

The Epistle of First John

Lesson Eleven

A Confident Life (1 John 4:6-5:21)

The Testimony of God – 1 John 5:1-13)

Introduction:

- I. In chapter five the apostle reveals three fundamental elements that are essential to knowing God: faith, love, and obedience.
 - A. These are the characteristics of those who have been "born of God" – who have been "born again."
 1. However, knowing God is much more than an intellectual awareness of God's existence.
 - a. Knowing God is having faith in God, loving Him intimately, and obeying His will without question.
 2. It is also important that we love those whom God loves – Jesus Christ, and our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - a. But loving God and our brethren also requires keeping His commandments.
 - b. And these commandments are not burdensome.
 3. John assures believers that we can overcome the world through our faith in Christ.
 - a. This victory comes by Christ working in us through the divinely inspired Word of God.
 - B. Finally, John explains why our faith gives us victory over this world.
 1. First, we have the testimony from the water and blood.
 2. Second, we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Unfortunately, this testimony is clouded by text added to the KJV and NKJV (1 John 5:7-8) that does not appear in the earliest manuscripts of John's first letter.

1. But the added text does not diminish all the other passages that speak of God being Three Persons in One God.
- D. John concludes by affirming there is no greater witness to the deity of Christ than the testimony of God the Father.
1. God gives us confidence that Jesus is the Christ – the Anointed of God.
 2. This confidence assures us we have eternal life as long as we are in Christ.

Discussion:

- I. From the beginning of chapter five John reveals the link between faith and love.
 - A. John presents two inescapable absolutes (1 Jn 5:1).
 1. Those who are convinced that Jesus is the Christ will submit to the new birth (Jn 3:3, 5).
 2. Those who are born of God will love those who are begotten by God.
 - B. This is the third time John speaks of being born of God in this letter (1 Jn 2:29; 4:7; 5:1).
 1. Taken together, these passages affirm that those who "do right," "love," and "believe" are born of God.
 - a. It's also important to notice that in all three passages, John used the present tense of the verb "born" (or "begotten").
 2. Those who love God the Father must also love God the Son.
 - a. We cannot claim to love God and yet neglect to love Jesus Christ the Son of God.
 3. However, claiming to be Christian are empty words if that claim is not followed by an obedient life – faithful to the commandments of the Lord (1 Jn 5:2).
 - a. This is the third time John affirms that keeping the commandments of God – especially those that pertain to brotherly love – is evidence of our love for God (1 Jn 2:3; 4:20-21; 5:2).
 - b. As we have already seen, love for God's children will demonstrate itself through sacrificial service (1 Jn 3:17-18).

4. Therefore, love for God and for our brothers and sisters in Christ will always be manifested by faithful obedience (1 Jn 5:3a).
 - a. Jesus said something similar to His disciples (Jn 14:15, 21).
 5. But then the apostle John adds a new dimension to keeping God's commandments – they are not burdensome (1 Jn 5:3b).
 - a. Jesus used this word when speaking about the oppressive rules and regulations of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:4; Lk 11:46).
 - b. Paul used this word to describe the crushing weight of oppression he and his coworkers experienced in Asia (2 Cor 1:8).
 6. The commandments of the Lord are not burdensome because the Lord never requires anything of us that is not in our best interest.
- C. John further explains why the Lord's commandments are not a burden to the faithful child of God (1 Jn 5:4-5).
1. We see the Lord's commandments as necessary and needful to have peace among ourselves as brethren and lasting contentment in our hearts as God's beloved children.
 2. It is our faith that gives us the victory to overcome the influences of the world around us (1 Jn 5:5).
 - a. We can only have this victory when the power of Christ is at work in us (Eph 3:20; Jude 24-25).
- II. In the next section the apostle shows why God's testimony of overcoming the world is true.
- A. Unfortunately, we encounter some difficulties in these verses (1 Jn 5:6-8).
1. John identifies Jesus as "He who came by water and blood" (1 Jn 5:6a).
 - a. This verse has generally been interpreted two ways.
 - (1). The "water" of verse 6 refers to the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan river (at the beginning of His ministry), and the "blood" refers to the blood Jesus shed on the cross (at the end of His earthly ministry).

- (2). Or the "water and blood" refer to the water and blood that flowed from the side of Christ when His body was pierced while on the cross.
2. The Holy Spirit also testified to the deity of Jesus Christ (1 Jn 5:6b; cf. Jn 15:26; 16:13).
- B. However, it is at this point that the KJV and NKJV differ from all other versions.
 1. Almost all textual critics agree that the KJV and NKJV includes text that was not part of John's original letter – specifically, verse 7 and the first part of verse 8:
 - a. 1 Jn 5:7-8 (NKJV) – For there are three that bear witness ~~in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth...~~
 2. What evidence is there for excluding the longer reading?
 - a. None of the early Greek uncial manuscripts contain the words, nor do they appear in the 200 to 300 existing cursive manuscripts – only six Greek manuscripts dating to the eleventh through sixteenth century.
 - b. None of the early "church fathers" (patristic witnesses) quoted these words, which suggests the text did not exist during the first 3 to 4 centuries.
 - (1). If they had, the church fathers would have quoted them to defend the Biblical teaching of the triune nature of the Godhead against heretics who denied the oneness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - c. None of the early versions of the New Testament include the longer text.
- C. The best evidence that this text was not part of John's original letter comes from the objections of Erasmus, the 16th century Catholic textual scholar who published an updated Latin New Testament in 1512 and a Greek New Testament in 1516.
 1. In both editions Erasmus intentionally omitted the text of 1 John 5:7-8 as it now reads in the KJV and NKJV.
 - a. He found no evidence of the text in any of the earliest Greek or Latin manuscripts.

2. But Erasmus was heavily criticized for omitting the text from his Greek and Latin translation.
 - a. Under pressure from the Catholic church Erasmus eventually included the text in the third edition of his Greek New Testament.
 - b. However, he included a lengthy footnote voicing his opposition to the questionable text.
 3. Despite this controversy, the Bible doctrine of God being Three Persons in One God is taught throughout the New Testament (Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:1-2; also John chapters 14-16).
- D. However, John affirms that "there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one" (1 Jn 5:8).
1. Three witnesses were always required under the Law of Moses (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; cf. Matt 18:16).
 2. The water (referring to the events that took place at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan), the blood (referring to the Savior's redeeming blood as the Lamb of God shed on Calvary), and now the Holy Spirit all testify to the same thing – Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 3. Although John has presented substantial evidence for believing in the deity of Jesus Christ, he recognized there is no greater testimony than that of God Himself (1 Jn 5:9).
 - a. The one who believes the testimony of God and believes on the Son of God has accepted this testimony and made it a part of his life (1 Jn 5:10).
 4. Therefore, the testimony of God is our assurance that eternal life can only be found in Christ (1 Jn 5:11-12).
- III. John concludes by stating the fourth reason why he wrote this epistle.
- A. It is to give us confidence that we have eternal life "in His Son" (1 Jn 5:13).
1. At the beginning of our studies of 1 John we learned that the apostle gave four reasons for writing this epistle.
 - a. We can live a joyful life (1 Jn 1:4).
 - b. We can live a clean life (1 Jn 2:1).

- c. We can live a discerning life (1 Jn 2:26).
- d. We can live a confident life (1 Jn 5:13).

The Summary:

- I. Some of the greatest enemies to our faith as children of God are doubt and uncertainty.
 - A. This is why John gives assurance to all believers in Jesus Christ.
 - 1. John knew his readers knew the truth (1 Jn 2:21).
 - a. Why would he need to assure them of eternal life in Christ (1 Jn 5:11)?
 - b. He understood the faith and confidence of believers had been undermined by false teachers.
 - 2. Therefore, John confirmed that faith in the Son of God will guarantee us eternal life – similar to the confirmation he gave in his gospel (Jn 20:30-31).

Review Questions:

- 1. Who will those who are born of God love?
- 2. How do we truly know we love our brothers and sisters in Christ?
- 3. Why are the commandments of the Lord not burdensome?
- 4. How do we overcome the world?
- 5. Explain two possible interpretations of "water" and "blood" in verse 6.
 - a.
 - b.
- 6. How did the Spirit bear witness to the deity of Jesus Christ?

7. In your own words explain the difficulties with the text of verses 7 and 8 as they appear in the KJV or NKJV.
8. Where else does the Bible teach the concept of a triune God (Three Persons in One God or Godhead)?
9. How, according to verse 10, does one who believes in the Son of God also have the witness in himself?
10. How do we know we have eternal life?