

PM 1 John 5:1-5

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Date: 16 May 2021

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] evening, especially if you're visiting us today. We have our prayer meeting and Bible study on Wednesday, which Jonathan Kenyon will be leading.

Next Lord's Day, the preacher, 11 o'clock and 6 o'clock, is the Reverend Ronnie Christie. You may be interested in a magazine on the table out in the vestibule from Govan Free Church.

That's a church plant about five or six years ago. I took one home at lunchtime and it is very encouraging and very inspiring, so do take a copy of that magazine.

First Base, who provide support for immigrants mainly, people who've come to Dumfries and Galloway to settle in this area, but have met with difficulties.

They are able to take contributions again of non-perishable items. There's details of that next to the First Base box at the back of the vestibule there, or if you have any questions, William will be pleased to answer.

[1 : 29] And then one final notice, just to say that there is some redecoration of the church going on. That's the reason for the wet paint sign just inside the doorway.

So let's come now before God and seek his blessing upon us. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that you are the almighty, good, loving, gracious, and holy God described to us in the scriptures.

We thank you that you are the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to be the saviour of the world. We pray that you would help us tonight to glorify the name of our saviour.

Father, we pray that you will help us to study your word with open hearts and minds and to receive some spiritual blessing from on high.

We ask you for the forgiveness of all our sins and for a real sense of your presence in our midst.

We ask all this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 49] Amen. Amen. Now our first praise item is Psalm 9. The first version in Sing Psalms, which is on page 9.

And we're going to hear the first, no, we're going to hear verses 7 to 11. Starts with the words, The Lord forever reigns on high.

His throne for judgment stands. He'll judge the world in righteousness with justice. Rule the lands. Goes on to speak of the Lord as our hiding place and as our strong defense.

Psalm 9. Psalm 9. We'll listen to these verses if you want to. Then please do sing quietly behind your masks.

The Lord forever reigns on high. The Lord forever reigns on high.

[3 : 54] His throne for judgment stands. He'll judge the world in righteousness with justice through the lands.

The Lord will be a hiding place for those who are oppressed.

And he will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed. And he will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed. He will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed.

And he will be a strong defense. And he will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed. His throne for those who are oppressed. The Lord will be a strong defense, Therefore those who are oppressed. He will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed.

And he will be a strong defense for those who are oppressed. O Lord, in you their trust will raise.

[5 : 09] For you do not abandon those who seek your gracious face.

Sing praises to the Lord who sits inside and on his throne.

Come on, the nations of the world. O Lord, what he has done.

O Lord, what he has done.

O Lord, what he has done. On those occasions when I have been preaching, once a month or so, at 1 John. And one of the things we have noticed, I hope, is how John seems to be constantly

referring to the Last Supper.

[6 : 44] To our Lord's discourse on that final evening before he was crucified. This short portion we're going to read from John 16 is, of course, taken from the Last Supper.

We're reading verses 25 to 33. I have said these things to you in figures of speech.

The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but will tell you plainly about the Father.

In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I will ask the Father on your behalf. For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father, and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.

[7 : 58] His disciples said, ah, now you're speaking plainly, and not using figurative speech. Now we know that you know all things, and do not need anyone to question you.

This is why we believe that you came from God. Jesus answered them, do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming.

Indeed, it has come when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.

We turn over now to 1 John. 1 John 5. Chapter 5. And we'll be looking later on at the first five verses.

[9 : 10] And you will see, I'm sure, the connection with that passage in John's Gospel. So 1 John, chapter 5, verses 1 to 5.

1 John 5. 1 John 5. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father, loves whoever, has been born of him.

1 John 5. 1 John 5. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

2 John 5. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 2 John 5. For everyone who has been born of God, overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world. Our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world, except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[10 : 22] We're going to hear another psalm now. This time Psalm 31, from Sing Psalms, on page 36.

And we're going to hear verses 1 to 8. In you I've taken refuge, Lord. You are my shelter in distress. Oh, let me never be ashamed. But save me in your righteousness. Thank you. Lord, I'll turn you here to me in my cry.

Lord, I'll turn you here to me in my cry.

Come, pray to me in my cry. I'll be in my affection and hurt defense.

[11 : 55] My rock and earth defense, my song, O Lamb, Savior, raise it.

You are my fortress and my rock, for you in saving my soul dies, preserving from the town of the set, to find the red in my night.

Bring me, Lord, O God of sin, my sins I fall into you.

I pay it for those who trust all souls, I trust the Lord, for he is true.

Is that okay? Good.

[13 : 46] Well, let's join together now in prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before you, confessing that indeed you are our only rock.

In all the stormy seas of this life, amidst all the tribulations that we have been warned would come upon us, we thank you that we have this firm rock on whom we can stand.

We thank you that the eternal rock was indeed cleft for us at Calvary. Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, laying down his life for us, that we may be saved.

And we pray that you would help us to always hide ourselves in him. not just from the troubles of this world, but from the great day of judgment itself.

We know that our only security is in Christ. We pray that Christ may be glorified throughout this land tonight, as many churches gather all over the land, offering up worship and hearing the word of God proclaimed.

[15 : 20] grant your presence in all the congregations of your people. And grant that souls may be saved, and that the saints of God may be built up in their most holy faith.

We pray for your church here in Dumfries. We ask you for this church, for the Free Church of Scotland here.

You know our needs, you see our weakness, our fewness in number, but Lord, you are able to build us up afresh. We thank you for those who come to us to minister the word of God week by week. And we do pray, Lord, for all of them, for Ronnie Christie, as he prepares for next Lord's Day, for our interim moderator, Kenny MacLeod. We give thanks for his ministry last Lord's Day. We pray, Lord, that the time may yet come when we will have the joy of having a minister ourselves here.

[16 : 28] But in the meantime, Lord, we pray that you would help us all to serve you faithfully. Thank you for our new elders. We pray that they may be anointed by your spirit for the task that they have accepted.

We pray for other churches through this town likewise. And elsewhere throughout Scotland, grant that the gospel of Christ may go forth in these difficult days and that nothing may hinder it.

We ask you, Lord, that we may live to see days of revival through our country, indeed throughout the world. Thank you for those parts of the world where there are many believers.

Strengthen their hands, we pray. Where some are facing persecution at this time, and many we know are. Lord, help them by your spirit.

Grant them a strong faith that they may be overcomers in their situation. We pray, Lord, for this world around us.

[17 : 43] We once again commit to you the great events that are going on in the world. Particularly, we hear of the violence in Israel and Gaza.

We long for some cessation to that, for peace in that land. But, Lord, we pray that you would give wisdom to those in leadership there.

We know that they don't have easy decisions to make, but we pray that lives may be saved, and that those that would seek to destroy may be restrained.

And that your church, in the midst of it all, might be strong and firm, and may radiate the light and the love of Christ.

Lord, we would pray for other flashpoints also. We hear of civil war in Myanmar. We hear of a rebel town being taken by government forces in the Chin province.

[18 : 58] Lord, that indeed is one province in Myanmar that is nominally Christian, predominantly Baptist.

Lord, we find it hard to imagine how it's come to this, that those peaceable people feel obliged to rise up against the government, and the government feels obliged to crush them in this way.

Lord, these are tragic things. Oh, Heavenly Father, draw near in that situation. Grant mercy to those people to emerge from it all in peace and freedom.

Many, many other situations too we know would have a claim upon our prayers. What can we say except may the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in the earth.

we thank you that the day will come when he will return and that will bring an end to these troubles.

We thank you for that great and glorious day when he shall judge the earth in righteousness and when his kingdom shall be established visibly and when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[20 : 22] Draw near to us each in our own more personal needs at this time also. Quite a number of our congregation are suffering at this time with illnesses of various kinds.

We ask you to kindly look upon them and raise them up again to health. We pray Heavenly Father for the coming week and ask you to help us all whatever area of life we may be found whether it is in raising families whether it is in our work or whether in retirement Lord help us all to be fruitful in serving Christ wherever we may be.

We ask you Lord to lift from us any anxiety any personal burden that may be bearing down upon us at this time and grant us Lord that we might in a few moments time study your word with hearts eager to gain something of spiritual good to ourselves from the Holy Scriptures do lead us all in the ways of righteousness lead us all as sheep of the good shepherd for we ask it in Jesus Christ's name Amen Amen Well before we come to God's word going to hear another psalm psalm 138 this time from the Psalter on page 431 and we're just going to hear verses 1 to 3 beginning thee will

I praise with all my heart I will sing praise to thee before the gods and worship will toward thy sanctuary thee will I praise with all my heart I will sing praise to thee before the gods and worship will toward thy sanctuary I praise thy name for thy truth and kindness of thy love for God thy word has kindly bright all thy great day above thou love thou didst me answer in the day when I to thee did cry and thou my fainting so with strength his strength and in heart live well let me ask you to turn please to 1 John chapter 5 and to those first five verses of the chapter which we read earlier we've come now to the final chapter of 1 John and John is beginning now to sum up what he's been saying three themes have dominated this letter faith love and obedience these three are the marks of real

[24 : 32] Christianity John Stott in his excellent commentary on 1 John calls them the three tests of a genuine Christian he calls them the doctrinal test the social test and the moral test all three of them appear here in these verses closely interwoven to show the inseparable relationship between them all together they form a summary of the Christian life I likened 1 John this morning to a kaleidoscope you know those little tubes containing little glass beads that catch the light with all the different colours you shake the tube and all the little beads move around and they form a beautiful pattern shake it again and you have an entirely different pattern but it's still the same beads and that's how it is in 1

John the same beads the same themes being shaken around in different orders from different angles different combinations creating all kinds of different beautiful spiritual patterns someone else in this congregation likened it to me a couple of weeks ago to cut crystal catching the light from different directions well tonight I suppose I ought to speak about embroidery the various threads being woven together to form one complex pattern faith love and obedience they're all there but you can't easily separate them in these verses and nor should you now for a preacher like me who likes to have clear cut points that's quite difficult but it would be wrong for me to try to disentangle these threads which

John has so carefully woven together as Jesus said in an entirely different context what God has joined together let not man separate to use another illustration it's like having a cup of tea with milk and sugar mixed in you can't separate those three elements in the drink that you have without totally destroying it so some years ago we visited Africa and one of my happiest memories of that trip was of the hospitality that we received in the rural areas and we would be invited into these little thatched mud huts and we would be served with chai tea brewed together with the milk and sugar jug full of tea a whole gallon of water and a whole pot of sugar all stirred up together delicious but you can't separate the three they belong together and so likewise here you can't separate faith love and obedience or perhaps a more accurate illustration might be a plant with the roots and the stem and the leaves and the flowers you can talk about them separately you can even chop up that plant and physically separate the different parts of it but if you do then the leaves and the flowers will very quickly shrivel up fall and so it is here faith is the stem from which love and obedience grow and faith in turn has its roots in

Christ try to chop it all up and the whole thing dies these various elements all belong together so let's look then at John's summary here of the Christian life and see how he brings these threads together with each other we'll look first at faith and love in verse 1 and then at love and obedience in verses 2 and 3 and then finally the triumph of faith in verses 4 and 5 so first of all faith and love the first two threads interwoven together in verse 1 everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him now this follows from what he was saying at the end of chapter 4 that whoever loves God must also love his brother there it was presented as a commandment but now John shows that it follows from our relationship with God and that in turn links it with faith

John begins here by defining the Christian faith obviously very important that we get that right a mere faith in God is not enough as James says the devils believe in God and they tremble a mere faith that Jesus existed and that he was a good man and that he taught good things and worked wonders it's not enough the Christian faith is more specific than that we need to believe as he says here that Jesus is the Christ and that as we've seen in the past particularly when we looked at the first part of chapter 4 has great implications it means that we believe in him as the promised Messiah the Son of God who became man in order to save us our Lord and our Saviour our Prophet, Priest and King who died for our sins on the cross who rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven and who will one day return to judge the world and to reign forever that is the

basic Christian faith and everyone who believes that

[32 : 35] John says has been born of God in other words born again now that is essential that's the root of all spiritual life Jesus said didn't he you must be born again there's no option about it there are not two different kinds of Christians born again Christians and the rest Christians are people who have been born again full stop Jesus says unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God and he cannot enter the kingdom of God by nature we're spiritually dead we need to have spiritual life before we can do anything spiritual our faith in Christ

John says here in these opening verses shows that we have been born of God we have been born again the grammar is significant here whoever believes John says has been born of God in other words faith is the result of the new birth faith and not vice versa people sometimes make a mistake over that even some very great preachers have made a mistake of suggesting that we believe in order to be born again it doesn't work that way around being born again leads us to believe Paul says by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God now if we are born of God then

God is our father and if God is our father then of course we will love him and if we love him John reasons here we will also love everyone else who has been born of him not just because of their relationship with us as our brothers and sisters not just because they are fellow members of our churches but because of their relationship with God himself as his children you see therefore in this opening verse how faith and love are linked together through the new birth now this presents us with a challenge doesn't it do you love the children of God simply because they are the children of God in everyday life we will sometimes show kindness to someone simply because of who their parents are there's an example of it in the

Old Testament with the story of David showing kindness to Mephibosheth do you remember that story after Saul and Jonathan had died in battle and David had become king he asked if there was anyone left of the household of Saul to whom he could show kindness and he was told about Mephibosheth Jonathan's son who was lame and he invited him to come and to eat with him every day at the king's table invited him to come simply because he was Jonathan's son no other reason don't know whether he liked Mephibosheth don't know what kind of a person Mephibosheth was don't know whether he was good company at the king's table that didn't matter he was Jonathan's son that's all that mattered because of who his father was he was welcome at David's table so likewise we should show kindness to the children of God to fellow

Christians whoever they are whatever they're like whichever church they belong to whether we get on with them or not whether they're nice people or not it doesn't matter if they're God's children he loves them therefore we should love them too so there's the first little pairing of these two threads faith and love secondly we have love and obedience in verses two and three 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 John answers here the obvious question what does it mean to love the children of God but this is not the obvious answer the way to love

[38 : 45] God's children he says is to love God and to keep his commandments seems like a kind of circular argument doesn't it but what he's doing is linking love with obedience now the link between loving God and keeping his commandments is obvious enough Jesus said at the last supper John 14 15 if you love me you will keep my commandments but how is this linked with loving the children of God well firstly because this is his commandment that we love one another and secondly because his commandments teach us how we should love one another love is not just a vague feeling towards one another love involves doing what is right and good for one another now we may think well that's easy we know how to do what's good but we don't with our clouded fallen minds we don't always know how to show love to one another in practical ways but God's commandments tell us what is right and good and it's by obeying those commandments that we will in practice show love for one another think about the ten commandments the first table of the law the first four commandments are all about our duty to God but the second are all about our duty to one another honor your parents do not kill do not commit adultery do not steal do not lie do not covet anything that is your neighbors well that's a start isn't it towards showing love now expand that in the light of the teaching of Christ and his apostles avoid even anger avoid even lust be kind and forgiving be pure in your relationships with one another work hard so that you can give that's love in a practical way or if you prefer go back to Leviticus 19 that rather surprisingly is where you

will find the commandment you shall love your neighbor as yourself but that chapter also tells us how to love our neighbor there are some very radical and some very practical things in that chapter leave some of your harvest for the poor it says well you can make your own translation into modern day life of that quite clearly we shouldn't be using every penny we have for ourselves should we whatever our source of income some of you are farmers and you could apply that literally if you wished others of us well we don't have any harvest to set aside but we do have an income set some of it aside for the poor that's love don't oppress your neighbor don't cheat people out of their wages don't curse the blind and the deaf it says in Leviticus 19 by implication treat the disabled with kindness

that's a very modern theme isn't it be honest in court avoid slander avoid hatred avoid vengeance it's all there in the law of God keep those commandments and you will be showing love above all remember what our Lord himself said a new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you with sacrificial self giving love obey that commandment and you really will be showing love now these commandments John says are not burdensome at first sight you may say oh that's a tall order I can't do that John is saying yes you can it's not burdensome Jesus said my yoke is easy and my burden is light again it comes back to the new birth God has given us a new nature he's given us a new desire to keep his laws Christ said in Psalm 40 I delight to do your will oh my God your law is within my heart and every true Christian can say the same this is the great promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 I will put my laws within them and I will write it on their hearts or again in Ezekiel 36 I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you a new spirit of love and obedience so there's no excuse you know what God wants and he's given you the power to do it faith and love love and obedience they're all linked together finally John returns to the subject of faith and in particular to the triumph of faith in verses 4 and 5 for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God as so often in this letter he is looking back to the last supper we read in John 16 how Jesus said to his disciples take heart I have overcome the world context there is our Lord's warning that he's about to leave the world and return to the father the world had turned against Christ and within a few hours he would be crucified but this was not a defeat it was actually a triumph by his death he would actually save his people from their sins and after his death he would rise again from the dead now in the world Jesus warns them they too will face tribulation but take heart I have overcome the world Jesus has overcome the world for us as our captain going into the battle ahead of us defeating death and sin and Satan and in the strength of his victory we can overcome too that's John's thought here the world is indeed a place of battle for a [47 : 09] Christian do you find that hope you do that's the truth certainly my experience I'm sure it's yours as well there's the daily battle with sin the world surrounds us with a thousand distractions temptations to draw us away from God the devil dangles before us a thousand temptations and the old fallen nature is only too willing to go along with it all there's the battle against persecution in John's day that was a daily reality many in our own day still face the constant threat of arrest and imprisonment and even death for their faith we're spared that here in the UK but even here in the UK we're facing constant mockery and criticism in a world that is more and more unsympathetic towards

Christianity there's also the battle against false teaching in the church one John was written remember partly to counter the false teachings of a sect called the Gnostics who claimed to have secret knowledge of God and who rejected Jesus as the Son of God Jesus said of the false teachers in chapter 4 they are from the world therefore they speak from the world and the world listens to them and of course there's the daily battle against all the troubles of this world such as illness and bereavement and one day that greatest battle of all against the greatest enemy of all death in all these battles John assures us by faith we will overcome perhaps you know that protest song we shall overcome

I haven't heard it so much lately but it used to be very popular in the civil rights movement back in the 1960s I'm surprised not to hear it more with all the protests about racial injustice in recent years it actually goes back to a hymn published in 1901 it's a hymn by a man called Charles Albert Tindley it starts off the world is one great battlefield with forces all arrayed if in my heart I do not yield I'll overcome someday over the years the words got simplified and politicized it became just a chant we shall overcome and it was adopted by all sorts of political causes some good some not so

good and the spiritual roots of it were forgotten but we as Christians we really could sing we shall overcome and not just someday in the future but every day the new birth gives us the power and faith gives us the courage it won't be easy Christians sometimes speak breezily about walking in the victory as if it were simple as if nothing ever really troubled them well if that's your experience then I'm very pleased for you and I envy you but for most of us this world is a battle ground with forces all arrayed but through faith in Christ we are gaining victories every day and we will emerge completely victorious in the end Paul says the same in Romans 8 who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or the sword no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us same thought appears in the book of Revelation in the seven letters to the churches the promises are made to the one who conquers or in the authorized version to him that overcometh in Revelation 12 we read of the ultimate victory of the saints over Satan they conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives even unto death but this victory comes only through faith who is it that overcomes the world

[52 : 54] John asks except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God without faith or with a false faith like those gnostic teachers who denied that Jesus was the son of God life will consist of defeat after defeat and far from overcoming we will be overcome falling constantly into all kinds of sin and temptation struggling helplessly amidst all the troubles of this world until we come to the most terrible defeat of all being rejected by God on the great day of judgment how much better to enjoy the triumph of faith going instead from victory to victory as it says in the old hymn from victory unto victory his armies he shall lead till every foe is conquered and

Christ is Lord indeed so as we draw to a close tonight let me ask you to consider what all this means for you personally if you're not yet a Christian then the challenge is a very simple one you need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you need to be born again that's the starting point without Christ you are facing a troubled life and a lost eternity you need to have your sins forgiven you need to be filled with the spirit of God and then everything else will follow if you're not yet saved ask God to save you even tonight but for those of us who are

Christians the challenge is to grow to grow in faith and love and obedience and in spiritual victory birth is normally followed by growth isn't it young families in our church you know that only too well all these babies that have been born amongst us lately when they were first born they were so tiny weren't they but very quickly they grow and they become quite a weight in your arms they will get bigger and bigger they will become more and more lively they'll become capable of doing more and more and that's a good thing much as you love little babies you don't want them to remain like that forever you want them to grow up and even when they're adults and they've stopped growing physically they will still we hope be growing in wisdom and knowledge and experience and that's surely how it should be with the new birth newborn baby is wonderful everything is there in miniature but we expect it to grow a newborn

Christian is wonderful complete in Christ but we expect that new Christian to grow and we should be growing too none of us can say we've now reached perfection none of us can say we are 100% spiritually mature that's it no further progress required if we're honest I think we'd probably all say we're still just beginners we're still just not much more than babes we should be growing our faith should be growing stronger our love should be growing deeper our obedience should be growing ever more complete and as the world throws more and more trials at us we should be gaining more and more victories through faith in Christ may that be our experience to the glory of Christ Amen going to conclude our service with the hearing of a hymn it's the hymn we rest on thee our shield and our defender we go not forth alone against the foe strong in thy strength and in thy keeping tender we rest on thee and in thy name we go we rest on thee our shield and our defender could rest on me and in things We rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

[58 : 50] Strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender. We rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

We go in faith, our own great weakness, feeling and meaning more.

Each day thy grace to know. Yet from our hearts, a song of triumph healing.

We rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

Yet from our hearts, a song of triumph healing. We rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

[60 : 07] We rest on thee, our shield and our defender.

Thy gifts of battle, thine shall be the praise. When passing through the gates of early splendor.
The doors we rest on thee through endless days. When passing through the gates of early splendor.

The doors we rest on thee through endless days.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore.

[61 : 24] Amen.