

Faith --> Love, Obedience, and Victory

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Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] We are back in our series 2, John's first epistle. And we are in the last chapter, chapter 5, Be with us now to sanctify unto us the truths that shall be delivered from them.

Be with us especially to enlighten our minds by the Holy Spirit and by the mighty working of your power. Bring into the way of truth all such as have stumbled and are deceived.

Be pleased to strengthen those that do stand and comfort and help the weak-hearted and raise up them that fall. And finally, beat down Satan under our feet.

All this we humbly ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. So, chapter 5 is all about faith.

Apostle John had emphasized love primarily, especially in the previous chapter, chapter 4, as the test of a believer.

[1:33] And now he ties in faith to the equation. Faith and love as the two inseparable pillars of authentic Christianity.

And his hymn is twofold. Firstly, he wants to encourage and comfort doubting Christians. Those who are wondering if they are truly in the family of God.

Secondly, he wants to warn those who are very confident that they are in God's family, yet they deny basic Christian truth.

So, John starts off in verse 1 by telling us that our belief about Jesus shows the genuineness of our faith, determines if we are real Christians.

Look there in verse 1 with me. Everyone who believes, and the word there believes, the verb, is a present, ongoing activity. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

[2:46] In our world today, moral absolutes are frowned upon. I think we touched on this last week as well. The world is turned upside down. Humanity has turned so far into itself that we not only deny God's supremacy and lordship over his creation, we even deny and reject basic creation order.

God created man in his own image. Male and female, he created them. To say that in the world we live in is now considered hate speech.

Good has become evil in the world, while evil is being extolled as good. And in such a world, what is the church to believe?

What are we to proclaim? How are we to be sure of our confession? How are we to know if we are truly born of God?

John gives us the grounds of our assurance in verse 1 and verse 5. He says, To believe Jesus is the Christ.

[4:00] To believe that Jesus is the Christ and he is the Son of God shows you are a real Christian. This is the doctrine upon which our faith lies.

God but John goes on to still talk about love even as he says that. He talks about love and obedience in these verses. John had mentioned that the test of obedience and the test of love are conditions by which we know if we are real Christians.

He said that earlier in previous chapters. And I think he does so because he wants to show us that we cannot separate our knowledge of God from our behavior as the people of God.

It's not mere doctrine. It is how we act based on those things that we confess and believe. So to believe the right things about Jesus is what makes you the Son of God.

If you do not believe Jesus as Christ, if you do not believe Jesus is the Messiah, then you have no fellowship with God. It's on the basis of this fundamental, foundational confession that we have life, the life of God in us.

[5 : 24] Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John says, continuing in verse 11 of chapter 5, that it is based on this testimony that God grants to us eternal life.

whoever has the Son, that is, Jesus Christ, the beloved Son, the only begotten Son, whoever has the Son has life.

And whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. And Easter reminds us of this, doesn't it? John is saying that the life which God imparts is only through the risen and exalted Son, who is the Anointed One, promised long ago.

So you see, you cannot receive eternal life if you deny that Jesus is God's supreme messenger, the promised Messiah, the seed of the woman, promised long ago, who came into the world to rescue and deliver us.

To deny this truth is to deny God's plan of salvation. It's to deny the one through whom He accomplished that salvation.

[6 : 43] And that's what it means to be born of God. That's what it means to be born again. It is to have this eternal life of God through faith in the Son in us.

I want to remind us of the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 12 to 13. John says it, and I think that's what he's arcing back to as he says it here in his epistle. He's arcing back to his Gospel.

Verse 12 and 13 says this, Yet to all who received Jesus, to all who received Jesus, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

Children born not of natural descent, not of human decision, or her husband's will, but born of God. The life of God is planted into us through the Holy Spirit and if that's happened to you, it is through faith in Jesus.

[7 : 48] That is the only way. And if it is not, the way to access this life that we speak of, this eternal life, is through faith in Jesus.

Faith in Jesus as the Christ. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, as the Bible testifies about Him. And as we talk about faith, I want us to think about the word faith itself.

As we talk about faith in the Son, it's important we know what the Bible means by faith. When the Bible talks of faith as the basis to the eternal life with God, the emphasis is not on our subjective feelings.

Those are important, but the emphasis is not on our subjective feelings. The meaning, what I mean by that is that it's not the amount, it's not the amount of faith that you can sum up, that you can gin up, that is, that is in view here.

Rather, it is the object of faith that is in view. The object of faith. If you're constantly looking inward to manufacture more faith, the Christian life will become a performance.

[9 : 09] It will. It will become a legalistic religion of works. And the only thing, can I suggest, the only thing that can rescue us from that bondage, the only thing that can rescue us from that fate of legalistic, performative Christianity, is turning to God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

If you start to wonder if you have enough faith to be born again, if you start to question in your heart, which we all do, at different moments in our life, if you start to wonder, can I encourage you not to look, start navel-gazing and saying, I need to get up.

Can I encourage you, if that is you, to turn to the objective, the object of the faith. Look to Jesus Christ. Look to Him in the moment of doubt.

Renew your faith in His saving work for you. Make Him the object of your faith. He is the one who will hold you securely and preserve you until that time when you will be delivered from this corruptible body into the promised, unblemished, resurrection body that He has.

And if you're indeed born of God, if you're born of God, John tells us that the effects of that life will be demonstrated in you.

[10 : 48] And John gives us three signs, three ways to demonstrate for us if we are indeed born of God. Those three signs are love, obedience, and we've referred to those in previous chapters, love and obedience, and then victory.

Let's talk about love first. It goes on, it says, everyone who loves the Father, everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

So, those who are born of God are characterized by their love for the Father and their love for all fellow children in the family.

First, love for the Father, and if you love the Father, then you have to love the only begotten Son, our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

That is essential. And love, then, for all of us who are adopted sons and daughters in the family of God. John said it earlier in chapter 4, verse 20, that we cannot truly say, I love God and I hate my brother.

[12:13] The true Christian cannot hear me. The true Christian cannot separate love for God and love for God's children. It's inseparable. Imagine a moment if someone says to you, I just, I love you, you know, I love you, but in the same breath, that same person says, but I hate your kids.

Yeah. Imagine, do you feel loved then by that person? Do you feel, oh man, yeah, you know, I'll take it. No. You being a human parent will likely not consider such a person a trustworthy friend. You will not even consider and trustworthy the claim that person makes to love you. How can you say you love me and say you hate my children? How much more the father who sent his beloved son to the cross to accomplish a new birth into his glorious life?

How can we say we love the father and not love the son and the blood-bought adopted sons and daughters of the kingdom? them? So if love for God and love for God's children is the first characteristic of faith in Jesus, it's important then that we not use this means of assurance.

And this is important for us. Don't use the means of assurance because that's what John is trying to do here. He's trying to share this is the characteristic. This is the way to be assured that you are genuine true Christian.

[13:57] But it would be wrong of us to use that as a badgering stick on ourselves. And sometimes we can tend to do that. It can be so easy to be in a constant state of soul-searching, wondering if you have sufficient love.

We can become so preoccupied with the subjective feelings of love that we neglect the objective standards that are shown us in his word.

Look at how those two things can be deceiving. If we get preoccupied with the subjective feelings, ginning up a feeling of love, always questioning whether we have the feelings, rather than look at the objective standards that God has given us to show that we love one another and obeying those objective standards, we can deceive ourselves.

We can either then get into the trap of constantly badgering ourselves, constantly being in doubt, constantly questioning God's love. Or we can look at his objective standards and say, God, yes, sometimes I don't meet those standards, but thank you for Christ who has come to redeem and save and who has saved me and is saving me, sanctifying me to be more like him, to help me to love my brothers and sisters.

I want to give you a quick example. Example is Exodus 20 16, for example, that says, do not give false testimony against your neighbor. That's an objective standard.

[15:26] Do not give false testimony against your neighbor. And how are we to respond to this clear command from our Lord? By seeing that this command reflects the character of our Father, whom we love, and then by keeping it, when there is false testimony in our hearing, by giving no heed to it.

Out of love for God, and out of love for the brother and sister. You see, it's no good to say, I love God, and love my sister and brother in Christ, when we neglect to obey the clear commandments of God, which reveal His love for us.

That's why obedience is the second essential characteristic of those who were born of God.

Obedience. And notice that they go hand in hand.

John has been saying to us throughout his epistle, they go hand in hand, love and obedience. And notice, you cannot love God without obeying Him. And you cannot obey God without loving Him.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep.

[16:53] His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome. His commandments are not burdensome. Do you read that? Often do we think that it is burdensome.

But God's word says here, it's not. His commandments are not burdensome, brothers and sisters. It is good to remind ourselves of that truth often. The world comes, the world comes with its allures and tell you of the freedom you can have in partaking of its products.

It tries to tempt you to loosen your hold and to loosen your resolve to obey God's word. The world lies and tells you that God's laws are weighty and he tells you to lay it aside for a while and partake in the offerings that it has to offer.

I want to tell you that when the devil comes to tempt, when he comes to tempt your flesh with the world's offerings, remember the words of our Lord in Matthew 11:30.

My yoke is easy and my burden is light. remember the psalmist's delight in the law of God in Psalm 19.

[18:17] The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much finer, much fine gold.

Sweeter also are they than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them, in keeping them, there is great reward.

Remind yourself when the devil comes with his false offerings, because ultimately he's coming to enslave. True freedom lies in love for God and obedience of God's word.

And we know that as long as we are in this mortal coil that is our body, we cannot keep God's law perfectly. We cannot.

In fact, that's why, that's why faith in Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, that's why faith in him is foundational to being born of God.

[19:28] John knows that. He stated it earlier in his letter. That's why he says that those who claim they have no sin, are self-deceivers and liars.

He wants us to see that it is not our perfection that is required before God, but it is trusting in Christ's perfection. Is perfect once for all sacrifice?

That's what's required. By union with Christ, we would display an ever-increasing measure, its characteristic. Now, we come to the third evidence of those who are born of God.

Victory. Verse 4, 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? John reminds us in chapter 2 of verse 17 of this letter that the world with all its desires is passing away.

[20:36] But whoever obeys the will of God remains forever. The victory that has overcome the world is our faith.

Again, the emphasis is not on your personal subjective faith here. That's not what John is saying.

But rather, in the faithful confession of Jesus as Christ, that's the faith that has been emphasized.

And if Christ, and if Jesus is Christ, then he is also God's chosen servant who came to die in our stead for our sins, who was raised on the third day and is now exalted ruler and lord over all things, both in heaven and on earth.

It is this confession of faith in this Christ who is God incarnate, the eternally begotten Son of God, that is the power of victory.

It is that faith in that Christ that makes us victorious. And you know, the churches carry this claim in Jesus Christ, Son of God, risen and exalted.

[21:49] We read it in the Acts passage when Peter spoke at Pentecost before the people in Jerusalem. the churches carry this claim since Pentecost in the face of overwhelming opposition and in keeping with our Lord's promise, armed with the gospel confession, armed with this confession, the gates of hell have not been able to withstand.

The victory was achieved at the cross. The victory was achieved at the cross and vindicated at his resurrection.

That is the victory that is in view here. But that victory, which is won, must be appropriated. Christ has won it, but you must appropriate it in your day-to-day lives.

If we are to walk daily in that victory in our present lives, we must be united with Christ, our victorious King, by faith. It is by union with him that we have access to the power that has conquered sin and death.

And you know, victory here is not an absence of conflict. That's not what John is saying here.

Victory, you have victory, brothers and sisters, if you're in Christ, but it's not an absence of conflict.

[23:10] It's not even an absence of suffering in the world. But it is an assurance that despite our suffering in this world, we can always take courage because our Lord has overcome, he's conquered, he's victorious over the world.

And it's far too easy to look around in the day, in today, to look around at the power of the evil in the world that we live in, to see the advance of wickedness in our world, and to cower in fear.

But we must remember that while the devil rages on, and the world in rejection of God rages on with the devil, while the righteous are being oppressed, we must remember, people of God, the outcome

of the war has been secured.

We know the end. The end has been determined. The victory has been won upon the cross. Christ is king. He has conquered all.

The powers are evil. And we are victorious in him. As one commentator puts it, he says this about our faith and victory. He says, our faith and victory as the people of God can rest squarely on the fact that Jesus Christ defeated death, and anybody who can defeat death can defeat anything.

[24 : 41] This is why then Paul goes on in 6 to 12. Paul, he's then pointing to Christ as the evidence. This is the evidence of this faith.

This is the one, Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood. Not by water only, but by the water and the blood. And the spirit is the one who testifies because the spirit is the truth.

John is demonstrating the historicity of our faith by insisting that this object of our faith sent from God is an historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth.

And then he points to three witnesses, water, blood, and the spirit. For there are three that testify to this Jesus of Nazareth as being the one.

The spirit and the water and the blood. And these three agree. The Bible says that in the presence of two or three witnesses, a matter is confirmed.

[25 : 47] Here is three witnesses. What does it mean by water? I think John has in view baptism. Not our baptism per se, but Jesus' baptism.

At his baptism, what happened at his baptism? He entered in. He entered the beginning of his official ministry. Entered in to the demands of the law upon himself.

And what is the confirmation of heaven at that baptism? The Holy Spirit descended. The voice of the Father proclaimed him as the beloved son in whom he is well pleased.

And then he commends us to listen to him. That is the first testimony of this Jesus of Nazareth as the anointed one of God.

And then the blood. What does John mean by the blood? I think John is pointing first to the baptism, the water, and he's pointing to the blood, the cross. There he shed his blood for us.

[26 : 54] By his crucifixion, atoning death, we are redeemed. This is the testimony about this Jesus of Nazareth. And John is refuting the claims that this Jesus of Nazareth is not God.

This is part of the people who have gone away that he had talked about earlier. They're denying that this Jesus is both man and God.

And that's why John says in the beginning of this chapter, you must confess Jesus is the Christ, he's the Messiah. You also must confess that he is the son of God. essentially, you must confess both his humanity and his divinity.

Because it's on that basis that he saves us. And we have thirdly, the spirit. The spirit. The supreme testimony and witness about who Jesus is.

It's the Holy Spirit. If we receive the testimony of men, John tells us in verse 9, the testimony of God is greater.

[28 : 03] God the Holy Spirit. For this is the testimony of God, that he is born concerning his son. Then whoever believes in the son has the testimony in himself.

He goes on and ends in verse 11 and 12. This is the testimony that God gave us. He reminds us again. This is the testimony, brothers and sisters, that God gave us eternal life.

You, if you're in Christ, have eternal life. It's given to you and this life is in the son. You cannot have eternal life if you don't have the son.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God. Paul tells us in Colossians. And whoever has the son has life. Whoever does not have the son does not have life.

having faith in God is holding on to God who is faithful. He is faithful. God is faithful in Christ and he's going to change you and I day to day by day, day to day, and allow us to rely on him and his word of promise.

[29 : 17] That's what I commend to you this morning. Beloved in Christ, remember the promise of God. Cling to him, the Christ, your redeemer and savior.

That is the object of your faith. If you cling to that, he will hold you fast. Through trials and storms, through the world's raging, he will hold you fast.

Until that day, when he will present you, he himself, your savior, your redeemer, will present you before his father unstained, unblemished, covered in his righteousness.

That is our hope. That is our assurance. Thanks be to God. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you.
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