

Lecture 28 - 1 John 5:1-21

The book of 1 John has taught us that God is **light**. We also learned that God is **love** and in today's chapter we learn that God is **life**. That life comes to us through Jesus Christ and is 1) received by believing, 2) given for overcoming, 3) possible through Christ's death on the cross, and 4) given assurance by divine testimony. All of chapter 5 is meant to reinforce our assurance that what God has promised is true!

First of all, we have assurance that we are "born again." Jesus said, "You must be born again." How? 1 John 5:1 "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

We prove it in our lives by declaring our allegiance before men, identifying with Christ in baptism, loving God and carrying out His commands. We show love for God by not only loving Him, but also by loving each other and being obedient.

Have you ever thought about why we should obey God (beyond just "because God said so.")? I can think of six reasons:

1) Obedience is a prerequisite for fellowship. (1 John 1:5-7) "God is light. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from every sin."

2) Obedience is also a means to effective prayer. (1 John 3:21)

“We have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask because we obey His commands.” We know that God isn’t fooled by lip service . . . He sees the motives of our hearts, He knows our behavior. If we’re drawing near with our lips but our hearts are far away from Him, disobedience will hinder our prayers.

3) Obedience demonstrates love for Christ. (John 14:15) “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

4) Obedience sets an example and glorifies God. (1 Peter 2:12)

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.”

5) Obedience is evidence of salvation. It is not a claim of faith that confirms new life in Christ; it is the pattern of life that follows. If we continue to revel in sin, it denies that we’ve surrendered to Christ. But if we strive to obey Christ out of a desire to serve the One we love, that is evidence that indeed we’ve confessed Him as Lord not only by mouth, but also with the heart.

6) Obedience is the pathway to joy. Jesus said, “If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love. I have told you this so that your joy may be complete (John 15:10,11). God’s demands are not burdensome. We obey out of love, not fear. It is a joyful way of life.

The Amplified Bible translates the last part of the third verse “But these orders of His are not irksome -- burdensome, oppressive, or grievous.” Aren’t we all looking for that -- a burden that we can carry, not one that defeats us before we begin?

Jesus accused the Scribes and Pharisees of making the burdens too heavy in religion. We have often made the rules so strict and so numerous that we have frustrated persons before they could ever begin to respond to Christ. Doing the will of God is not burdensome because we are never asked to do anything without the gift of strength to accomplish it. We may not be able to cope with the problems we create, but the aspirations God has for us can be completed in the strength that God gives.

Obeying the will of God is not burdensome because love never finds any duty or task too hard or great. God’s love is sacrificial and He gives us the capacity to love as He loves. The boy who replied, “He’s not heavy, he’s my brother,” is the classic example of this truth.

Verse 4 tells us about the victory that overcomes the world – our faith. This ability to overcome is another proof to support the assurance that we have been born again.

To be born of God means to share God’s victory. The victory of Christ over Satan–death–and sin was a single victory in time for all time. When we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, His victory became our victory. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He “seated Him at His

right hand in the heavenly place, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and He put all things in subjection under His feet.” (Ephesians 1:20-22) This means that positionally, each child of God is privileged to sit far above his enemies! Where a man sits determines how much authority he may exercise. His power is determined by his position, not by his personal appearance or the way he feels.

So it is with the child of God, his authority is determined by his position in Christ. His old life was buried and he has been raised in Christ to a new life of glory. In Christ he is sitting on the very throne of the universe!

The word “overcome” here also means a continuous victory in the midst of a continuous struggle. The early Christians to whom John was writing needed to know that they had been born into Christ for a time like that which they were facing. They needed to be reassured their faith would overcome the world of forces antagonistic to the new life in Christ. Satan was the divisive general of those forces. The company commanders were the leaders of the Gnostic movement that denied the incarnation. The foot soldiers were the antichrist troops who constantly tried to unsettle a Christian’s security in Christ. John didn’t offer any glib advice . . . he just wanted to reassure them they **were** the cherished children of God and, as such, would overcome the world in the power of God. Victory is a right now happening! We keep on conquering with a

new victory each time we have a skirmish with evil. Our shield of faith is the front line of defense that Satan cannot penetrate.

In 1789 Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Nothing is certain but death and taxes.” Man has a deep desire for certainty. Christians are not afraid to say, “we know.” In fact, the word “know” occurs 39 times in John’s brief letter and eight times in this closing chapter. To know something is to have full assurance.

We have assurance that Jesus is the Son of God in vs. 6-10 because of the threefold witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

The Wycliff Bible Commentary lists four interpretations that might apply to this passage. “By water and blood” could mean:

- 1) two events of Jesus’ life – baptism and death
- 2) the water and blood which flowed from Christ’s side on the cross
- 3) Christ’s ministries of purification and redemption, or
- 4) the church’s sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Generally, it’s accepted that this refers to the baptism and death of Jesus . . . the water and the blood. The Holy Spirit testifies to the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, just as our baptism testifies that we have died to sin and are raised to walk in the newness of life and receive the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 10 says “anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.” We know that to be true, don’t we? We have a confidence that only God can give us. The Spirit witnesses through the

words of Scripture . . . as we read He speaks to us and teaches us. We feel “at home” with other Christians. No matter where you go in the world, there is a bond between strangers who name the name of Christ.

The Law required two or three witnesses for a matter to be settled. The Father witnessed at the baptism and at the cross and the Spirit continues to witness today within the believer. The Spirit, the water, and the blood settle the matter. Jesus is God! This is a Christian assurance foundational to everything else.

God not only gives us assurance that Jesus is indeed God, He gives us assurance of eternal life in His Son. We KNOW that we have eternal life. 1 John 5:13 “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

What happens when you become a Christian? Satan begins to attack all the assurance you’re supposed to have.

His first approach is usually to cast doubt on the work God has done in your heart. -- “You don’t think you’re saved and your sins are forgiven just by saying so, do you? Surely that isn’t enough.”

How do you answer that? Your only hope of successfully resisting those attacks is with the Word of God. All the more reason why we need to memorize it and get it down deep inside us. With the sword of the Spirit, which Ephesians 6:17 tells us is the Word of God, we keep from letting sin hide in our heart (Psalm 119:11) which gives Satan

ammunition. We're ready to defend what we know regardless of how we might feel. Assurance is a wonderful thing.

There is a little poem that goes like this:

Three men were walking on a wall,
 Feeling, Faith, and Fact.
When Feeling got an awful fall,
 Then Faith was taken back.
So close was Faith to Feeling,
 That he stumbled and fell too.
But Fact remained and pulled Faith back,
 And Faith brought Feeling too.

We receive eternal life not only from Christ, but also in Christ. The gift of eternal life is a Person. It is a fact. We receive that gift by faith and it begins from the moment we accept Christ and continues on beyond death. Our relationship brings joy and power to live the abundant life without fear of God's rejection. Triumph and victory are ours NOW!

It is one thing to know that Jesus is God and that we are God's children, but what about the needs and problems of daily life? Jesus helped people when He was here on earth . . . does He still help us today? Does the heavenly Father respond when His children call on Him? Christians have confidence and assurance in prayer.

We're told to pray without ceasing. Prayer should be a natural part of our lives. It's like breathing. In his book *Believing God for the Impossible*, Bill Bright talks about the concept of "spiritual breathing."

It's as simple as confessing our sin (exhaling) and claiming the fullness and control of the Holy Spirit in our lives by faith (inhaling).

Sometimes the harder we try to live as Christians do, the more we find ourselves in periods of discouragement and defeat. We often feel guilty and spiritually inadequate. It's times like these to exercise spiritual breathing.

We take a deep breath . . . and exhale by confessing our pride, jealousy, lust, dishonesty, critical spirit, loss of our first love, lukewarmness, and sometimes even the sin of unbelief. Even when we confess, Satan tries to make us feel unforgiven. A Christian should not succumb to a defeated life. We know that Christians do not practice sin, but we also know that we live in the flesh and face the problems of Romans 7 -- doing what we do not want to do. But we claim 1 John 1:9 and confess our sins knowing He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We begin to thank God and praise Him and to accept the full assurance that He has cleansed and forgiven us.

And then we inhale . . . Ephesians 5:18 "be filled with the Spirit." Romans 8:1 "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We can praise Him and rejoice. Blessed assurance Jesus is mine!! So think about spiritual breathing this week. Right now, everyone take a deep breath . . . it feels so good to inhale the goodness of God . . . to feel the joy of the Holy Spirit!

John reminds us about intercessory prayer and brings up the subject of “sin unto death.” So many Christians worry about having committed the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. I want to tell you that you can rest assured if you are a Christian you have not committed that sin. It is a sin committed by unbelievers who say that Jesus did His wondrous works by the power of Satan (Mark 3:28-30). The Holy Spirit cannot deny himself, and therefore, this is one sin a Christian cannot commit.

The “sin unto death,” however, can be taken two ways. If it is spiritual death, then that would be denying Christ and the incarnation. It may also be referring to physical death. Meaning that a Christian may so bring dishonor to God that he takes the physical body in death. We have examples of Ananias & Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit, and Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians who were getting drunk at the Lord’s Supper and not giving it proper respect.

This is a difficult passage of Scripture and I don’t want to just gloss over it. I think the easiest way to delve into it is simply to share what three different commentators have to say about these verses:

The first is from Roy Laurin’s commentary on First John titled *Life at It’s Best*. He writes . . .

“Most people stop in confusion before the words “sin unto death” which is the least important item in these verses. The most important

thing is the least attended to among most Christians. It is our responsibility to pray for the brother who has fallen into sin of any kind.

“There are two scriptural ways to help a sinning brother. The first thing to do is to pray for him as directed in this passage. The next thing to do is to deal with him. Galatians 6:1 tells us, ‘Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.’

“Talk to God about him and talk to him about himself.

“When it speaks of ‘sin unto death’ it does not identify it specifically, but we may be safe in stating a few conclusions based on Scripture. To begin with it is not spoken of as being a sin of a Christian. Previously John spoke about a brother sinning ‘a sin which is not unto death.’ The meaning is simply this, ‘If a man sees his brother sin in such a way that the sin which he commits does not involve absolute renunciation of Christ, he shall pray for him.’ For sin weakens spiritual life and through prayer and intercession God may infuse new life as He deals with his wrongdoing.

“The sin unto death is the sin that rejects Jesus Christ. When one does that, he rejects the only means of life. There is no need to even pray for such a man. While a person is still approachable, prayer is practical but when that person comes to a place of final decision then prayer is futile. Such a state is exceedingly rare and seldom comes to our notice. Let us not be overwhelmed by problems so rare that few people ever

encounter them, while we neglect the person who is still in reach of the efficacy of prayer.” (LAURIN)

The second commentary is from Lloyd Ogilvie’s book *When God First Thought of You*. He writes . . .

“If you believe that in God you have eternal life, then the ‘sin that leads to death’ or the sin that excludes the sinner from the life of God, must surely be the denial of that saving truth. It rejects the only means by which sin may be forgiven . . . the atoning death of the incarnate Son of God. The underlying truth is not that sin is unpardonable, but that it remains unpardoned.

“When we see sin we are responsibility to pray with confidence and faith that the sinner will be given life and restored to full fellowship with God. John is not forbidding prayer for hardened unbelievers, just not encouraging it. Having denied the doctrines of salvation and left the community of God’s faithful people, such apostates, whatever they may once have professed to believe, have put themselves beyond the reach of the church’s prayers. John agrees with Hebrews 6:4-6 . . . “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

Let me interject here that the Hebrews passage refers to those Jews who were going back to the Law as the way of salvation. They tasted the right way, they'd been exposed to the full truth of salvation in Jesus Christ, but by going back to the Law it was the same as crucifying Christ again . . . there was no sacrifice under the Law that would supercede the blood sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God. So it's true – if you trust in anything other than the blood of Christ for salvation you are lost. The Gnostics were denying that was the way of salvation . . . Jesus was not God in the flesh.

Kenneth Wuest, writing *1 John in the Greek New Testament*, says this . . .

“In inquiring what this is, we must be guided by the analogy of what John says elsewhere. We have life in Christ Jesus, but there are those who have gone out from us, not being of us (2:19), who are called antichrists, who not only “have not” Christ, but are Christ’s enemies, denying the Father and the Son (2:22), whom we are not even to receive into our houses nor to greet (2 John 10,11). These seem to be the persons pointed out here, and this is the sin, namely, the denial that Jesus is the Christ, the incarnate Son of God. This alone of all sins bears upon it the stamp of severance from Him who is Life itself. As the confession of Christ with the mouth and in the heart is salvation unto life (Romans 10:9), so denial of Christ with the mouth and in the heart is ‘sin unto death.’”

“Sin unto death denies that Jesus came in the flesh and was the Son of God . . . God incarnate.”

I personally believe that God would take the body before He would let you lose your soul. He only gives one kind of life – eternal – not temporary. In all of Scripture I believe God is assuring and reassuring us that our future . . . our eternal life is totally secure in His hands. We can trust Him to hold on to us forever. But the matter of eternal security is one each person has to settle for himself through what the Holy Spirit teaches in Scripture.

John ends his letter with assurance that the Christian life is the real life and we need to keep ourselves from idols. Jesus Christ is the true God. Be assured we have “the real thing.” Because we have met the true God through His Son, Jesus Christ, we are in contact with reality. Our relationship is with a God who is genuine.

✓Christians live in an atmosphere of truth and reality. Most unsaved people live in an atmosphere of pretense and sham.

✓Christians have been given spiritual discernment to know true from false, the unsaved do not have this understanding.

✓Christians do not simply choose between good and bad, they choose between true and false. An idol represents that which is false and empty; and a person who lives for idols will himself become false and empty. This explains why God warns so often against the sin of idolatry. Not only is it a violation of His commandment, but it is a

subtle way for Satan to take control of us. When “things” take God’s place in our lives, we are guilty of idolatry. We are living for the unreal instead of the real.

To a man of the world, the Christian life seems unreal. A crutch to get along. To him only what he can see and feel is reality.

✓The world boasts of its enlightenments, but a Christian walks in the real light, because God is light.

✓The world talks about love, but it knows nothing of the real love a Christian experiences because his God is love.

✓The world displays its wisdom and learning, but a Christian lives in truth because he knows the Spirit of Truth. God is light, love and truth; and these together make a life that is real.

Questions?