

Living in the Victory of Faith

1 John 5:1–21

First John chapter 5—the closing chapter of this letter, where John gathers up the major themes and presses them home: faith in Jesus Christ admits us into God’s family, love is the family resemblance, obedience is the evidence, and assurance is the believer’s confidence.

1. The New Birth: Faith That Makes You Family

“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” (First John 5:1, NKJV).

John starts with something beautifully simple: if you truly believe that Jesus is the Christ—the promised Messiah, God’s anointed Savior—then you have been born of God. That means Christianity is not merely a lifestyle upgrade or a moral renovation; it is a new birth.

And John adds a relational result: if you love the Father who brought you into this new life, you will also love the Father’s children. Love for God and love for God’s people are joined at the root. We may not be alike in personality, background, or preferences, but we share the same Father and the same Savior—and that changes how we view one another.

2. Love and Obedience: The Proof That Love Is Real

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments” (First John 5:2, NKJV).

John is not sentimental. He is practical. Love is not merely what we say; it is what we do. Loving God shows up in obedience, and loving God’s people shows up in how we treat them.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (First John 5:3, NKJV).

When love is genuine, obedience changes. It is no longer, “I have to.” It becomes, “I want to.” Not because we are naturally strong, but because God’s Spirit supplies what our flesh cannot manufacture.

And we all know the truth: loving certain people is not something you can psyche yourself into. There are relationships where the natural heart tightens up. Old wounds reopen. Personalities clash. That is why this love is a work of God. When He gives you love for someone you would not naturally choose—when He softens what had become hard—that is evidence of His grace at work.

So we come honestly. We do not pretend with God. We tell Him the truth. “Lord, I cannot love this person in my own strength. But You can. Give me Your love. Change my heart. Teach me how to bless instead of resent.” God works with honesty. He does not bless spiritual pretending.

3. Overcoming the World: The Victory of Faith

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (First John 5:4, NKJV).

John does not say we escape the world. He says we overcome it. The world’s values, pressures, fears, and temptations do not have the final word over the one who is born of God.

“Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (First John 5:5, NKJV).

Faith is not wishful thinking. Faith is trust anchored in the reality of who Jesus is. And that faith grows as we grow in knowing Him. It is hard to trust someone you do not know. That is why Jesus said, “Learn from Me” (Matthew 11:29, NKJV). The more you learn His heart, His character, His faithfulness, the more natural it becomes to trust Him when life is uncertain.

4. God’s Witness About His Son

“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” (First John 5:6, NKJV).

John reminds us that God has not left us with guesses. God has testified about His Son, and the Spirit continues to bear witness to Christ in the believer’s heart.

“And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one” (First John 5:8, NKJV).

Here is the point: the testimony of God concerning Jesus is unified and consistent. And John makes a strong argument:

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” (First John 5:9, NKJV).

Our entire court system runs on witness testimony. We believe human witnesses every day—often without much evidence beyond their word. How much more should we receive the witness of God.

“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar” (First John 5:10, NKJV).

Refusing God’s testimony is not a neutral act. It is calling God untrue. That is why Scripture treats unbelief as a moral issue, not merely an intellectual one.

And what is God’s testimony?

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (First John 5:11–12, NKJV).

That is as clear as it can be. Eternal life is not found in religion, morality, heritage, or human effort. Life is in the Son. To have the Son is to have life. To refuse the Son is to remain without life.

And remember, eternal life is not merely endless duration. It is a quality of life—a God-given life marked by fellowship with Him, by righteousness, peace, and joy. It is life as God intended it to be, flowing from relationship with Him.

5. Assurance: You Can Know

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (First John 5:13, NKJV).

God does not want His children living in constant spiritual uncertainty. John wrote so believers could have settled assurance: *you can know* you have eternal life. Not by perfection, but by the person and promise of Jesus Christ.

6. Confidence in Prayer: According to His Will

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (First John 5:14, NKJV).

Prayer is not a tool to get our will done in heaven. Prayer is the privilege of aligning with God’s will on earth. When our hearts are surrendered, our prayers become less about self-indulgence and more about God’s purposes—His kingdom, His glory, His work in people.

“And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (First John 5:15, NKJV).

Many of us can also testify that unanswered prayers have been mercy. God has loved us too much to grant every request we made when our perspective was limited and our desires were mixed.

7. Prayer for a Brother in Sin

“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life” (First John 5:16, NKJV).

John urges intercession, especially when a believer is caught in deception. Sin clouds judgment. It blinds the heart. It makes lies sound reasonable. So we pray: “Lord, open their eyes. Break the deception. Bring them to repentance. Restore them.”

John also speaks of “sin leading to death” (First John 5:16, NKJV). The thrust here is sobering: persistent rejection of God’s saving truth leaves a person outside of life. God will not force salvation on a resisting heart. He calls, convicts, and draws, but He does not coerce. That is why we pray, not that God would violate a person’s will, but that God would shine light, break deception, and bring the person to a place of honest surrender.

“All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death” (First John 5:17, NKJV).

John refuses the kind of preaching that terrifies tender consciences over every failure as though grace does not exist. He calls sin what it is—but he also anchors us in God’s provision and God’s mercy.

8. The Believer's Security and the World's Condition

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him" (First John 5:18, NKJV).

A true believer cannot live comfortably in sin as a pattern of life. And there is also protection here: the believer belongs to God. The enemy is real, but he is not sovereign. God keeps His own, and the believer learns to keep watch over his heart by staying close to the Lord.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (First John 5:19, NKJV).

This explains so much. The world's values, priorities, and narratives are not spiritually neutral. The world system is bent away from God. That is why Christian living will always feel like swimming upstream. But you are not alone, and you are not without help.

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (First John 5:20, NKJV).

John ends by lifting our eyes: Jesus has come. He has given understanding. We know the true God, and eternal life is found in Him.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, and the resurrection declares that He is God, Savior and Lord.

9. The Final Word: Guard Your Heart from Idols

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (First John 5:21, NKJV).

John closes with a fatherly warning because idols are not only statues. An idol is anything that competes with God for your devotion—anything that displaces Him at the center.

An idol can be a possession, a hobby, entertainment, success, comfort, romance, control, or even ministry if it becomes more important than obedience and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Anything that comes between you and the Lord is not harmless. It will hollow you out. So guard your heart. Keep Christ first.

Practical Application

- Ask yourself honestly: Is my faith in Jesus shaping my loves, my priorities, and my obedience?
- Where is God calling me to love in deed and truth, not merely in words?
- What pressure from the world is trying to squeeze me into its mold—and how can I respond with faith this week?
- What "idol" has been quietly stealing devotion that belongs to God?

A Challenge for Believers

Do not settle for a thin Christianity that is all talk and no transformation. Feed your faith by staying in the Word. Strengthen your prayer life by seeking God's will. Love the family of God in practical ways. And tear down any idol that is crowding out your fellowship with Christ—because nothing is worth losing closeness with Jesus.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you do not have the Son, you do not have life. But God is offering life to you today.

“This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (First John 5:11, NKJV).

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross for your sins. He rose again, and the resurrection declares that He is God, Savior and Lord. Turn from sin. Come to Him. Trust Him. Ask Him to forgive you and give you eternal life. God does not merely offer you a new start—He offers you a new birth.