

# “FAITH THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD.”

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## Scripture Texts: I John 5:1-5

### Introduction.

John wrote this letter with essentially two purposes in mind. He wanted to expose the false teachers and those who merely profess faith but don't actually possess eternal life. And at the same time to encourage believers and reassure them what it means to be born again.

John is writing to the church, the family of God, and he is helping identify who is in the family and who isn't. The spiritual deceivers and fakes and frauds are confusing the saints.

We know in our human families how we are like our parents and our kids are like us. There are certain identifying characteristics, birthmarks. We can see the resemblance in the eyes, nose, mouth, how someone walks or talks. Like father, like son. She is just like her mother.

People often comment about how much our boys look like one of us. People are identifying Woodyard features in our granddaughters.

John is saying there are three identifying birthmarks or characteristics of God's kids, of those who have been born again.

John has repeatedly used *three tests* for both sides. *The doctrinal test*, do we love Jesus; the *moral test*, do we love God's commands; and *the social test*, do we love His people. These are the fruit on the tree of born again, the tree of spiritual life. They are not the cause of our being born again, but the consequence. They are not the root, they are the fruit.

I remind you that we had no more to do with our being born again than we did with our being born. We are born again of God, by the power of the Spirit, by grace through faith, which is a gift from God so none of us can boast. The word born means begotten by God.

We are not Christians because of something we do, like live a good life, go to church, don't do certain things. This focuses on us and that's the wrong focus. God is the Lord and giver of life and God is the God of our salvation from before the foundations of the earth. We cannot and will not be Christians unless God does something first and does something to us.

Do you know with confidence you are born again, that you belong to Jesus and have eternal life?

John wants to assure us we are part of the family especially in the face of those stirring up doubt.

Right belief, the doctrinal test is whether believe in Jesus.

Right behavior, the social or ethical test is whether we love each other.

Right love, the moral test is whether we obey God's commands.

In our text we can see all three of these tests are tightly woven together. In a sense, all of I John is summarized and repeated here in I John 5:1-5.

### **Right belief, the doctrinal test is whether we believe in Jesus.**

John begins and ends our text with the doctrinal test. Christianity always begins with Christ. The object of our faith is Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That sounds familiar. It is Peter's profession of faith.

**Matthew 16:16** Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Notice these two statements, they are both crucial.

***Jesus is the Christ.*** To believe Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God, is to believe all that is promised by the Messiah. This is no empty title, it is packed with meaning. In the Messiah would come the full restoration of all things, the fulfillment of the Law, the reconciliation with the Father.

He would be the Lord of righteousness and show the way of righteousness.

He would crush the head of the serpent and bring judgment on the enemies of God.

He would be the substitute for all our sins and wash away all our guilt.

He would bring salvation and make a new covenant with God's people.

He would establish an everlasting kingdom and rule and reign as king.

***Jesus is the Son of God.*** Jesus is not just a man, but more than a man, He is the God-man.

Everyone means everyone must believe. That is the bottom line. There are no exceptions.

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**Acts 4:12** There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

We show we believe Jesus is the Christ of God when we believe that salvation can only come from and through Him and nowhere else.

The birthmark of a Christian is a clear confession that Jesus is who He says He is, He is the Messiah, the Christ from God, the Son of God.

Notice the doctrinal test is not just a belief in a doctrine, it is belief in a person. Do you accept Him as your Lord and Savior from all your sin? And it is not just something you believe in your head, but with all your heart. An all-in kind of commitment.

Jesus didn't suffer and die on a cross and rise from the dead just to make us kinder and nicer people. He did that to radically transform us and make us into new people, people of the new birth, people who walk in newness of life, by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

**Right behavior, the social or ethical test is whether we love each other.**

The second birthmark or chief characteristics will be love for God and God's family.

The people in Phama and my life who have loved us the longest and loved us the most and loved us the best all have one interesting characteristic in common. They don't just love Phama and me, they love our kids. They show a genuine interest in them, ask about them and pray for them.

John is saying, everyone who loves the parent, loves the children.

Every Christian is a child of God.

Therefore, when we love God, we love our fellow Christians.

These two loves are always together in Scripture. They are the backbone of the Ten Commandments and the two great commandments.

True love for God will always show itself in love for one another. For John the proof of our love for God is seen in our love for each other. It is by our love for others that we can have the assurance that we love God.

Do we do this perfectly? Of course not, that's not John's point. But we do it imperfectly. Sure, we stumble and fall and fail and have to ask forgiveness.

But we don't say I don't love him, and I don't want to or intend to. The born-again believer in Jesus Christ has a heart that is open to his fellow believers.

We see in them what we see in ourselves, we are all sinners, we are all saved in the same way, by the pure and free grace of God. So, while we may see things in each other we don't like, we still look on them with the same love God looks on us all, and we say, that is my brother and sister.

In spite of their sin Jesus died for them just as He did for me.

**Right love, the moral test is whether we obey God's commands.**

The third birthmark is we love God's commands.

If someone says he loves God, but doesn't do what God says, then he is a liar. Love for God is not a sentiment, an emotion, a nice warm feeling. It is alive, active, engaged, doing.

**John 14:21** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

If I love God, I want to please Him, to live as He wants me to, which of course is the best for me. Is this about being perfect? No, no, a thousand times no. John never once even implies that. Remember what we have already read.

**I John 1:8-10** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**I John 2:1-2** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

But what is my attitude toward God's commands? Do I love them or hate them? Do I respect them or resent them? Do I groan and grumble, or do I submit and be humble? Do I think they are onerous and burdensome, or pleasing and a delight?

**His commandments are not burdensome.**

That's a rather strange and strong statement. Really, do you think that's true?

The Law requires self-denial and sacrifice and that's hard. The Law requires submission and obedience and that's hard. Who has found it easy to keep the commands of God? It seems like if it was easy everyone would do it.

There may be *two ways* the commands of God can be said to be not burdensome.

*First*, they are not burdensome compared to the laws and commands of the scribes and Pharisees. They put heavy, burdensome loads on the people. They created thousands of very minute requirements. Like all works righteousness, it was a heavy yoke. That's why Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

*Second*, God's commandments are not hard because God has given us Himself, He has given us His power; they are not burdensome because He has given us the new birth and our faith in Jesus, and He has given us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is all God's enabling grace.

What makes them burdensome is when we try to keep them in the flesh, in our own strength. The Law of God is spiritual, and it can't be done in the flesh. God never gives us a command without giving the strength of carry it out.

In other words, at the new birth I also receive a new nature and this new nature comes with new desires, new affections, new values, new priorities. Now I treasure Him and value Him more than anything else. Now I want to please Him and serve Him and live for Him. Now I want to delight in obeying Him. Now His commands aren't a burden or a duty, they are a delight.

What you desire to do is never burdensome to you. Do you desire to love your spouse or your kids or grandkids? Of course, and it is no chore or job.

Imagine a husband coming home with a beautiful bouquet of flowers for his wife and she exclaims "Oh, you shouldn't have" and he says "Well of courses I should have, it's my duty." No. It's his pleasure, his joy.

If we obey God out of constraint or fear or duty or obligation, then we are still far from true obedience. We know we are growing in our love when we move from I have to obey to I want to obey, I delight to obey, it is my joy to obey.

**Psalm 40:8** I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

**Psalm 112:1** Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

**Psalm 119:14** In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

**Psalm 119:16** I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

**Psalm 119:24** Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

**Psalm 119:47** For I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.

For the one who is born again with the Spirit of God, love becomes the motive. The commands and laws are just the specific ways for us to show that love to God.

There is one more thing that lifts the burden. And that is when we stumble and fall again and again in our efforts at obedience, we know there is forgiveness and grace, and so we do not slide into depression and despondency over our falling short and missing the mark.

### **Overcoming the World.**

The politicians are lining up for a run at the presidency. They all have plans for saving the country and the world. But the problem is all their plans are of the world. They are in the world, so they can't see the problem with the world. They are governed by the world and dominated by the world and so can't get free to change the world. They are part of the problem.

You have to be delivered from the world before you can see clearly what the world's greatest problem is, sin and evil and Satan. The moment we have faith in Jesus, the problem becomes clear. We see what He saw, and we see why He came down.

The Greek word here for overcome and for victory is the same, it is *niki*. Niki was the Greek goddess of victory, strength, and speed. Niki's Roman name was Victoria.

If you know someone named Nicholas, Nick, Nicole, Nicki, their names come from this.

This is another birthmark of one who is born again. He has conquered and is continually victorious over the world.

Christ has overcome the world, and we are in Christ, so we have overcome the world. We are called out of the world and are no longer part of the world.

We have the victory, but we still have to fight. It is the common analogy of D-Day and V-Day. The battle was won at Normandy, but it took months to finish the fight and complete the victory.

Notice the past tense, has overcome. God already has won the fight; the victory is already in hand. So yes, we must fight and fight to the end, but we fight with courage and confidence knowing the outcome and that we can't lose because of our faith in Christ.

That we are assured the battle is won doesn't mean we can rest or be lazy. No, we must fight to the death, with everything He gives us. The true is we would have been totally defeated if it were not for God who fights with us and for us.

Our growth is evidenced as the power of the world's desires and pleasures and hold on us is broken and we gain increasing victory. What is your treasure, you desire, the world or God? What is more beautiful to you, sinful attractions or God and His perfect will and ways?

***How does faith in Jesus give us victory over the world and sin?*** It does when by faith we see that Jesus is better and more desirable than anything the world has to offer. Jesus is better than the temporary desires of our flesh and eyes and the pride and greed the envy that fill our hearts.

Notice finally the victory is not ours or in us but is by faith which comes from outside of us and is given to us by the Spirit. Jesus came into the world to be the only way we could be saved from the world.

**Zechariah 4:6** Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

**Philippians 4:13, 19** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

**Proverbs 18:10** The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.