

**STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN**  
**GOD'S TESTIMONY REGARDING JESUS 1**

Read 1 John 5:1-10

### **Introduction**

Chapter 5 emphasizes the believer's ability to "overcome" the world (1 John 5:1–5) through the power of Christ. John gives testimony regarding Jesus as the Son of God (1 John 5:6–12). This passage also reassures believers, telling them they can know they have eternal life (1 John 5:13–21). First John chapter 5 begins with an important idea. Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ is "born of God." Those who truly love God also love their spiritual brothers and sisters.

The second section focuses on Jesus as God's Son. He came by water and blood, likely a reference to His baptism and crucifixion. The third section focuses on the teaching that believers can have assurance of their salvation. Five additional teachings are then given, followed by a brief command to stay away from idols.

- First, John speaks of confidence in prayer (1 John 5:14–15).
- Second, John emphasizes helping those struggling with sin (1 John 5:16–17).
- Third, John teaches those who know God are protected from the evil one (1 John 5:18).
- Fourth, John notes that those who don't belong to God are under this world's power (1 John 5:19).
- Fifth, John notes that Jesus came so we can have eternal life (1 John 5:20). As a result, we are to stay away from idols and worship only the true God, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:21).

### **Loving and Obeying**

*"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."* (vv1-3)

Here, John affirms several points he has made earlier (as we has studied in previous weeks):

1. Belief in Jesus as the Christ is characteristic of those who have the Holy Spirit (are "born of God"), in contrast to John's opponents.
2. Only those who love the Christian brothers and sisters ("love his child" -- literally, "the ones who have been begotten") have genuine love for the Parent (literally, "the One who begat").
3. Christian discipleship requires obeying the command to love one another ("carrying out his commands").

### **His Commands Are Not Burdensome**

"Burdensome" (NIV, NRSV), "grievous" (KJV) is barys, "heavy," here used figuratively, "pertaining to being a source of difficulty or trouble because of demands made." The rabbis of the Pharisees laid a "yoke" of teaching on their disciples that required minute observance of hundreds of laws.

Jesus said: *"Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."* (Luke 11:46)

Peter said to the Judaizers: *"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"* (Acts 15:10)

Paul said to a church influenced by the Judaizers: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." (**Galatians 5:1**)

But Jesus' "yoke" was different.

"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (**Matthew 11:28-30**)

What is Jesus' yoke? The "yoke" he imposed on his followers was summed up in two commandments -- love God and love one another -- to be lived out with utmost seriousness (Matthew 22:35-40).

### **Overcoming the World**

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (**vv4-5**)

John begins with a principle that is so simple, yet so powerful — if we are born of God, we will overcome the world. The idea that anything born of God could be defeated by this world was strange to John and it should be strange to us. Since believing on Him is the key to being born of God (1 John 5:1), the key to victory is faith, not only an initial, "come-to-the-altar-and-get-saved" faith, but a consistently abiding faith, an ongoing reliance and trust upon Jesus Christ.

John repeats the thought with the words, *who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* The life of abiding faith and trust in Jesus Christ is the life that overcomes the pressures and temptations of the world.

### **Who is he who overcomes the world...**

This tells us we overcome primarily because of who we are in Christ, not because of what we do. We overcome because we are born of God, and we are born of God because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God — again, not in a mere intellectual sense, but we put our lives on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God for us.

How is it we can become world-overcomers in Jesus?

- *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).* Because Jesus has overcome the world, as we abide in Him, we are overcomers in Jesus.
- John said of those who were growing in their walk with Jesus, *you have overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:13-14).* As we walk with Jesus and grow in that walk, we will overcome our spiritual enemies.
- Overcomers have a special place in the world to come. Jesus promised "*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*" (Revelation 3:21).
- Overcomers overcome because the blood of Jesus overcomes Satan's accusations, the word of their testimony overcomes Satan's deceptions, and loving not their lives overcomes Satan's violence (Revelation 12:11).

### **The Testimony of the Spirit, Water, and Blood**

"This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ, not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is truth. 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: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” (vv6-8)*

John makes it clear that the Jesus he speaks of is not the Gnostic, “phantom” Jesus who was so holy that He had nothing to do with this world. The Jesus we must believe on is the Jesus who came by water and blood; the Jesus who was part of a real, material, flesh-and-blood earth. Through the centuries, there have been many different ideas about exactly what John meant by this phrase, but we are still unsure.

### **School of Thoughts:**

Some believe that water speaks of our own baptism, and blood speaks of receiving communion, and that John writes of how Jesus comes to us in the two Christian sacraments of baptism and communion (Luther and Calvin had this idea). Yet, if this is the case, it doesn’t add up with the historical perspective John had when he wrote “came by water and blood.” He seems to write about something that happened in the past, not something that is ongoing.

Others (such as Augustine) believe the water and blood describes the water and blood which flowed from Jesus’ side when He was stabbed with a spear on the cross: But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out (John 19:34). This was an important event to the Apostle John because immediately after this description of water and blood, he added in his gospel: And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe (John 19:35). Yet, if this was John’s meaning, it is a little unclear how it can be said that Jesus came by water and blood.

Still others believe the water spoke of Jesus’ first birth, being born of the “waters of the womb,” and blood speaks of His death. If this is the case, John would be essentially writing, “Jesus was born like a man and died like a man. He was completely human, not some super-spiritual being who had no real contact with the material world.”

Probably the best explanation (though there are good points to some of the other ideas) is the oldest recorded Christian understanding of this passage (first recorded by the ancient Christian Tertullian). Most likely, John means the water of Jesus’ baptism, and the blood of His crucifixion.

### **The Spirit who bears witness**

The Holy Spirit also bears witness to the true person of Jesus, even as Jesus promised He would (*He will testify of Me... He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you [John 15:26 and 16:14]*). The consistent message of the Holy Spirit to us is, “Here is Jesus.”

The Spirit, the water, and the blood are all consistent witnesses in telling us who Jesus is. We can know that these three agree as one. It isn’t as if the Spirit tells us one thing, the water another, and the blood says something else. Jesus’ life, death, and the Spirit, all tell us who Jesus is, and they tell us it in agreement.

### **The Witness of the Heart**

*“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” (vv9-10)*

Everybody, every day, receives the witness of men regarding various things. Therefore, we should have much more confidence in the witness of God when He tells us who Jesus is. John does not want us to

believe with blind faith. Instead, our faith is to be based on reliable testimony. And we have the most reliable testimony possible, the witness of God.

When we believe on Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit as an inner confirmation of our standing before God. Romans 8:16 puts it like this: *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God.* When we refuse to believe on Jesus, we reject the testimony God has given of His Son. Therefore, we call God a liar with our unbelief.

Such rejection of God's testimony over time can lead to a place where a person is permanently hardened against God, to the place where they may be one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, as Jesus warned in Mark 3:28-29. What hope can there be for the one who persists in hearing what God says, and calling Him a liar?

