

1 John 5 1-12

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn together to the chapter we read, 1 John 5, and I would like to think together with you about the first passage from the beginning of the chapter to verse 12. And I'd like us to think about five things that are true about every believer in Jesus. Five things that John tells us that are true about every believer in Jesus. Very, very briefly because I'd like us to cover these five things because they're all found in this passage between 1 and 12. And the first one is found in the very first verse where John says, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. So if you're a Christian today and by the word Christian, I don't mean someone who wears the Christian label or who happens to have been baptized simply or who has been brought up in a Christian home. The Bible insists that a Christian is someone who has a faith relationship to Jesus Christ and you've rested and trusted in the death of Jesus and in the resurrection of Jesus as your salvation and the only way that your sins are forgiven. That's what a Christian is. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. That's the first thing that John tells us about what a Christian is. He has been born of God. And I want to stop and for a moment think about that. And I don't want to encroach on what Kenny's been going through in the mornings. He's been going through the gospel of John. And I know that he's started on chapter three and he's spoken about what the third verse means that unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And this, of course, ties in with that in a very significant way. The gospel of John was written so that you may believe. It was written for unbelievers. It was written so that people would be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ and so that by so persuasion that they would put their trust in him. That's what he tells us. The first letter of John, which is another book in the New Testament that John wrote, is very similar or rather there are lots of similarities to the gospel of John.

But instead of this time being written so that you may believe, it's written to Christians. It's written to those who already believe. And the purpose of it is so that you may know you believe.

So he tells us, I write these things, verse 13, this chapter, 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. That's the purpose of him writing. And as part of that purpose, he writes this monumental statement in the beginning of this chapter. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. So this is something big. This is not something that we can just bypass or ignore. Because when a person is born, when a child is born, it is a monumental occasion. It's a time of great celebration. It's a time when people send cards to the parents congratulating them on having the birth of their child. And it's a time when a significant event, I don't believe that there is anything quite as mind-blowing as being present at the birth of a child. It is something amazing in how a person can stand there and still not believe in the sovereignty of God and the goodness and the power of God. It just beats me. But here is John, and he tells us that if we have begun to believe Jesus, and if we trust in Jesus and follow him, it's not just a question of waking up one morning and deciding to follow Jesus, like deciding to go to the golf course or deciding to make the breakfast. That's not what happens. It is far, far greater and more monumental than that. Something fundamental has happened in your life if you are a follower of

Jesus. And it's not something that you have decided to do. I know that when you heard the gospel, you said yes to Christ. I know that faith is when we take hold of Jesus, and when we take that step of faith, and every one of us is commanded to do that. And yet, when a person comes to Jesus, it is God's working in that person's life. His miracle working, it's as much a miracle for a person to be converted as it is for a person to be conceived and to come into this world. It's as much a work of God for a person to rise from what they once were. The person that they once were is gone. He's finished. He's in the grave.

And now that person is a new person. It's a new creation, according to the New Testament. You'll know also that the first thing that happens when a person, when a baby is born, that he gets a name tag. I guess that as long as everything's okay with him, his life has to be secure, first of all.

[5 : 39] But that baby gets a name tag because the very first thing that happens is you can't just be born at random. You're born to a family. You're born to a mother, a particular mother and a particular father.

And then from that moment onwards, you carry the identity of that family. That's why we immediately have our family name. It was because my father was called Martin that I'm called Martin and his father before him and so on. You carry the identity of that family. You carry the genetic features of that family, either your mother or your father or a bit of both. And the same is true for people who are adopted. An adopted person has the rights of every privilege. That adopted person is brought into the identity of the family, the loving parents who have brought that child in to be their child.

And he is their child or she is their child. So it doesn't actually matter whether you're adopted or whether you're born. You have the identity of those parents.

And what God is saying to us here, what John is telling us and what God is telling us here is that when we follow Jesus, we have the identity of God. That's the first thing we think about when we're answering the question, who am I? First and foremost, I belong to God. I've been born into God's family. I've been brought into his family. I've been taken in by his love and by his salvation and his forgiveness. I carry his identity. Now that separates us from every other person.

And it joins us to God forever. It means that we are different from the rest of the world. And we'll see that in a few moments time when we come to talking about how a Christian overcomes the world.

[7 : 39] A person who is a Christian is not just someone who has happened to decide in favor of Christianity over and above any other system, but a person in whom God has worked and has taken that person to belong to him. He bears the mark of a child of God. You bear the mark. If you're a follower of Jesus, of a child of God, you bear that mark, first of all, in his eyes, but you also bear that mark in the eyes of those around you. Don't be tempted to think that as we live our Christian life, people don't notice the difference in the way in which we live, the way in which we talk, the change that's taken place in us. And don't be ashamed of it. If people want to marginalize you, well, that's up to them.

But don't be ashamed of how Jesus has separated us from the rest of the world. Because it's in that separation that other people get to see the reality of God in us. And they get to see that we have something that perhaps they don't. And they, hopefully, in the power of God, will want it as well. So faith is a consequence of the new birth. Except a man be born again. You've been reading in the last couple of weeks, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And here John says it again, everyone who believes that Jesus the Christ has been born of God, anyone who has been born of God will automatically believe that Jesus is the Savior. You might say today, well, I do believe that Jesus is the Christ. I believe that he is the Son of God. But I'm not a Christian. I'm not converted.

Does that make me born of God? Because I do believe that Jesus is the Christ. Can I just stop there for a moment and just present you with all due respect with the absurdity of what you're saying? You're saying on the one hand that you believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, that he came into the world as a baby because of God's love for lost sinners like you and like me, that he laid down his life at Calvary.

You're saying you believe that at Calvary. And the reason he laid down his life was to pay the price of our sin to be our sacrifice. You believe that he rose again from the dead on the third day. You're saying that and that he ascended into heaven. You're saying that you believe that he is God in the flesh.

Yes, you say, I believe all that. Well, I have to ask you, how in the world can you not be a Christian? How in the world can you possibly sleep at night knowing what you do, that Jesus is the way to God, that he's the door through which we must enter to get forgiveness, and you haven't gone through that door? That doesn't make sense to me. You see the absurdity?

[11:07] It just doesn't make sense for you to say on the one hand, I believe that Jesus is the Christ. You see, in John's day, there was no difference. To say, to believe that Jesus was the Christ was to commit yourself to him, heart and soul. Because the Jewish people, for them to say, I believe that Jesus is the Christ, that was them tying themselves, if you like, to Jesus. It was them grasping Jesus by faith. And so the rest of their lives was spent following him.

But we seem to have the luxury, for some reason, of being able to separate the two things out. We seem to have the luxury of being able to say, well, I do believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but I don't want to follow him. I don't understand that at all. Can't figure that out. You're saying you know one thing, but you don't want it. You're saying you know the way to eternal life, but you're not going to take it. I'll leave that with you. I'll leave you to reflect throughout the day on the absurdity of your thinking. And I'm going to say this, that if you're not a Christian, if you're not a follower of Jesus, then you don't actually really believe that Jesus is the Christ. Because there's only one or the other. You can't have it both ways. Second thing that is true of every believer in Jesus is that he keeps God's commands. Verse 2, by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commands. And obey his commands. Now, number one question is this, what does John mean by his commands? Well, his commands are everything we find in the Bible, both Old Testament and New

Testament, that show us the mind of God as to how we are to live. And you can, by all means, go back into the Old Testament, to that great summary in the Ten Commandments. You shall not have any other gods before me. That was the first commandment. Indeed, the commands are summed up in even before that. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and soul and strength.

And then, of course, there's all the rest of the Ten Commandments, that you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. But then you go all the way through the Bible and you come to the Sermon on the Mount and what Jesus tells us about the way in which we think and our attitudes and our prayer life and all the things that we think and our prayer life. And then you come to the Sermon on the Mount and what you are going to be. Now, John is saying, here is what we will do if we love him and if we follow him. We will obey his commands. But question number two is, well, does that mean that if I fail to obey, that I'm not a Christian? Because there are many times every day when I fail to keep the mind of God.

Both Old Testament and New Testament, there isn't a day that passes. There isn't an hour that passes. But I fail in some way to keep what I know and to live up to what I know is what God wants me to live like. Well, the answer to that question is, no, it doesn't mean that you're not a Christian.

[14 : 49] Because we live in a sinful world and we are sinful people. And sin within us will always produce that tension and that warfare and all that temptation that produces the conflict in which we live every day. And sometimes we win that conflict. Sometimes we're victorious over that conflict. Other times we let the Lord down by something we say or something we do. Or we allow temptation to creep into our hearts and we end up going astray.

That doesn't mean you're not Christian. It means that you've gone astray. It means that we've, we're not in the right place. But like I said last Sunday night, speaking from my own experience, and I'm sure everyone here, we all know what that struggling is like in the Christian life.

What John means is this, that a Christian has a new relationship to God's commands. Because in the past, when we were confronted by God's command, we didn't want anything to do with it.

There's something really irritating, isn't there, about being confronted by the Ten Commandments. And what it is, is that we actually know that we can't live up to the Ten Commandments, but also that we don't want to live up to the Ten Commandments. But when a person becomes a Christian, that relationship all changes. And even although he still can't live up to what God commands, he wants to.

I want this morning to love God with all my heart and mind and soul and strength. And you do too, if you are a child of God. You will be, you will be driven and motivated by love for God. And of course, that's where keeping God's commands begins, by loving God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. And so wanting to keep his command out of love for him is where it begins. The third thing that is true for every Christian is that he overcomes the world. And we find that in 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? Now, question number one on this aspect is, what is the world? Well, it's not the world that God created at the beginning in Genesis chapter 1, the world that he created perfectly and all very good. It's the world that has gone wrong, the fallen world, the world that is full of rebellion and selfishness, a fool of men and women like ourselves who want to live for themselves, a world that doesn't want anything to do with God. If it was really honest, despite all the religion in the world we really want, we're out for ourselves. The world that you and I live in lives by a very, very different way of life than you and I know through the Bible. So in fact, then, how do we overcome the world?

[18 : 25] Well, I want to suggest three things. I want to suggest, first of all, that you and I, if we're followers of Jesus, we overcome the world, the influence and its influences over us by our faith.

In a way, this has already happened when we came to faith in Jesus at the very beginning. Everything became changed and transformed. No longer did we have the same relationship with what we saw and what we experienced round about us. Instead of living for ourselves and living to please ourselves, which is what the rest of the world does, we live for God. And so the influence of the world around us has been broken already in that we love God through the Lord Jesus Christ, albeit with an imperfect love. But yet we love him with our heart. But secondly, we overcome the darkness of the world by our obedience. Jesus said, you are the light of the world. We're to let our light so shine before men that they may see by our good works. And what that means is by our lifestyle, by the different way in which we live. Very often the opposite way in which we live. And so that by seeing that, they would come and glorify God. And what a challenge that statement is, that command is, let your light shine before men.

What a challenge to us on another Lord's Day, at the beginning of another week, as we go into all the difficulties and the challenges of another, wherever we are in our homes or in our places of work, whatever. We are to let our light shine. We are to overcome the world through our lifestyle.

We are also to overcome the lordship of the world, the way in which the world is its own power, in which the world has kept people captive to its thinking. And the only way that can break that is the gospel. And you and I are the light of the world in being able to spread the gospel by telling people of Jesus and what he has done to forgive our sin on the cross. And as people come to discover Jesus, perhaps it will take ages. Perhaps it will take years. I know people who have taken years to come to faith in Jesus. But we have to be steadfast. And we have to know that we are God's witnesses in this world.

And that by that slow and that steady witness, each one of us in our own different environment, that God will work and God will bless our witness. And so he will add this one here and that one there to his kingdom. And as he adds, that's another person coming out of the world, out of the darkness of the world and the power of the world and belonging to him. And the world, who knows, will become a different place as the gospel is spread. Do you believe that today? That God will use his people to make the world a different place. Fourth thing is found in verse 10. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Here's the fourth aspect of the Christian life, which is true about every believer in Jesus. Every believer who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Now, what is John talking about? Well, you have to go back to verse 6. And you'll find very quickly that the whole thing centers around Jesus Christ. But let's read what he says in verse 6. This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies. Now, jumping to verse 10, that's the answer to the question. The testimony that you and I have as believers in Jesus is the Holy Spirit. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. God has sent out his Spirit into you and I as part of his church to work within us. And he does that by two ways.

[22 : 56] He helps us to understand the Bible and the gospel day by day. Our lives are a constant discovery, a new discovery of what Jesus did in coming into the world and what God continues to do.

But the Spirit also does something else. He testifies to the truth of his word. He's the one that gives us that satisfaction deep within our soul that what we read is God speaking to us.

And he's the one, thirdly, who focuses our attention supremely over and above everything else on the Lord Jesus Christ and his work at Calvary.

Just let's stop for a few moments because those who have been reading this with me, you'll know that there's a question here, a little bit of a deeper question here. Just let's spend two minutes answering it.

This is he, verse 6, this is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. What does that mean? That verse has been the subject of lots of debates amongst theologically minded people.

[24 : 12] Every Christian ought to be a theologically minded person. Let's ask the question because I'm sure you were asking it as we read it. This is he who came by water and blood. What does that mean?

We know who he was. It was Jesus. But what does John mean when he says that he came by water and blood? Well, Martin Luther and John Calvin believed that John was talking about the two sacraments.

The Lord's Supper and baptism. Water is what we use at baptism. And wine is what we use to signify the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross.

Personally, I don't agree with that explanation. So I'm not going to spend any time on it. Augustine believed that John was talking about when Jesus was dying on the cross and the soldier thrust the spear into his side.

And what happened was water and blood came out of it. So Augustine believed that John was thinking of Jesus' death on the cross. I have no doubt that he was. But I find it far-fetched to believe that that's what he meant by the water and the blood.

[25 : 30] A man called Tertullian, who lived, I think it was the second century, a great Christian. One of the fathers of the Christian, the New Testament church.

He believed this and I think he was right. He believed that the water and the blood signified Jesus' baptism at the beginning of his ministry and his death at the end of his ministry.

After all, water does signify baptism. And it is used at baptism. The blood was the blood of Jesus.

That's what the New Testament always refers to when it talks about the death of Jesus. And the effect that the death of Jesus had in securing our salvation and our forgiveness.

What happened when Jesus was baptized? You can remember it was way beyond any ordinary baptism, even for that day. You remember the three things that happened.

[26 : 35] This marked the very beginning of his ministry. His announcement as the Son of God. The heavens were opened. Signifying that God was doing something utterly unique.

He was opening the heavens. Not for Jesus. Jesus didn't need the heavens to be opened. They were always open for him. But they were open for us. This was God sending his Son into the world.

To bring us to him. To open the gate of heaven. And let us in. Remember also that the Spirit of God came down like a dove. And rested upon him. And this is God saying to us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

He is our peace. Who has reconciled us. And who will reconcile us through his death. You remember the third thing that happened when God opened his voice. And he said, This is my beloved Son.

In whom I am well pleased. That was the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. And from then on. Everyone got to see through his miracles and his extraordinary life.

[27 : 37] How unique a person he was. The blood of course signifies the end of Jesus' ministry. When Jesus hung on the cross and laid down his life on the cross.

And said, It is finished. Jesus came by water and the blood. He came to us today.

And the great thing about the gospel today is that he comes to us today. Through the water and the blood. Through his ministry and through his death on the cross. And says to us, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Number five. And with this we bring things to a close. He has eternal life.

Verse 11. This is the testimony that God gave us eternal life. And this life is in his Son.

[28 : 36] When we speak about eternal life. We have to be careful not to complicate that. Not to confuse that. With perhaps what we might naturally think as the life that we have in this world.

Just lasting forever. We know that we don't have that. Because everyone dies. Your eye will die. So whatever eternal life means.

It doesn't mean that any one of us will live in this world forever. Eternal life in the New Testament. Is the title that God chooses to describe.

His gift of life. To all those who trust in him. He describes it as a new life.

Different from what we were before. When God changes a person. By coming into. By entering into that person's life. His life is no longer the same. He looks the same.

[29 : 41] Wears the same clothes. Belongs to the same family. Works in the same place. And yet that person has a new life. The New Testament tells us that we've been raised to newness of life.

God tells us that there's a quality to that life. That we've never experienced before. That doesn't mean. That everything is going to become easy for us. And God's going to lift us out of every difficulty.

And frustration. And hard. In fact. For a Christian. Sometimes his life becomes. Harder. Than it ever did in the past. But Jesus said.

That the life I give you. Is abundant life. Abundant life. Is where God is at the center. And where what we want. Our greatest motive.

Is to live for God. Because of his love for us. And then eternal life also means. That God promises. That when we do die.

[30 : 44] That we go straight to be with him. To see him as he is. To enter into his presence. I don't know how that's going to happen.

God knows. He's already done it. He's already promised it. And God does not promise anything he doesn't keep. I believe that when I die.

Whenever that is. That I shall go straight to be with God. To be with the Lord Jesus Christ. In perfection. Forever and ever.

I also believe that my body one day. Even a thousand years from now. It might be. Body in the grave. And yours too. If you believe in him. Will rise. On the day when Jesus comes again.

In his power. And when the trumpet will sound. And when the archangel's voice will sound. And when. God will command. Jesus personally will command.

[31 : 42] The graves to be opened. In fact. Don't even need the graves to be opened. Because God's people will rise in any case. And when.

With new glorified. Bodies. Never ever to be. Corrupted anymore. Never to age. Or to become ill.

Or to decay. We will go forever. Once and for all. To live in the new heaven. And the new earth. That's eternal life.

But I want to leave this. With an invitation this morning. The invitation that John himself gives. In verse 11. God has given us eternal life.

And this life is. In his son. I hope today you're asking. If you're not there already. You're asking.

[32 : 38] Well how can I have this life? How can I know. That I have this life? The answer. Is his son. God's son. Jesus. That's the only answer there is. By surrendering.

Everything that we are. To him. By asking him. To take us. To cleanse us. To wash us.

Once and for all. From all our. Our shame. And our guilt. For taking that step forward. In following. Him. Whoever does not have the son.

Does not have life. If you don't have the son. You don't have life. However. Whoever has the son. Has life.

May it be so. With each one of us this morning. Let's pray together. Amen. Father. Amen. Hang on. Amen. Amen. Let's pray. Thank you.

[33 : 37] Father in heaven, we ask that you will give us the faith to believe what you say about ourselves as your people. I pray, Lord, that our lives will be built on these amazing truths, that we will reflect on them and live by them. What a privilege belongs to us as your citizens and your sons and your daughters. We pray also for anyone with us today who hasn't taken that step of faith. We pray that by the power of your Spirit that you will draw them in to give them to see that there is no living without Jesus and real, abundant, eternal life is linked to and cannot be otherwise than to trust in him as our Savior. Show us how to do that, we pray. Show us how to knock.

The door will be opened to us in his name. Amen.