behold a voice out of heaven saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'" Here is the testimony of God at the water. This is the testimony of God at the water event, the baptism of Jesus.

But it was for John to see, the affirmation of the Spirit of God and then the affirmation of God the Father. This is Messiah, fully qualified, fully affirmed, fully satisfying God the Father and God the Spirit. In the gospel of John, I always think it's an interesting note, chapter 1 verse 32, "And John bore witness saying, 'I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and He remained on Him.'

At the death of Jesus, blood was shed and there was attestation to this as many miracles happened as He died.

What an astonishing assortment of miracles. Darkness, the veil's rent from top to bottom, ripped, as it were, by the very power of God, the earth begins to shake, the rocks split, the tombs are opened, dead saints are raised, they come out of their tombs and then after the resurrection enter the holy city and appear to many. Verse 54 says, "Now the centurion and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became frightened and said...what?... 'Truly this was the Son of God.'" Not only did the centurion say it but those who were with him said it. There's no other conclusion. This was the Son of God. Here was God's testimony at the cross. No less miraculous, in fact in some ways even more astonishing than the descent of the Spirit, that the voice to John, the voice out of heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" at His baptism, this is astonishing, astonishing.

Accept the testimony of God the Father at His baptism and the testimony of God the Father at His death.

Then the third, back to 1 John, the third source of testimony here is the testimony granted by, or given by the Holy Spirit. That is indicated, first of all, in verse 7, "It is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is the truth." That is to say that anything the Spirit says is true. And so then in verse 8, "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and the three are in agreement." The Spirit, the water and the blood.

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When the Lord Jesus began His ministry, it was the Holy Spirit who led Him. It says in [Mark 1:12](#), "And immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.

So, you see the witness of the water and the witness of the blood and the witness of the Holy Spirit all come together in perfect agreement externally, historically, manifestly, visibly, publicly to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

## B. GOD'S TESTIMONY VS. MAN'S TESTIMONY 9-10

His testimony is greater than human testimony. Why wouldn't

anybody believe God more than man?

John 8:14

We have an internal witness. It is the work of God's Spirit.

C. GOD'S OWN TESTIMONY 11-13

What is the content that is essential of this revelation from God?

Eternal life, the essence of salvation in Christ

The purpose is to lead these to full assurance regarding their salvation.

**4. CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER 5:14-17**

Does prayer change things? What is prayer?

A. GOD'S PROMISE 14

God hears and He answers when He hears.

We have the promises even as we pray.

B. QUALIFICATION --3:21-22 15

We are not to think God will give to us just anything. It must be according to His will. Prayer is not so much getting God to pay attention to our requests as it is getting our requests in line with His perfect will. It is learning to think God's thoughts. It is not a device to fulfill our own wills.

C. INTERCESSION 16-17

We are consumed with ourselves but we forget sometimes that we are to do for others.

When a believer is in the will of God and is praying according to the will of God, he will pray for others.

We are to pray for others especially when they struggle with sin.

Yet John seems to hesitate here. God desires to restore sinners.

But what is this sin unto death? it must have been known then.

There are answers to this such as a heinous sin, or apostasy, or blasphemy against the Spirit, or physical death for deliberate sin.

Why is that even introduced here? It just illustrates that when you pray according to God's will, and if He hears you, and He does, you know that He'll answer and give you what you request if it's consistent with His will unless it falls into the category of divine judgment where God really is unable to answer. But that's just the exception, that's not the main point. That's the sub-point. The main point is He hears, He answers, and we have what we ask in His will. And here's an illustration of something that's not in His will, and that is it's not in His will to deliver someone from death who has committed a sin that in God's judgment leads to death.

**5. SUMMARY 5:18-21**

These three we know verses sum up what he has been saying.

A. WE KNOW WE DO NOT PRACTICE SIN 18

B. WE KNOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD 19

C. WE KNOW CHRIST IS AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

This strikes right at the heart of Gnostic heresy for it affirms that the Son of God has come into the world to give us knowledge of both God and salvation. He is what all men need. Jesus is salvation.

D. CONCLUSION 21

The false gods of the Gnostics, who, though he was presented under the name of the Christian God, was not the true God, just as the apostles were not true teachers.

Anything that detracts from Christ is idolatrous.