

JESUS ALONE

1 John 5:1-13

In the news today, we find stories of the rise of Islam and we hear bits and pieces of what they believe or at least what their religion teaches. One of the driving forces for some of the more radical elements is that acceptance of and following their beliefs is the only way to heaven. I grew up in an area of the country with strong Catholic influence and had heard that they taught that Catholicism was the only true belief and the only way to heaven. Some of us have encountered Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and we have likely heard that they believe that their religion is the only way to heaven. Most of us are familiar with John 14:6 that tells us that Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father except by Me." So, we teach that there is only one way to get to heaven.

This multitude of possibilities again raises the question "Does it really matter what you believe?" In today's politically correct philosophy of "inclusiveness" some people will tell us that it doesn't really matter as long as we are sincere. We just mentioned at least five groups that reject such an idea. Have you noticed that all five of these groups are viewed by many of the "politically correct" crowd as being ignorant religious fanatics who believe in myths and fantasies?

The Apostle John lived in a time where there were a multitude of alternate ways of salvation being promoted by various sects and false teachers that promoted ideas that were causing confusion among the early followers of Christ. In the fifth chapter of his first general epistle to the early church we find help in understand why Jesus is the only way to achieve victory and have eternal life since He is truly the Son of God.

Offers Victory – 5:1-5

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:1-5 (NASB95)

How is it that we can be born again, or be born of the Spirit of God? Jesus told Nicodemus that "you must be born again." The only way to receive the new birth is through faith in what God did for us in Jesus Christ, His Son. Let's examine what it means to "believe that Jesus is the Christ." This belief is more than just mental acknowledgment, but involves commitment to the fact that Jesus is God's Son. It also involves trusting that "what Jesus did for us on the Cross satisfies the requirements of the penalty for our sins and restores us to fellowship with God."

How does a person come to such a belief condition? We have confidence that Jesus is God's Messiah when we see what He accomplished in His ministry. First, He revealed the way of salvation which would be in His role as prophet. Second, He worked out that salvation (presented a perfect sacrifice for our sins) which would be His role as priest. Third, He conferred that salvation upon us in His role as king. This threefold ministry of prophet, priest and king is the evidence that Jesus is God's Messiah.

How does this confirmation of salvation become "worked out" or "worked into" us? True belief is acceptance of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, as the Lord of our lives. When we receive Him as Lord, then He quickens (gives life) to our spirits and we are born of His Spirit. This is the new birth. After we have experienced the new birth, part of the evidence is a

confident faith that Jesus is the Christ. This argument sounds somewhat like a circular argument. We must believe before we can be born of the Spirit and after we are born of the Spirit, then we have more ability to believe. This is very close to the idea that David expressed in Psalms 27:13: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah In the land of the living."

The first part of verse one is essentially all about our faith or trust. The second part of this verse addresses how the result of our faith finds expression in what we actually do. In other words it addressed the issue of obedience. Some may argue that John was addressing the issue of love rather than obedience. The answer to that is "love is what is required in obeying the new commandment that Jesus gave the evening of the Last Supper in John 13:34." *A new commandment I give you that you love one another even as I have loved you.*

In verse two we see that John again emphasized that love for God and love for other people are closely connected. Usually he wrote of love for God as shown in love for people, but here he reversed the process: we know that *we love the children of God* when we love God. Love for God and love for people go together and form a unity.

The evidence that we love God is seen in our love to His children and vice-versa: Sometimes it is difficult to show our love in concrete ways. We can feel the emotion of love and express that in times of praise and worship but love needs to be demonstrated. John was stating that one way to do this is to show love to God's children. Sometimes we think that is not easy. As Christians we can get caught up in what we "feel" and in "talking about" our faith but we forget to follow through on the demonstration of our faith.

It seems obvious and logical to John that since a person's family is essential an extension of the person, then our love for the person would extend to that person's children. We could think of this as John trying to explain why Christ's command to love one another as He loved us is totally logical. Such love is not dependent on the behavior of God's children since Christ's love for us was not dependent on our behavior. As Paul told us in Romans, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." We need to do the same for the children of God. We know we ought to love our fellow Christians without being told to do so and it should not be done grudgingly.

The burden of religion (man trying to please God in his own strength) is very difficult and can produce resentment as was the case of the Jews trying to carry out all the legalisms they had. On the other hand, the yoke that Christ puts on us is not burdensome at all (Matt. 11:28-30). When love (rather than obligation) is our motivation, then the burdens (walking in obedience) should be joyful.

Warren Wiersbe has noted that disobedience to God's will is a tragedy – but so is reluctant, grudging obedience. God does not want us to disobey Him, but neither does He want us to obey out of fear or necessity. What Paul wrote about *giving* also applies to *living*: "not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7, NASB).

What is the secret of *joyful* obedience? It is to recognize that obedience is a family matter. We are serving a loving Father and helping our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been born of God, we love God, and we love God's children. And we demonstrate this love by keeping God's commandments. D.L. Moody often said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather." We show our love to God, not by empty words but by willing works. We are not slaves obeying a master; we are children obeying (doing what is pleasing to) a Father.

In verse four, John once again emphasized the importance of our beliefs. Who overcomes the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who is born of God? The one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who has the Holy Spirit living in him? The

one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Our faith in Christ is of and in itself a victory over the world system that cannot or will not believe God's message to us through His Son.

Victorious faith is the result of maturing love. The better we come to know and love Jesus Christ, the easier it is to trust Him with the needs and battles of life. It is important that this maturing love become a regular and a practical thing in our daily lives. How does a believer go about experiencing this kind of love and the blessings that flow from it? To begin with, this kind of love must be cultivated. It is not the result of a hit-or-miss friendship! God has provided us with a means to make steady progress in understanding the relationship we have with God, with people and with the material world. We refer to this as the written Word of God.

As children of God, we have a new attitude toward the Word of God: it is the expression of God's love, and we enjoy obeying it. Confidence toward God, honesty toward others, and joyful obedience are the marks of perfecting love and the ingredients that make up a happy, victorious Christian life.

Many times we tend to think that what we believe has influence only on the after life; that is, will we go to heaven or hell? While that is true, it is also very important for us to realize that what we believe affects the quality of our lives and how we conduct ourselves in the "here and now." If eternal life is truly timeless, then we should be experiencing something of that life right now if we are truly possessors of eternal life. So many times we tend to measure quality of life in terms of status, wealth, health, popularity; however, these things are not values of the Kingdom of God. The values of the Kingdom are righteousness, peace and joy. These other things are nice to have, but are not essential.

The Son of God – 5:6-10

⁶This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 1 John 5:6-10 (NASB95)

One of the heresies that John challenged in his teaching of his readers was with regard to the divinity of Jesus. In his closing arguments on this he treated this as if he were presenting evidence in a court trial and the challenge for all of us is "what testimony will we believe?" Our understanding is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God from His physical birth and remains so forever.

In verse six, John argues that Jesus came by "water" and "blood." The conventional interpretation of this is that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His baptism (water) and by the events surrounding the crucifixion (blood). One of the heresies that John was combating was that Jesus (from His physical birth) was just a man upon whom the "Christ consciousness" came at His baptism and left Him before He died on the cross. Therefore, the conclusion of the heresy is that He was born an ordinary human and died an ordinary human. (This would seem to require a rejection of the virgin birth.) John told us Jesus was born the Son of God (water) and died on the cross as the Son of God (blood) and was the Son of God all the time in between.

The reference to "water" could be related to the miraculous nature of His physical birth which testified to His Sonship. The witness of His passion, including the death, burial and resurrection testifies to His Sonship because of the power of the Spirit that raised Him from death.

In addition to these evidences, all of us have within us the witness of the Holy Spirit that

Jesus is the Son of God which adds to the evidence of His birth and death that were miraculous. John made the point that three witnesses who all agree ought to be enough for anyone to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In the Jewish judicial system, if two or three witnesses could be found to agree then that information was taken as truth. I believe that the main problem of unbelief today is not that people cannot find the evidence that supports that Jesus is the Son of God – there is plenty of evidence. It is not that the evidence is not believable – most is plain as day. The problem is that people WILL NOT believe. It is a matter of willingness and not a matter of ability to believe.

John pointed out the seriousness of refusing to believe Jesus is the Son of God in spite of all the evidence that He is. John said it is as if we were calling God a liar. God gave evidence and testimony that Jesus was His Son. Two of the best known testimonies were what John the Baptist reported at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River and the account of what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. God also gave the record for those of us who were not there at the time. We can see in the account of the life of Jesus that He was “eternal life.”

Offers Eternal Life – 5:11-13

¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:11-13 (NASB95)

God has given us Jesus – for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Therefore, He has given us eternal life if we will accept and receive it. If we have Jesus abiding in us, then we have eternal life abiding in us. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” God gives this to us as a gift that we can neither earn nor buy. It is by grace that we are saved. This is God’s unmerited favor – it is not a reward for being good. It is up to us to believe and receive this gift by faith. We don’t have eternal life apart from Jesus Christ, for He **is** life eternal. John does not say that God *will* give us eternal life but that He *has* given us eternal life. John was writing this letter to believers. It is a possession that we have right now.

God wants us to be confident in our position in Him. We can **know** we have eternal life. We don’t have to just hope it or wish it were so. We can know. If we have any doubt in our minds whether or not we have surrendered to Jesus, then the most important thing for us to do is to take care of that doubt. Surrender now and ask Jesus to live in you by His Holy Spirit and take control of your life. You can know, and it is important that you do.