

Lesson 14 – 1 John 5:1-5

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Review/Introduction

John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). He does this by presenting the objective truths (1 John 5:11-13) and subjective evidences that give assurance of salvation. He presents tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. He makes it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. Each spiral starts with a doctrinal test then presents conduct tests. The spirals all have similar topics that are expanded on and/or reiterated in each spiral. John uses repetition to present his simple, yet profound, truths to encourage his readers and us.

- I. Introduction – Christ is the way of fellowship (1:1-4)
- II. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 1 (1:5-2:17)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – The way of salvation from sin (1:5-2:2)
 - B. Conduct – Obedience (2:3-6)
 - C. Conduct – Love (2:7-11)
 - D. Conduct – Sin (Don't love the world) (2:12-17)
- III. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 2 (2:18-3:24)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Don't Apostatize (2:18-27)
 - B. Conduct – Christ's coming is a purifying fixed hope (2:28-3:3)
 - C. Conduct – Sin/obedience (3:4-10)
 - D. Conduct – Love (3:11-18)
 - E. Conduct – Confidences (3:19-24)
- IV. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 3 (4:1-21)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Test false teachers (4:1-6)
 - B. Conduct – Love (4:7-21)
 - C. Conduct – Obedience (5:1-5)**
- V. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 4 (5:6-21)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Christ is the way of salvation (5:6-12)
 - B. Conduct – Confidences (5:13-20)
- VI. Conclusion (5:21)

Today we will look at the last conduct test in the third spiral – obedience and sanctification.

Spiral 3 – Conduct – Obedience (5:1-5)

1. Exclusivity of Christ results in a changed life (5:1)

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

¹Everyone 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. (ESV)

The Pew Research Center’s “Religions Landscape Study” (pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/belief-in-god/) and the Barna Group’s “State of the Church 2016” article (barna.com/research/state-church-2016/) provide some interesting statistics regarding the US’s conformity to the supposed “Christian nation” assumption.

90% believe in God (at varying certainties and however they may individually define that)

35% have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and believe that, when they die, they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior

7% have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and believe that, when they die, they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior AND

- say their faith is very important in their life today (*perseverance*)
- believe they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians (*care about obedience*)
- believe that Satan exists (*source of authority*)
- **believe that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth** (*person of Christ*)
- assert the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches (*source of authority*)
- **believe that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works** (*means of salvation*)
- **describe God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today** (*nature of God*)

So, what conclusions can we make from these statistics? Or better, how do we understand these statistics in light of God’s word?

First, in spite of ~90% of people “believing in God”, only 7-35% (most likely closer to the 7%) are true believers – have exercised the gift of saving faith, are regenerate, are saved from their sins.

¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19)

¹⁴For many are called, but few *are* chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

Second, there are many more people in the US destined for hell than heaven.

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Third, there will be a lot of people disappointed when their time for judgement comes.

²⁷And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

Fourth, these truths and statistics coupled with compassion for the lost and love for Christ should spur us on in disciple making.

¹⁹“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Motivation of obedience to Christ

²¹“**He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me;** and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” ... ²³Jesus answered and said to him, “**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;** and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. (John 14:21, 23)

Motivation of Christ’s example of love

⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and **His love for mankind** appeared, (Titus 3:4)

Motivation of Paul’s example of compassion for the lost

¹I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ²that **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart**. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ... ¹Brethren, my **heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation**. (Romans 9:1-3, 10:1)

¹⁰For this reason **I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen**, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:10)

❖ **What about you? What do these truths move you to do?**

John has been addressing this throughout his epistle. Self-identification as a Christian is meaningless. It is God who identifies you through regeneration and the subjective evidence of salvation that flow from regeneration.

A Christian is someone who has exercised the gift of saving faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. This is not an intellectual assent to facts about Jesus or the gospel or “believing in God”. True saving faith involves repentance from sin (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20-21; Hebrews 6:1), a heart to follow (John 10:27-28) and obey Jesus (John 3:36), denying self (Luke 9:23-26), forsaking all (Luke 14:15-33), and confessing Christ as Lord (Romans 10:8-10).

While we are saved by faith alone, that initial faith must be genuine and not fake.

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25)

“Believes” means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust. It is in the present tense meaning keeps on (or continues) believing. “Born” means to beget, to bring forth, to give birth. Its usage signifies the permanent effect of being born of God. Everyone God has saved in the past continues to give evidence of that fact in the present and will continue to give even more evidence in the future. John’s point is that continual faith is the result of regeneration. Perseverance, continuing, abiding, believing is the natural result of regeneration.

❖ Are you “believing”? Are the professing believers in your life “believing”?

John already addressed the love of the brethren in relation to loving God.

²⁰If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.** (1 John 3:20)

In a different way John says the same thing, “whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him”. If you truly love the Father, you love the Father’s children.

❖ Are you loving the brethren?

2. Love for Christ is demonstrated with love and obedience (5:2-3)

²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

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What “compartments” do you have in your life? Family, work, friends, believer, church? Are those connected or different? Are you a different person in each sphere or the same?

The Holy Spirit through John makes a point here that is hard to swallow. There are no compartments in the Christian life; to sanctification. Everything is linked. If you say you are a believer then loving God is linked to loving the brethren is linked to obedience is linked to overcoming is linked to faith.

❖ What compartments do you have in your life? Are you consistent or hypocritical?

“Know” is knowledge gained by experience, a knowing intimately and not just intellectually. The usage signifies a lifestyle of experiential knowing.

“Love” is that extreme sacrificial commitment of my will to serve another regardless of the cost to myself. Both usages (love the children of God and love God) refers to a lifestyle.

“Observe” means to perform or do God’s commandments with the usage again referring to a lifestyle.

If your lifestyle is to love God and to observe God’s command, then you will experience the love of God’s children as a lifestyle.

It is difficult to wrap our minds around this verse. But John says that your “horizontal” relationship to the brethren is connected to your “vertical” relationship with God. There are no compartments in our Christian walk. You can’t say you love God which is demonstrated by obedience and not love the brethren. The two are intimately connected.

❖ **Are your vertical and horizontal “spirituality” consistent?**

The love of God is demonstrated by obedience. This is a simple equation:

Loving God = Keeping on keeping His commands

The negative is also true:

Not keeping on keeping His commands = Not loving God (i.e., hating God)

❖ **Is your love for God demonstratable/provable?**

“Burdensome” literally means heavy but is used figuratively of rules and regulations likened to a heavy burden that are difficult to obey and thus are burdensome or oppressive or grievous. If you understand the love of Christ and love for Christ, then nothing is burdensome.

The true child of God views His commands as a delight rather than a burden.

²But **his delight is in the law of the Lord**, And in His law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:2)

¹⁶I **shall delight in Your statutes**; I shall not forget Your word. (Psalm 119:16)

²⁴**Your testimonies also are my delight**; *They are* my counselors. (Psalm 119:24)

⁷⁷May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For **Your law is my delight**. (Psalm 119:77)

⁹²If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction. (Psalm 119:92)

⁹⁷**O how I love Your law!** It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97)

¹⁷⁴I long for Your salvation, O Lord, And **Your law is my delight**. (Psalm 119:174)

If you are a child of God, then you have the power through the indwelling Holy Spirit who applies God’s word to your heart to increase in your obedience (progressive sanctification). You “overcome” and have “victory”.

❖ **Do you view the precepts of Scripture a delight or a burden?**

3. Love for Christ overcomes the world (5:4-5)

⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (ESV)

“For” connects “His commandments are not burdensome” to what comes next. God’s commands are not burdensome because something “overcomes” the world.

The NASB and ESV are slightly different here with “whatever” and “everyone”, respectively. The usage is neuter and while it could refer to “everyone”, some commentators view this as referring to the new birth, regeneration, and the indwelling of the Spirit.

“Overcomes” means to conquer, to be victorious, or to prevail in the face of obstacles. The usage describes continually overcoming or as a habit or lifestyle.

Remember, “world” refers to the current world system that belongs to Satan and is radically alienated against the God. Satan is currently referred to as the “god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4) and “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11). Currently, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). The “world” then is Satan’s worldwide system of deception and wickedness that leaves God out and is opposed to Him (1 John 2:15-17; James 3:15-17). Satan’s aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive; appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to entice people to sin.

Those with the new birth are the ones that are continually overcoming the world. These are the ones that have the power through the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. The overcomers are set apart for God and are continually being progressively sanctified. They are continually overcoming.

The verb form of “overcome” was used to describe ultimate victory by the Greek gods which could not be achieved by mortals. Interesting that the Spirit through John applies this word to the believer.

❖ **Is overcoming the world an increasing reality in your life?**

The true believer is continually overcoming the world, but they also “has overcome” the world by their faith.

“Victory” is the word “nike” and is the noun form of “overcome”. It means overcoming of an enemy or antagonist; victory, or the power that confers victory. This is the only use of the noun in the NT. In Greek mythology, it was the name of the goddess of victory who aided Zeus in his battle against the Titans.

“Has overcome” is the same verb used previously in the verse except with a different tense. The first use signifies that overcoming is in progress, continual, and ongoing. The second use signifies that the victory is secured. Looking at the totality of your life from regeneration to glorification, it is one of overcoming. The victory is assured; it is permanent.

❖ **Is the truth of your ultimate overcoming of death a heart-level reality in your life?**

All of this (overcoming, ultimate overcoming, victory) occurs because of faith. “Faith” in its simplest meaning is full, unreserved trust. But as we have seen, true saving faith has a deeper, fuller meaning as we systematize the biblical teaching.

Who is the one who keeps on overcoming the world? The believer. Either you are in the process of overcoming the world because you are in Christ, or you are being overcome by the world because you have rejected Christ. There are only saints and aints. There is no middle ground.

The usage of “believes” is in the present tense and signifies true, saving, biblical faith is a lifestyle. It is constant. It is something that is always there. It is something that occurs every moment of every day.

“Son of God” is synonymous with Christ or Messiah.

²⁰Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. ²¹Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” ²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that **You are the Christ, the Son of God**, *even* He who comes into the world.” (John 11:20-27)

³⁰Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these have been written so that you may **believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)

❖ **Do you bow before the second person of the Godhead, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah?**

Conclusion

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. His purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today, we looked at obedience and overcoming the present lifestyle and future reality.

Additional Study

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today’s passage.
4. Read today’s passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.