

1 John Chapter 5

Verses 1-5: John introduces the subject of the victorious life. While the bible uses many terms to describe what Christians are (e.g., believers, friends, brothers, sheep, saints, soldiers, witnesses, etc.), John highlights one particular term in this chapter: the overcomer. Of the 24 times the word occurs in the New Testament, John uses it 21 times. Several different forms of this term appear in these verses to emphasize the victorious nature of the believer.

1 John 5:1 "Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Whoever believeth": Saving faith is the first characteristic of an overcomer. The term "believes", conveys the idea of continuing faith, making the point that the mark of genuine believers is that they continue in faith throughout their life. Saving belief is not simply intellectual acceptance, but whole hearted dedication to Jesus Christ that is permanent.

"Jesus is the Christ": The object of the believer's faith is Jesus, particularly that He is the promised Messiah or "Anointed One", whom God sent to be the Savior from sin. Whoever places faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior has been born again and thus, is an overcomer (verse 5).

"Born of God": This is a reference to the new birth and is the same word that Jesus used (in John 3:7). The tense of the Greek verb indicates that ongoing faith is the result of the new birth and therefore, the evidence of the new birth. The sons of God will manifest the reality that they have been born again by continuing to believe in God's Son, the Savior. The new birth brings us into a permanent faith relationship with God and Christ.

"Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him": Love is the second characteristic of the overcomer. The overcomer not only believes in God, but loves both God and fellow believers. The moral test is again in view.

To truly believe in Jesus, brings new birth in Him. To be filled with Jesus is also, to be filled with His love. To have this special kind of God love dwelling within you would cause you to love all of God's creation. If we truly love God in our hearts and are filled with Him, then we love all of our brothers in Christ.

Verses 2-3: "Keep his commandments": John repeats this phrase twice in these two verses. Obedience is the third characteristic of an overcomer. In these 5 verses, John weaves faith, love and obedience all together inextricably. They exist mutually in a dynamic relationship i.e., as the genuine proof of love is obedience, so the genuine proof of faith is love. The word "keep" conveys the idea of constant obedience (John 8:31-32; 14:15, 21; 15:10).

1 John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

Look with me, at some Scriptures that Jesus spoke Himself about this very thing.

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The completeness of the commandments that Jesus gave to all of us was caught up in the one word, love. He said love God first, and then love your neighbor as yourself. His commandment is love.

1 John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

"His commandments are not grievous": For example, in contrast to the burdensome man-made religious traditions of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 23:4), the yoke of Jesus is easy and the burden light (Matt. 11:30).

There is perfect peace and rest in the Lord, when we keep His commandments. There is no fear, when there is perfect faith.

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come unto me, all [ye] that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light."

2 John 1:6 "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

Verses 4-5: "The world": Satan's worldwide system of deception and wickedness. Through Christ and His provision of salvation, the believer is a victor (verse 5), over the invisible system of demonic and human evil that Satan operates to capture men's souls for hell. John repeats the reference to overcoming the world 3 times, to press it home.

"Our faith ... he that believeth": Faith in Jesus Christ and dedication of one's life to Him make one an overcomer. John repeats the truth for emphasis.

1 John 5:4 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, [even] our faith."

"Overcometh": John clearly defines who these overcomers are; they are all who believe that Jesus is God's Son, and all that means. The overcomers are believers, all of them (2:13). The word for "overcomes" or "overcomer" comes from a Greek word meaning "to conquer," or "to

have victory,” or “to have superiority” or “conquering power.” The word reflects a genuine superiority that leads to over-whelming success.

The victory is demonstrable; it involves over throwing an enemy so that the victory is seen by all. Jesus also used this word to describe Himself (John 16:33). Because of believers' union with Christ, they too partake in His victory (Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14). The word “overcomes” in the original language conveys the idea that the believer has continual victory over the world.

We know that without faith, it is impossible to please God. Look with me, at the definition of what faith is.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

We live in a "show me" generation. To please God, we must believe in our heart in the love of God, which we cannot see with our physical eye. The love of God, even though we cannot see it with our physical eye, is more real than anything else.

Our very life is determined by believing in salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When we bury our flesh in water baptism, and rise to new life in Jesus, we have been born of the Spirit. We are no longer flesh, but spirit.

The victory over this world is when the world becomes unimportant in our life, and we are living to the day when we can go home to heaven and be with Jesus. Christians are in this world, but not of this world. We are dead to fleshly desires of this world, and are putting our faith and trust in Jesus.

1 John 5:5 "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Jesus defeated Satan on the cross. He defeated sin, as well. If I have received Jesus, then Jesus in me has overcome the world and Satan. I am no longer in a battle against Satan. I am living in the victory of Jesus.

Verses 6-12: The terms “testified” and testimony” are the themes of this section. The passage concerns the witness or testimony of God and the Spirit to the world regarding the great truth of the deity of Jesus Christ.

The previous passage (5:1-5), described overcomers as those who believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior. And here John presents God's own testimony to confirm that Jesus is the Christ (John 5:31-37; 8:13-18). He gives two kinds of testimony: external (verses 6-9), and internal (verses 10-12).

1 John 5:6 "This is he that came by water and blood, [even] Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

“Water and blood”: water and the blood constitute external, objective witnesses to who Jesus Christ is. They refer to Jesus' baptism (water), and death (blood). John combats the dualism of false teachers who asserted that the “Christ-spirit” departed from the man Jesus just prior to His death on the cross. John writes to show that God has given testimony to the deity of Jesus through both His baptism and death.

“Beareth witness” or testifies. Both the verb “testifies” and the noun “testimony”, come from the same Greek word and are used a total of 9 times in this section. The basic meaning is “someone who has personal and immediate knowledge of something.”

This water and blood include all that is necessary to our salvation. By the water, our souls are washed and purified for heaven and the habitation of saints in light. By the blood, we are justified, reconciled, and presented righteous to God. By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal cleansing of our natures. The water, as well as the blood, came out of the side of the sacrificed Redeemer. He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church (Eph. 5:25-27).

John 19:34 "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

Water also, symbolizes the Word of God. The blood seals the covenant. The Spirit bearing witness is the Holy Spirit. We could also look at the Way, Truth, and Life. These are symbolized also by the water, Spirit, and blood.

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

“Three that bear record”: The Old Testament Law required “the evidence of two or three witnesses:” to establish the truth of a matter (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17-18; 1 Timothy 5:19).

The fact that they are One is in the Spirit. They are of one mind and accord. The manifestations of that One Spirit are Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. The name of Jesus, in heaven was the Word of God. The Father is like the great Architect. The Word is creator God. The Holy Ghost functions as Teacher and Guide.

Each has a purpose. All are God. Each is co-equal with the other. When you see Elohim, or El, for the name of God, it is speaking of the plurality of God. Jesus means Jehovah Savior. Many times, when you see Lord, it means Jehovah.

When you see LORD, it means El, or Elohim. This Scripture above has puzzled people through the ages, but I believe that we should look more from the spiritual standpoint to understand what

it is saying. Jesus said He and the Father were One, but at His baptism all three were present. Jesus was being baptized, the Father was the voice that came from heaven and said this is my beloved Son. The Holy Ghost was symbolized by the dove that lit on Jesus. I would not get into an argument over their oneness except to say, I believe they are one in the Spirit, as we are one with Jesus in the Spirit when we believe. We look at an egg and we say, behold an egg. Really that egg consists of shell, white and yellow, but they all three are an egg. It is difficult to separate the Father, Word and Holy Ghost, other than their purpose. Believe completely in your heart, and you will not go too far wrong.

1 John 5:8 "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

“The Spirit, and the water and the blood”: At the baptism of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit testified to the Son (see Matthew 3:16-17). The death of Jesus Christ also witnessed to who He was (Matthew 27:54; Heb. 9:14). The Holy Spirit testified throughout Jesus' life as to His identity (Mark 1:2; Luke 1:35; Acts 10:38).

We see three totally different things which are of the same purpose. Notice, the unity is in their agreement. All three are necessary to be Christians. Each has its separate function, however. Jesus did not just come by water, but by blood, as well. The Spirit, here, is speaking of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of the risen Christ.

1 John 5:9 "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

Man's witness is in part, because of the limited knowledge he has. The witness of God is in power and operating with full knowledge. The witness of God was when the voice came from heaven and called Jesus His Son. This happened at the baptism of Jesus, and again, at the transfiguration.

Men can speak all kind of glowing reports of things Jesus has done, but when the voice comes from heaven and calls Jesus Son, it leaves no doubt who He is. Jesus is actually man's only contact with the reality of God. He represents God to mankind and mankind to God the Father.

1 John 5:10 "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

“Hath the witness in himself”: John writes of the internal subjective witness to the Son within the believer's heart (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6).

“Hath made him a liar”: If someone refuses the testimony of God regarding His Son, such rejection is the ultimate form of blasphemy for it is tantamount to calling God a liar (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

God said that Jesus was His Son when the voice came from heaven. To deny this witness, would be to deny God altogether. It would be as if we were calling Him a liar. When we believe in Jesus, the witness becomes alive within us. The witness within us is a knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, as the Father said from heaven.

Verses 11-12: This summarizes the blessing of the believer's subjective witness, the very life that we possess in Christ expressed in the grace and power He provides all the time. It is the very experience of knowing Christ in one's life. Life is only in Him, so it is impossible to have it without Him.

1 John 5:11 "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

This does not mean that we will inherit eternal life sometime in the future, but that it is ours now. Jesus is Eternal Life. To have Jesus, means you possess eternal life. This Life, spoken of here, is in Jesus.

John 1:4 "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Colossians 3:4 "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

1 John 5:12 "He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Jesus is Life, as we read earlier in this series of lessons. To have Jesus means we have life everlasting.

Hebrews 3:14 "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;"

Colossians 3:3 "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

To deny Jesus brings death.

Verses 13-21: John concludes his letter with a discussion regarding 5 Christian certainties that constitute a powerful climax to the entire epistle. He accentuates their certainty by using the word "know" seven times in this section.

1 John 5:13 "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

“These things”: This has reference to all that John has written in his letter.

“That ye may know that ye have eternal life”: Assurance of eternal life constitutes the first Christian certainty. While John wrote his gospel to bring unbelievers to faith (John 20:31), he wrote the epistle to give believers confidence that they possessed eternal life. The false brethren's departure left John's congregation shaken (2:19).

He assured those who remained that since they adhered to the fundamentals of the faith (a proper view of Christ, obedience, love), their salvation was sure.

“Eternal life”: This does not refer primarily to a period of time, but a person (verse 20; John 17:3). Eternal life is a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and possessing His nature (as in verses 11-12).

The name of the Son of God, of course, is Jesus. There is power in that name.

John 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:"

John 20:31 "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

The name Jesus means Savior. To believe on the name Jesus means you believe there is salvation in the name.

Verses 14-17: Answered prayer is the second Christian certainty.

1 John 5:14 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"

“Confidence”: Christians can know with absolute confidence that God answers prayer when they approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

“According to his will”: This phrase constitutes a strategic key to answered prayer. To pray according to God's will is to pray in accord with what He would want, not what we would desire or insist that He do for us (John 14:13-14).

John already specified that answered prayer also depends on obedience to God's commandments and avoidance of sin (3:21; Psalm 66:18; John 15:7; 1 Peter 3:7). Since genuine believers know

God's Word (i.e., His will), and practice those things that are pleasing to Him, they never insist on their own will, but supremely seek God's desires (Matthew 26:39-42).

“He heareth us”: The word “heareth” signifies that God always hears the prayers of His children (Psalm 34:15-17), but not always in the manner they were presented.

When we have confidence in Him, it means that we know He will do what He has promised. My favorite Scriptures pertaining to this are (John 14 beginning with the 12th verse). We need to look at the following Scripture to see that everything we pray for may not happen, and the reason it won't happen.

James 4:3 "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts."

When we pray, we must pray for the things that are beneficial. Be careful what you pray for, you might get it. Prayer has great power when coupled with faith. The power of prayer is in the name of Jesus.

1 John 5:15 "And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

To know means that we have faith in it happening. It is very important to believe that you receive the thing you are praying for. It is your faith that is the key to getting prayers answered.

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive [them], and ye shall have [them]."

When Jesus healed the sick, He said; your faith has made you whole.

Verses 16-17: John illustrates praying according to God's will with the specific example of the “sin leading to death.” Such a sin could be any premeditated and unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to determine to end a believer's life. It is not one particular sin like homosexuality or lying, but whatever sin is the final one in the tolerance of God.

Failure to repent of and forsake sin may eventually lead to physical death as a judgment of God (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30). No intercessory prayer will be effective for those who have committed such deliberate high handed sin, i.e., God's discipline with physical death is inevitable in such cases as He seeks to preserve the purity of His church.

The contrast to the phrase “sin leading to death” with “sin not leading to death”, signifies that the writer distinguishes between sins that may lead to physical death and those that do not. That is not to identify a certain kind of mortal or non-mortal sin, but to say not all sins are so judged by God.

1 John 5:16 "If any man see his brother sin a sin [which is] not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

The sin here, I believe is when a man totally rejects the salvation in the Lord Jesus. God will not overrule the will of the person being prayed for. The prayer of intercession is a powerful prayer. It is an unselfish prayer for others.

It is in the will of God to save all of mankind. The unselfish prayer, prayed by someone who firmly believes, will be answered, if the person being prayed for has not totally turned against God.

In the book of James, we read:

James 5:14-15 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:" "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

We see from this, that it is correct to pray for the sins of others to be forgiven. The only time this would not be answered, would be if the person had totally rejected salvation in Jesus Christ. You cannot give a person something that they will not take.

1 John 5:17 "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

We see in the following Scripture in Jesus' own words that sins will be forgiven. The only one that will not, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which I believe is dying not believing in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 12:31 "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy [against] the [Holy] Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."

1 John 5:18 "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The "we" in the verse above is John and all believers in Christ. To be born of God means that we are a new creature in Christ. Christ is sinless. If we are allowing Christ to live in us and through us, we will be free of sin, as well.

Victory over sin and Satan is the third Christian certainty (3:9; Rom. 6:15-22).

"Keepeth himself": This refers to the fact that God protects the believer. Notice, there is an effort that we must make not to sin. When we are living with Christ in us, the blood of Jesus Christ keeps the enemy from us.

"Wicked one": This is a reference to Satan.

“Toucheth him not”: John uses this word only here and (in John 20:17). The word suggests “to lay hold of” or “to grasp” in order to harm. Because the believer belongs to God, Satan must operate within God's sovereignty and cannot function beyond what God allows, as in the example of Job (Job 2:5; Romans 16:20).

While Satan may persecute, tempt, test and accuse the believer, God protects His children and places definite limits on Satan's influence or power (2:13; John 10:28; 17:12-15).

1 John 5:19 "[And] we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

“We are of God”: That Christians belong to God is the fourth Christian certainty. Only two types of people exist in the world according to John: children of God and children of Satan. One belongs either to God or to the evil world system that is Satan's domain. Because the whole world belongs to Satan, Christians should avoid its contamination.

The Christian is to live a separated life away from the sin of the world. The world around us is more wicked today than it has ever been before in history. We must not get caught up in this sin that surrounds us.

1 John 5:20 "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

“True”: The word means “genuine” as opposed to what is false (verse 21).

“God, and eternal life”: That Jesus Christ is the true God is the fifth Christian certainty. This verse constitutes the summation of John's whole letter. The greatest certainty of all, the incarnation, guarantees the certainty of the rest. This is the doctrinal foundation, out of which comes love and obedience.

Here again, we see the statement "we know". This leaves no doubt. We know Jesus is the Son of God. We have accepted that as fact. We know also, that eyes of understanding have been opened to the knowledge of the Son of God. The world has eyes to see, but they do not see.

We know the Word of God to be True. We know that eternal Life is in Jesus. We Christians, know what we believe and are eager to tell others who will believe. Jesus is speaking to believers in the next verse.

Matthew 13:11 "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

2 Corinthians 4:6 "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

1 John 5:21 "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

“Keep yourselves from idols”: John contrasts the term “idols” with “the true God” (of verse 20). He has reference here to the false teachers who withdrew from the brotherhood with which they had been formerly associated (2:19). Their false beliefs and practices are the idols from which the readers are commanded to protect themselves.

The false teachers upheld the world's philosophy as superior to God's revelation as demonstrated in their perversion of basic Christian teaching (faith, love and obedience). In closing, John once again highlights the importance of adherence to the fundamentals of the faith.

We have mentioned before, that idols mean nothings. They are of no value at all.

2 Corinthians 6:16 "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

1 John Chapter 5 Questions

1. Who is born of God in verse 1?
2. To be filled with Jesus is to be filled with His _____.
3. What was the new commandment Jesus gave in John 13:34-35?
4. My yoke is _____, and my burden is _____.
5. Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the _____.
6. What is faith?
7. When do we know we have victory over this world?
8. Who is he that overcometh the world?
9. This is He that came by _____ and _____, even Jesus Christ.
10. What bears witness?
11. Water symbolizes the _____ of _____.
12. Who are the three that bear record in heaven?
13. How are they One?
14. What was the name of Jesus in heaven?

15. How does the name Elohim differ from the name Jehovah?
16. What did the dove at the baptism of Jesus symbolize?
17. What are the three that bear witness in the earth?
18. What is their unity in?
19. What is the greater witness?
20. Jesus is actually man's only contact with the _____ of God.
21. Life is in whom?
22. How do you know you have eternal life?
23. Is it right to pray for others sins to be forgiven? Explain.
24. All unrighteousness is _____.
25. What does the author believe to be the sin against the Holy Ghost?
26. To be born of God means what?
27. Little children, keep yourselves from _____.
28. What is the temple of God?