

## The Exclusivity of Christ

1 John 5:1-3 - Read Passage: [epmkg.com/1John5](http://epmkg.com/1John5)

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### Notes

#### 5:4B-12 ACCEPTING GOD'S TESTIMONY AND ETERNAL LIFE

The long section (4:7-5:4a) dealing with claims to love God tested by love for fellow believers concludes at 5:4a. A new section (5:4b-12) begins at 5:4b, in which there is no further mention of the love imperative. Here the focus of attention shifts to the 'faith' which overcomes the world and leads to eternal life. It is true that the idea of overcoming the world is found in 5:4a, but there its primary reference appears to be overcoming those desires which militate against the love of God (cf. 2:15-17), whereas in 5:4b-5 its primary reference appears to be overcoming the false teaching about Christ propagated by the secessionists (cf. 5:6-10).

In this passage the author speaks of the faith which overcomes the 'world', a faith in Jesus as the Son of God who 'came by water and blood'. To the testimony of the water and the blood is added the testimony of the Spirit and of God himself. All who accept the testimony of God concerning his Son have eternal life, while those who do not accept it do not have eternal life.

**5:4b-5** By saying, **this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith**, the author defines what it is that enables those born of God to overcome the world. It is their faith. This is the only place in the Johannine writings where the noun 'faith' (*pistis*) is found. Elsewhere the author prefers to use the verb (*pisteuō*) and portray faith dynamically. The nature of the faith that overcomes the world is made clear in the following rhetorical question and answer: **Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.** It is faith in Jesus as the Son of God which enables believers to overcome the world. In this context the

influence of the 'world' comes primarily through the secessionists and their false teaching (cf. 5:9–10). To overcome the world, the readers must persist in their faith in him despite the propaganda of the secessionists. In 1 John 'the Son of God' is virtually equivalent to 'Christ' (cf. 2:22, 23; 5:1, 5). It was only those who held the belief that Jesus is the Son of God who could be said to have overcome the world. The secessionists who denied these things were, as far as the author was concerned, still part of the world (2:18–19; 4:1–3; cf. 2 John 7) and subject to the power of the evil one (5:19).

The author uses two different tenses of the verb 'to overcome' (*nikaō*) in 5:4b–5. He uses the aorist participle (*nikēsasa*) in 5:4b, and then the present participle (*nikōn*) in 5:5. This does not reflect any time difference, as if the first represents a victory in the past and the second a victory in the present. Rather, it is stylistic, indicating the author's choice to portray the victory of faith as a complete action in the first case and as an ongoing process in the second (both without necessary time reference).

**5:6a** Following his description in 5:5 of those who overcome the world as those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, here the author describes the Jesus in whom he believes: **This is the one who came by water and blood** (*di' hydatos kai haimatos*)—**Jesus Christ**. His belief is different from the belief of the secessionists, and in 5:6b the author indicates the difference between his view and theirs: **He did not come by water** (*en tō hydati*) **only, but by water and blood** (*en tō hydati kai en tō haimati*). This text indicates two things: what was not in dispute (Jesus came 'by water'), and what was in dispute (Jesus came 'by water and blood').

This is a very difficult text to interpret. The first thing to ascertain is the meaning of what was not in dispute between the author and the secessionists, that is, what both parties understood Jesus' coming 'by water' (*en hydati*) to mean. There are a number of ways to interpret this statement. First, in the Fourth Gospel the expression 'by water' (*en hydati*) is used three times, each time in relation to the ministry of John the Baptist (John 1:26, 31, 33). Taking this as a clue, we could say that both the author and the secessionists agreed that Jesus underwent John's baptism, and, we might add, that Jesus was endowed with the Spirit at that time (cf. John 1:33, where the Baptist says: 'I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" '). Understood in this way, the statement that Jesus came 'by water' recalls his baptism in water by John and the concomitant endowment with the Spirit that he experienced. His coming by water would then mark the beginning of his ministry, as his coming by blood (i.e., his death) marked its end.

Second, it is possible that the previous interpretation misreads the significance of the uses of 'by water' (*en hydati*) in the Fourth Gospel. It is true that all these uses are connected with the ministry of the Baptist, but that is the point: they are connected with the *ministry* (active) of the Baptist, not the *experience* (passive) of Jesus when he received baptism at his hands. If the uses of *en hydati* in the Fourth Gospel all relate to John's practice of water baptism, then it is possible that the reference in 1 John 5:6 to Jesus coming *en hydati* refers to Jesus' ministry of baptism, not to his experience of baptism. There are a number of references to Jesus' baptising ministry in the Fourth Gospel (John 3:22, 26; 4:1), although he clearly entrusted the actual baptising of people to his disciples (John 4:2). However, while the Fourth Gospel mentions Jesus' ministry of baptism (with water), it places greater emphasis upon his future ministry of baptism with the Spirit. As already noted above, in John 1:33 the Baptist says of Jesus: 'I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit."' When the author of 1 John and the secessionists agreed that Jesus came *en hydati*, therefore, they agreed that Jesus had a baptising ministry. Jesus once baptised with water but now baptises with the Spirit, and it has been suggested that those in the author's community understood that Jesus now baptised people with the Spirit when they baptised them with water in Jesus' name.

Third, it has been argued that coming 'by water' is a reference to natural birth, water being an allusion either to male semen or amniotic fluid. Witherington lists Prov 5:15–18 and Song of Songs 4:12–15 as OT texts where water relates to birth (semen in one place, amniotic fluid in the other) as well as a number of texts from other Jewish and ancient Near Eastern literature. If it is correct to interpret Jesus' coming 'by water' as a reference to his natural birth, then the author and the secessionists would have agreed that Jesus' humanity was real. However, it is quite clear that this was not something about which they agreed (4:2; cf. 2 John 7). Further, when the author wants to emphasise the reality of Jesus' humanity elsewhere in 1 John, he does not speak of Jesus coming 'by water' (*en hydati*), but coming 'in the flesh' (*en sarki*) (4:2; cf. 2 John 7). For this reason it is unlikely that the reference to Jesus coming *en hydati* here constitutes an affirmation of his real humanity.

Fourth, there is a view that Jesus' coming 'by water' and his coming 'by blood' must be taken together. It is argued that 5:6 reflects the view found in ancient Jewish sources that the human body is composed of two elements, water and blood. The whole statement that Jesus came 'by water and blood' is then seen as analogous to the author's reference in 4:2 to Jesus' coming 'in the flesh' (*en sarki*), both of which function as affirmations of his real humanity. Thus to say that he came 'by water' only would be to deny his real humanity. Adopting this view, we would

have to say that Jesus' coming *en hydati* was not something agreed upon by the author and the secessionists, but that it represented the secessionists' denial of the real humanity of Jesus—a denial that the author strenuously opposed.

Fifth, it has been suggested that Jesus' coming 'by water' is an allusion to the sacrament of baptism (and Jesus' coming 'by blood' is an allusion to the sacrament of the Eucharist). But, as Venetz points out, no matter how attractive this might seem to later readers of the letter, it hardly does justice to the intention of the original author, who was not discussing sacramental theology but dealing with a christological heresy.<sup>207</sup> In addition, it does not do justice to the aorist participle, 'the one who came' (*ho elthōn*), which presents the action as complete, not ongoing as one would expect if the reference was to the sacrament.

Of these various suggested interpretations of Jesus' coming 'by water', it is the second, that is, that it refers to Jesus' baptising ministry, which has the most to commend it. It takes note of the way the expression 'by water' (*en hydati*) is used in the Fourth Gospel, and it allows the expression to function actively and so in line with the way the complementary expression, 'by blood', also appears to function. It is this latter expression which we must explore now.

If there was no dispute between the author and the secessionists concerning the fact that Jesus came 'by water', the same cannot be said about Jesus' coming 'by blood', for the author insists: 'He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.' The question we must now ask is, What is it that the author affirmed by saying that Jesus came 'by blood', and therefore what was it that the secessionists denied by rejecting that affirmation? A couple of interpretations have been suggested.

First, there is the interpretation already mentioned above that Jesus' coming 'by water' and his coming 'by blood' must be taken together as a single affirmation of his real humanity, something the secessionists denied and the author asserted. The weaknesses of this interpretation have already been explained above.

Second, there is the more usual and far more likely interpretation which explains Jesus' coming 'by blood' in terms of his death on the cross. The only other reference to Jesus' 'blood' in this letter (apart from references here in 5:6–8) is located in 1:7: 'But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin'. Here the 'blood' denotes Jesus' death by which he made atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people. Thus the reference to his 'blood' refers, not to something done to Jesus, but to something Jesus did. The author did not see Jesus as a passive victim when he came to the cross, but as the active party: 'Jesus Christ laid down his life for us' (3:16). The Fourth

Gospel repeatedly emphasises the same active role of Jesus in laying down his life for his people (cf. John 10:11, 15, 17, 18; 15:13).

Thus, we may say that Jesus' coming 'by water' and his coming 'by blood' both refer to things Jesus did. His coming 'by water' refers to his baptising ministry. His coming 'by blood' refers to his laying down his life as an atoning sacrifice in order to provide cleansing for the sins of his people. It was the reality and atoning significance of Jesus' death that the secessionists denied, and that the author felt compelled to assert.

The author's purpose, then, in 5:6a is to deny the limited view of the secessionists that Jesus came by water only, that is, that his ministry was essentially a baptising one. The secessionists may have connected baptism in Jesus' name with the anointing with the Spirit. (That they stressed the importance of this anointing may be inferred from 2:20–21, 27–28, where the author reminds his readers that they, too, have received the anointing of God's Spirit. This he does presumably to reassure them in the face of exclusive claims by the secessionists.) However, the author's purpose in 5:6a was not just to deny what the secessionists taught, but also to state what he believed to be the truth about Jesus' ministry; that he came 'by water and blood', that is, he was not only the baptizer but the Saviour who made the atoning sacrifice for sins.

**5:6b** Having made the point that those who truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God also believe that he is the one who came 'by water and blood', the author now indicates that the Spirit himself testifies to this truth: **And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.** In 4:6 the author described the Spirit as 'the Spirit of truth', and in the upper room discourse in the Fourth Gospel Jesus describes the Spirit in a similar way three times (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Both here in 1 John 5:6 and in the Fourth Gospel (John 15:26) the role of the Spirit is to bear witness to the truth about Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel the Spirit's testifying role is mainly bearing witness to Jesus against the world. In 1 John the Spirit's testifying role is mainly bearing witness to believers concerning the truth of the message about Jesus that they heard from the beginning (cf. 2:24–27). The author invokes the Spirit as a witness to the truth of the fact that Jesus came 'by water and blood' because, he says, 'the Spirit is the truth'. At a minimum this constitutes a guarantee of the truthfulness of the Spirit as witness to Jesus, but it may also imply that, as truth is personified in God elsewhere in 1 John (5:20) and in Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (John 14:6), so also it is personified in the Spirit in this verse.

**5:7–8 For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood.** In both the OT and the NT important issues were decided with the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:6; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb

10:28). Here in this context the author cites three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, to the truth he affirms. What it means here for the Spirit to testify seems reasonably clear. The Spirit confirms to believers the truth of the message about Jesus that they heard from the beginning (cf. 2:24–27). It is more difficult to say how the water and the blood make up the second and third witnesses. Normally witness is given by one *person* concerning another. However, in the Fourth Gospel, when people will not accept Jesus' own testimony about himself, he points them to his works, for these, too, bear witness, albeit silent witness, to the truth about him (cf. John 5:36; 10:25). It may be, then, that in this verse the author is suggesting that alongside the Spirit's witness concerning Jesus there stands the silent witness of Jesus' work as the baptizer and the one who made atoning sacrifice—the witness of the 'water' and the 'blood'.

The author then adds: **and the three are in agreement**. In judicial cases it is vital that the testimony of different witnesses should agree. The author builds his case here by showing that his three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, concur in their testimony. The secessionists denied that Jesus came by water and blood, focussing only upon his coming by water, which they probably associated with their experience of the Spirit. The author insists that Jesus came by water and blood, and that to this the Spirit also bore witness. It is only in the concurrence of these three witnesses that the truth about Jesus is to be found.

In verses 9–12 the author continues to work with the theme of witness (*martyria*), reflecting the fact that 5:9–12 forms a subsection of 5:6–12. However, he expands the scope of the witness theme to include the gift of eternal life that God gives those who believe his testimony concerning his Son (cf. vv. 11–12).

**5:9** The NIV renders 5:9a as follows: **We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son**. However, the NIV here obscures the meaning of the original text, which opens with an incomplete conditional sentence (providing the protasis but expecting the reader to supply the apodosis). Rendered literally (and supplying the apodosis), the verse would read: 'If we accept the testimony of men [then we should accept the testimony of God]'.

The first part of the verse is an argument from the lesser to the greater: if we accept human testimony, then we should certainly accept God's testimony. What is the human testimony that the author alludes to here? It can hardly be a reference to the threefold testimony of Spirit, water, and blood. Is it an allusion to the witness of John the Baptist? In the Fourth Gospel Jesus refers to the Baptist's testimony as 'human testimony' and indicates that it is much less important than God's testimony (John 5:33–36). Does it refer to the testimony of the eyewitnesses to the Word of life

(1 John 1:1), which, though trustworthy, is not of the same order as God's own testimony. Or is it merely a general statement indicating that God's testimony is always more important than human testimony. Probably the last is the best alternative, for the first two suggestions create new problems. There are no other allusions to the Baptist's ministry in 1 John, and the author would not want to downplay the testimony of the eyewitnesses because he believes that to be a true report of the truth of God.

The next question that needs to be addressed is what the author means by 'God's testimony'. Is it to be identified with the testimony of the three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood? Is his testimony to be heard through the Spirit/anointing which believers have received, and through the baptising and atoning work of Jesus? In this letter, as in the Fourth Gospel, the Spirit bears witness to Jesus, and in the Fourth Gospel the works of Jesus do bear testimony to who he is. Or is the testimony of God additional to the testimony of the three witnesses, so that the author has provided an ascending order of witnesses, the water, the blood, the Spirit, and finally God himself? In support of this view Brown cites John 5:31-40, where Jesus speaks of an ascending order of witnesses. These include the Baptist's testimony, the testimony of Jesus' own works, and finally the testimony of God himself. This last testimony, Jesus implies, is the voice of God which he hears but which his opponents have never heard ('you have never heard his voice nor seen his form', John 5:37). Or is it to be identified with the testimony of the eyewitnesses, God speaking through them. This last alternative is preferable because the content of God's testimony described in 1 John 5:11 is that God has given us eternal life in his Son, which is the central feature of the testimony of the eyewitnesses alluded to in 1 John 1:1-4.

**5:10** In this verse the author explains that the divine testimony is appropriated internally by those who believe in Christ: **Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart** (lit. 'in himself'). The testimony referred to here is God's testimony to his Son made known through the testimony of the eyewitnesses.

There are two ways of interpreting this statement. First, in the light of verse 6 we might say that it refers to the inner witness of the Spirit. And it cannot be denied that the role of the Spirit in this letter and in the Fourth Gospel is to testify to Jesus. But this verse does not actually say that believers have 'the inner testimony of the Spirit in their hearts'; it simply states that they have 'the testimony' in themselves. The second and more likely interpretation is that the testimony believers have in themselves is the true testimony concerning Jesus Christ which they heard from the eyewitnesses and have accepted and internalised.

This is not the case with those who reject God's testimony: **Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar.** The author uses the present tense here when depicting those who do not believe, thereby portraying their unbelief as a process. Such people are not accepting the true testimony concerning Jesus Christ. The author has the secessionists in mind. As far as he is concerned, they are the ones who do not believe God's testimony concerning his Son. They deny that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh. They deny that he came by water and blood. By so doing, the author says, they make God out to be a liar.

This is the fifth time in the letter that the author accuses his opponents of either being liars or making God out to be a liar (1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10). In 5:10 such people are said to make God out to be a liar **because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.** If we ask when the author thought the secessionists heard and then rejected God's testimony, his answer would be that they did so when they heard and then turned away from the original message of the gospel; the message proclaimed by those who at the beginning had seen and handled the Word of life (cf. 1:1-4). For the author, the testimony of God is the same as the message proclaimed from the beginning. It is this message to which God bears witness by his Spirit, and to which believers must remain committed (cf. 2:23-24, 27). The secessionists, of course, did not see it that way. They claimed to be enlightened by the Spirit (cf. 2:20, 27), but their 'enlightenment' led them to deny the truth about Jesus Christ to whom God himself bore witness.

**5:11** Amplifying now the nature of the witness which God gave, the author adds, **And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** Up to this point the author has emphasised God's witness concerning the person (came in the flesh) and work (came by water and blood) of the historical Jesus, but here he emphasises God's testimony concerning the benefit made available to believers through him. Simply put, what is stressed here is God's testimony concerning the eternal life he gives people 'in his Son'. In 1 John eternal life is not an unending extension of life as we know it; rather, it is 'having' Jesus Christ himself. Eternal life is identified with Jesus Christ. He, in fact, is eternal life (5:20); the eternal life that was with the Father from the beginning (1:2).

**5:12** Because God's gift of eternal life is given 'in his Son', it follows that **he who has the Son has life.** What it means to 'have the Son' is closely related to believing in the Son, as the next verse (5:13) indicates. Believing in the Son is closely connected with accepting the proclamation. But the question remains: Is the expression 'having the Son' a synonym for 'believing in the Son'? Or does 'having' the Son involve something more than this? We get some help from the 'abiding' language of Fourth Gospel (John 6:56; 14:23; 15:4-7). As far as it relates to believers

abiding in Christ, it denotes continuing loyalty and obedience to Christ, but it is not exhausted by this. There is an ontological dimension to it as well. As far as it relates to Christ abiding in believers, it clearly has ontological significance.

Allowing ourselves to be guided by the relevant material in the Fourth Gospel, we may say that to 'have the Son' means to be indwelt by the Son, something which, when viewed from the human perspective, takes place when people believe in him. To have the Son is to have eternal life because the Son himself is the eternal life that was with the Father. He has eternal life in himself, and he gives eternal life to those who believe in him. (See 'A Note on Eternal Life', pp. 184–87.)

While those who believe in and are indwelt by the Son have eternal life, the opposite is the case for those who do not believe in him and so are not indwelt by him: **he who does not have the Son of God does not have life**. If having the Son involves believing in him, and if believing in him involves accepting the message that was proclaimed at the beginning by the eyewitnesses, then, as far as the author is concerned, the secessionists do not have eternal life because they do not 'have the Son' in this sense.

## A Note on Witness

The verb 'to witness' (*martyreō*) and the noun 'witness' (*martyria*) are found a total of 113 times in the NT. Of these, 47 are found in the Fourth Gospel and 17 in the Letters of John. This means that more than half of the NT occurrences of these two words are found in the Gospel and Letters of John.

Witness is a major theme in the Fourth Gospel, and all but three of the 47 uses of the witness terminology involve testimony to Jesus (given by the Baptist, other humans, Jesus himself, Jesus' works, God the Father, the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit) or Jesus' own testimony to the truth. In many but not all cases the witness motif is found in contexts where God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, has a controversy with the 'world', incarnate in 'the Jews'. The witness motif in the Fourth Gospel contributes to its overall purpose of setting forth Jesus as the Christ, so that people might believe in him and so enjoy eternal life.

In the Letters of John the witness terminology is used in the following ways: (i) in relation to the eyewitness testimony concerning the eternal life which was with the Father and appeared to them (1 John 1:2) and their testimony concerning the Father's sending the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14); (ii) in relation to the testimony God gave concerning his Son—he gives eternal life to those who believe in him; a testimony that is internalised in the hearts of those who believe (1 John 5:9–11); (iii) in relation to the testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the

blood—the Spirit confirms the truth of the witness to Jesus, and the water and the blood add their silent testimony as well (1 John 5:6–8; see commentary *ad loc.*); (iv) in relation to the testimony given by believers concerning the faithfulness of other believers (3 John 3, 6, 12).

However, the purpose of the inclusion of the witness motif in the Letters of John differs from the purpose of its inclusion in the Fourth Gospel. In the letters it serves the purpose of distinguishing the errors of the secessionists from the truth of the message of the gospel as it was heard from the beginning. It is also used in recommending faithful missionaries to other Christian communities, and to describe the reports of those missionaries to their home churches concerning the hospitality they had received from those to whom they had been recommended.

## **A Note on Eternal Life**

The First Letter of John begins and ends on the note of eternal life (1:1–2; 5:20), and the theme of eternal life pervades throughout. At one point the author describes the purpose of his letter to be that his readers might know that they have eternal life (5:13). The expressions 'life' and 'eternal life' are used interchangeably. In 1 John eternal life almost always refers to a present experience as far as believers are concerned. (Eternal life as a future experience that may be lost may possibly be implied in 1 John 5:16–17.)

Strecker documents possible parallels to the Johannine idea of (eternal) life in Greek mythology, Gnosticism, and Hellenistic Judaism. However, our best chance of understanding what the author meant is to examine what is found in 1 John itself, and what further light is thrown on the subject by the Fourth Gospel.

*Eternal life was with the Father and is revealed in Christ.* In the opening paragraph of 1 John, where the author reminds his readers of what it is that he proclaims (the Word of life), he also tells them that 'this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father' (1:2). This reference to the eternal life 'that was with the Father' (*hētis ēn pros ton patera*) is almost certainly an allusion to the Fourth Gospel, where the Logos is described as the one who 'was with God' (*houtos ēn ... pros ton theon*) (1:1–2). In the light of this allusion, we can say that 'eternal life' here does not denote an impersonal quality of life that was with the Father, but refers to the Word of life, the Son of God, who was with the Father prior to his incarnation and revealed to us (the eyewitnesses). That this is what the author of 1 John intends is confirmed in 5:20, where he says, Jesus Christ 'is the true God and eternal life'.

The following passages from the Fourth Gospel further illustrate what the author means when he asserts that Jesus is the eternal life that was with the Father:

John 5:26: "For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." (NRSV)

John 1:4: in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. (NRSV)

John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live." (NRSV)

John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (NRSV)

John 17:2: "since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." (NRSV)

What these passages reveal is that Jesus Christ is eternal life because, just as God the Father has life in himself, so he has given the incarnate Son to have life in himself.

*Those who have the Son have eternal life.* In 1 John the author reminds his readers that God has promised them eternal life (2:25) and also explains that this gift of eternal life is tied up with God's Son. The key text is 1 John 5:11–13:

And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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.

Consistent with the opening statement of the letter, where the author points out that the eternal life which was with God has been revealed to us in the incarnate Son, he now makes clear that God's promise of eternal life for those who believe is intimately connected with God's Son. When God gives eternal life to human beings, he gives it with his Son. To have the Son is to have life; not to have the Son is not to have life. What it means to 'have the Son' is closely related to believing in the Son, as the passage just cited indicates. And believing in the Son is closely connected with accepting the proclamation.

But the question remains: Is the expression 'having the Son' a synonym for 'believing in the Son'? Or does 'having' the Son involve something more than this? We get some help in answering this question from the 'abiding' texts in the Fourth Gospel:

John 6:56:

"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." (NRSV)

John 14:23:

Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." (NRSV)

John 15:4:

"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." (NRSV)

John 15:5-7

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me

and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (NRSV)

It is apparent that the 'abiding' language of John's Gospel, as far as it relates to believers abiding in Christ, denotes continuing loyalty and obedience to Christ, but it is not exhausted by this. There is an ontological dimension to it as well. As far as it relates to Christ abiding in believers (which is closer to the notion of 'having the Son'), the abiding language definitely has ontological significance. In the light of the latter, we could say that in 1 John to 'have the Son' means to be indwelt by the Son, something which viewed from the human perspective is initiated when people believe in him. To 'have the Son' is to have eternal life because the Son himself is the eternal life that was with the Father.

*What does it mean to have eternal life?* The author of 1 John does provide one clue concerning what it means to have eternal life. In 3:14 he speaks of believers passing from death to life, indicating that the experience of eternal life expressed negatively is escaping death. The same idea is found in the Fourth Gospel where, again and again, eternal life is expressed in terms of escaping death and judgement. Not to have eternal life is to perish (John 3:16; 10:28); to endure God's wrath (John 3:36); to come under God's judgement (John 5:24); and to experience the resurrection to condemnation (John 5:29).

First John gives us virtually no clues as to what is involved positively in having eternal life. However, there are a number of clues in the Fourth Gospel: to have eternal life means to have one's spiritual hunger and thirst satisfied (John 4:14; 6:35); to be raised up on the last day and to live forever (John 6:40, 51, 54); to have the light of life so that one does not walk in darkness (John 8:12); to have abundant life (John 10:10); to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent (John 17:3); and that, though we die, we will live (John 11:25).

*Eternal life and being born of God.* 1 John makes it clear that those who believe in the Son have eternal life, and viewed from a human perspective, belief is the means

by which a person receives eternal life. However, the extensive use of the 'begetting' language in 1 John suggests that, viewed from God's perspective, believers have eternal life because they have been 'born of God' (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

*Evidences of eternal life.* The begetting texts mentioned above also reveal what the author of 1 John believed to be the evidences of eternal life: belief that Jesus is the Christ (5:1), avoidance of sin and doing what is right (2:29; 3:9; 5:18), overcoming the 'world' (5:4), and love of fellow believers (4:7). The author places heavy emphasis upon the fact that eternal life manifests itself in love for fellow believers (see esp. 3:11–17). This is no surprise once we recognise that to have eternal life means to have the Son, that is, to have Christ indwelling us. To have Christ indwelling us means that we will love fellow believers. Therefore, to say that we have eternal life while we hate fellow believers is a contradiction in terms. To shut our hearts against fellow believers in need is evidence that we do not have eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

*(5:4, 5) The reason why God's commandments are not burdensome is that obedience to them enables the saint to overcome the world. "Whatsoever" is neuter in gender, the comprehensive, categorical neuter, expressing the universality of the principle, and refers to persons, those persons born of God. "Born" is again perfect in tense, referring to a past completed act of regeneration with the present result that that regenerated individual has been made a partaker of the divine nature and as such is a child of God (II Peter 1:4, John 1:12 "sons," tekna ( τ ε κ ν α ), "bairns," born-ones). "Overcometh" is nikaō ( ν ι κ α ω ), "to carry off the victory, come off victorious." The verb implies a battle. Here the forces of the world-system of evil, the flesh (totally depraved nature), the devil, and the pernicious age-system (zeitgeist German) with which the saint is surrounded, are all engaged in a battle against the saint, carrying on an incessant warfare, the purpose of which is to ruin his Christian life and testimony. The verb is in the present tense, "is constantly overcoming the world." It is a habit of life with the saint to gain victory over the world. To go down in defeat is the exception, not the rule.*

In the expression, "This is the victory that overcometh," the verbal form is an aorist participle, literally, "This is the victory that overcame the world"; as Smith says, "St. John says first, 'is conquering,' because the fight is in progress, then 'that conquered' because the triumph is assured." The same authority says, " 'Our faith' conquers the world by clinging to the eternal realities." Vincent says, "*Our faith* is

<sup>1</sup> Kruse, C. G. (2000). [The letters of John](#) (pp. 173–187). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.

embraced in the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." This is brought out in v. 5, in the question, "Who is he who is constantly conquering the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" A heart belief in the incarnation with all that that implies results in an individual who gains the victory over the world. Unitarianism was clearly one of the most wide-spread heresies of the early Church, for John over and over again in this epistle writes against it.

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Translation. Because everything born of God is constantly coming off victorious over the world. And this is the victory that has come off victorious over the world, our faith. Who is he who is constantly coming off victorious over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

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*(5:6) "Came" is an aorist participle in the Greek text, referring to a definite fact in history, the first Advent of the Son of God embracing human nature without its sin through virgin birth. "By" is dia ( δ ι α ), the preposition of intermediate agency, speaking here of accompaniment and instrumentality. His coming to make an atonement for sin was accompanied by and made effective through water and blood. Vincent says, "Water refers to Christ's baptism at the beginning of His Messianic work, through which He declared His purpose to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). Blood refers to His bloody death upon the Cross for the sin of the world." Robertson says, "These two incidents in the Incarnation are singled out because at the baptism Jesus was formally set apart to His Messianic work by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him and by the Father's audible witness, and because at the Cross His work reached its culmination ('It is finished,' Jesus said)."*

The combination "Jesus Christ," used together by John to designate one individual, is a refutation of the Cerinthian Gnostic heresy to the effect that Jesus was the person, only human, not deity, and that the Christ or divine element came upon Him at His baptism and left Him before His death on the Cross.

In the words, "not by water only, but by water and blood," John changes from the preposition *dia* ( δ ι α ) to *en* ( ἐ ν ). It is locative of sphere, "not in the sphere of the water only but in the sphere of the water and the blood." *Dia* ( Δ ι α ) presents the medium through which, and *en* ( ἐ ν ), the sphere or element in which Jesus Christ came to offer Himself as the atonement for sin.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the third witness to the Incarnation, the water and the blood being the other two. John writes, "And the Spirit is the One who is constantly bearing witness, because the Spirit is the truth." This latter statement does not take away from the conception of the Holy Spirit as one of the Persons of the Trinity, for

the Lord Jesus referred to Himself as the truth (John 15:26). The idea is that it is the Holy Spirit whose characteristic is truth, to whom John refers.

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Translation. This is the One who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the sphere of the water only, but in the sphere of the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the One who is constantly bearing witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

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*(5:7) There is general agreement among textual critics that the contents of this verse are spurious, and do not belong to the original text. "The fact and the doctrine of the Trinity do not depend upon this spurious addition" (Robertson).*

(5:8) The words "in earth" are not found in the best manuscripts. The same three witnesses of verse 6 are repeated. The expression "these three agree in one is literally in the Greek text, "are to the one thing"; that is, in the words of Vincent, "they converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh." Alford translates, "Concur in the one, contribute to one and the same result, namely, the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and that we have life in Him."

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Translation. Because three there are that are constantly bearing testimony, the Spirit and the water and the blood. And the three concur in the one thing.

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*(5:9) The word "if" here is not ean (ἐὰν), a conditional particle of an unfulfilled condition, but ei (εἰ), the conditional particle of a fulfilled condition. It is used with the indicative mode, and assumes the reception of the witness of men to be a fact. The idea is, "In view of the fact that we receive the witness or testimony (marturia (μαρτυρία) of men." "Receive" is lambanō (λαμβάνω), "to take, appropriate, receive." The reception of testimony is therefore the act of appropriating it to ourselves as something to be depended upon as the truth. John's thought is here, "Since we are in the habit of receiving the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, and therefore should be received."*

"For" is *hoti* (ὅτι) "because." Vincent says, "Not explaining *why it is greater*, but why the principle of the superior greatness of divine testimony should apply and be appealed to in this case. Supply mentally, *and this applies in the case before us*, for etc." "Which" is not *hēn* (ἧν) but *hoti* (ὅτι) in the best texts. John's thought is as follows: "Since we are in the habit of receiving the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater (and therefore should be received); because this is the testimony of God (and this applies in the case before us) that God has borne testimony concerning His Son with the present result that that testimony is on record." That is, we receive testimony from our fellow-man. But God's testimony is greater than

man's testimony. God testifies of the fact that He has borne testimony concerning His Son, and since He is the One who has borne this testimony, not man, that testimony should be received. The verb is in the perfect tense, speaking of a past act of bearing testimony with the result that the testimony is on record at the present time.

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Translation. Since the testimony of men we are habitually receiving, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God, that He has borne testimony concerning His Son, and this testimony is on record.

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*(5:10, 11) Smith has a most helpful note here: "A subtle and profound analysis of the exercise of soul which issues in assured faith. Three stages, 'believe God,' ... accept His testimony concerning His Son, i.e., not simply His testimony at the Baptism (Matt. 3:17), but the historic manifestation of God in Christ, the Incarnation. God speaks not by words but by acts, and to set aside His supreme act, and all the forces which it has set in operation is to 'make Him a liar' by treating His historic testimony as unworthy of credit. (2) 'Believe in the Son,' ... make the believing, self-surrender, which is the reasonable and inevitable consequence of contemplating the Incarnation and recognizing the wonder of it. (3) The Inward Testimony ... The love of Jesus satisfies the deepest need of our nature. When He is welcomed, the soul rises up and greets Him as 'all its salvation and all its desire' and the testimony is no longer external in history but an inward experience, and therefore indubitable." "Witness" is *martus* (μ α ρ τ υ ς). It is used of a witness, "one who avers, or can aver, what he himself has seen or heard or knows by any other means" (Thayer). It is used of one who testifies to what he has seen or heard, for instance, a witness in a court of law. Thus, the one who believes on the Son of God has the testimony in him to the effect that he thus believes. Paul in Romans 8:16 tells us that the Holy Spirit bears testimony in connection with our human spirits as energized by the Holy Spirit that we are children of God. That is, our human spirit, energized by the Holy Spirit, gives us the consciousness that we as believers are children of God. The Holy Spirit testifies to us that that same thing is true. The following verbs, "hath made, believeth, gave record" are in the perfect tense, and as Vincent says, the act perpetuates itself in the present condition of the person acting in the verb. In verse 11 we have the simple aorist in the verb "hath given," marking the giving of His Son at the Cross as an historic fact.*

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Translation. The one who believes on the Son of God has the testimony in himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, and as a result considers Him to be such, because he has not believed the testimony which God has given concerning His Son, which testimony is

on record, with the result that he is in a settled state of unbelief. And this is the testimony, that life eternal God gave us.

*(5:12) The definite article appears before the word "life," pointing out a particular life, that life which God is and which He gives sinners who place their faith in the Son. The first mention of the Son is without the qualifying words, "of God," the second has them. Bengel remarks: "The verse has two clauses: in the former, of God is not added, because believers know the Son; in the other it is added, that unbelievers may know at length how serious it is not to have Him."*

Translation. The one who has the Son, has the life. The one who does not have the Son of God, the life he does not have.

*(5:13) Smith comments: "The purpose for which St. John wrote his Gospel was that we might believe in the Incarnation, and so have eternal life (20:31); the purpose of the Epistle is not merely that we may have eternal life by believing, but that we may know that we have it. The Gospel exhibits the Son of God, the Epistle commends Him. It is a supplement to the Gospel, a personal application and appeal."*

"I have written" is an epistolary aorist, a courtesy extended the reader by the writer of a letter in which the latter puts himself at the viewpoint of the reader when he receives the letter, looking at the letter which he is writing as a past event, although it is a present one with him. John refers here, therefore, not to a previous letter, but to the one he is writing. "Know" is *oida* (οἶδα), speaking, not of experiential knowledge, but of absolute, beyond the peradventure of a doubt knowledge, a positive knowledge. The words, "and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God," are not found in the best texts. The words, "unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God," appear after the words, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life," in the Greek text.

Translation. These things I write to you in order that you may know with an absolute knowledge that life you are having, eternal (life), to you who believe on the name of the Son of God.<sup>2</sup>

Ver. 4.—Reason for the preceding statement: the opposition which causes the difficulty is already overcome. Nothing, however, is gained by transferring the full stop from the end of ver. 3 to the middle of ver. 4, any more than from the end of ver. 2 to the middle of ver. 3. The punctuation of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version is to be preferred. It is the world that hinders obedience to God's

<sup>2</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 13, pp. 173–179). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

commandments and makes them seem grievous. But *everywhere* God's children (πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον as in John 6:37, 39; 17:2) conquer the world, and that by means of faith. The aorist (ἡ νικῆσασα) marks the victory as already won and complete: "the victory that *hath* vanquished the world is this—our faith."

Ver. 5.—What other way is there of conquering the world? And how can he who believes fail? Belief in Christ unites us to him, and gives us a share in his victories; and he has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Vers. 6–12.—The section takes a new turn; the test of the Christian life furnished by the witness of the life itself. This witness is that of the Spirit (ver. 6), identical with that of God (ver. 9), and possessed by every believer (ver. 10). Few passages of Scripture have produced such a mass of widely divergent interpretation.

Ver. 6.—**This (Son of God) is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.** This may be regarded as one of the main propositions of the Epistle—that the eternal Son of God is identical with the historic Person, Jesus. Of the water and the blood widely differing interpretations have been given. It would be tedious and unprofitable to enumerate them. Our estimate of John 19:34, "the most perplexing incident in the Gospel," will probably influence our interpretation of this "the most perplexing passage in the Epistle." Not that we have here any direct reference to the piercing of Christ's side, and its results. Yet both passages teach similar spiritual truths, viz. the ideas which underlie the two sacraments, and teach them by reference to facts in the life and death of **Jesus Christ**. But the facts are not the same in each case. It is difficult to believe that this passage contains any definite and immediate allusion to John 19:34. Why in that case the marked change of order, "water and blood" instead of "blood and water"? And if it be thought that this is explained by saying that the one is "the ideal, mystical, sacramental, subjective order," the other "the historical and objective order," and that "the first is appropriately adopted in the Epistle, the second in the Gospel," we are not at the end of our difficulties. If St. John is here referring to the effusions from Christ's dead body, what can be the meaning of "not in water only, but in water and blood"? It was the water, not the blood, that was specially astonishing. And "in" in this case seems a strange expression to use. We should have expected rather, "not shedding blood only, but blood and water." Moreover, how can blood and water flowing from the Lord's body be spoken of his "coming through water and blood"? The simplest interpretation is that which refers ὕδωρ to the baptism of water to which he himself submitted, and which he enjoined upon his disciples, and αἷμα to the baptism of blood to which he himself submitted, and which raised the baptism of water from a sign into a sacrament. John came baptizing in **water only**, ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων (John 1:31, 33). Jesus came baptizing in **water and blood**,

*i.e.* in water which washed away sin through the efficacy of his blood. This interpretation explains the marked change of preposition. Jesus effected his work *through* the baptisms of **water and blood; and it is** by baptism in these elements that he comes to his followers. Moreover, this interpretation harmonizes with the polemical purpose of the Epistle, viz. to confute the errors of Cerinthus. Cerinthus taught that the Divine Logos or Christ descended upon Jesus at the baptism, and departed again when Jesus was arrested; so that a mere man was born of Mary, and a mere man suffered on the cross. St. John assures us that there was no such severance. The Divine Son Jesus Christ came **not by water only** at his baptism, but by blood also at his death. Besides these two abiding witnesses, there is yet a third still more convincing. **And there is the Spirit that beareth witness** (to the Divinity of Christ); **because the Spirit is the truth**. There can be no higher testimony than that of the truth itself (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). It is surprising that any one should propose to translate, "The Spirit is that which is witnessing *that* the Spirit is the truth." What has this to do with the context?

Ver. 7.—**For those who bear witness are three**, and thus constitute full legal testimony (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). It will be assumed here, without discussion, that the remainder of this verse and the first clause of ver. 8 are spurious. Words which are not contained in a single Greek uncial manuscript, nor in a single Greek cursive earlier than the fourteenth century (the two which contain the passage being evidently translated from the Vulgate), nor are quoted by a single Greek Father during the whole of the Trinitarian controversy, nor are found in *any* authority until late in the fifth century, cannot be genuine.

Ver. 8.—**When all three witnesses are enumerated together**, the Spirit naturally comes first. He is a living and a Divine witness, independent of the two facts of the baptism and the Passion, which concur with him in testifying that the Son of God is Jesus Christ.

Ver. 9.—An argument *à fortiori*. **If we receive** expresses no doubt, but states an admitted fact gently (see on ch. 4:11; and comp. John 7:23; 10:35; 13:14). "If we accept human witness [and, of course, we do], we must accept Divine witness [and, therefore, must believe that the Son of God is Jesus Christ]; for the witness of God consists in this, that he has borne witness concerning his Son." Note the pertinacious repetition of the word "witness," thoroughly in St. John's style. The perfect (μ ε μ α ρ τ ὄ ρ η κ ε ) indicates that the witness still continues.

Ver. 10.—**Hath the witness in him**. This rendering is to be preferred to either "in Him," *i.e.* God, or "in himself. The former is obscure in meaning; the latter, though probably correct as an interpretation, is inaccurate as a translation, for the better reading is α ὐ τ ῶ, not ε α υ τ ῶ. But ε ν α ὐ τ ῶ may be reflexive. The believer in the

Incarnation has the Divine testimony in his heart, and it abides with him as an additional source of evidence, supplementing and confirming the external evidence. In its daily experience, the soul finds ever fresh proof that the declaration, "This is my beloved Son," is true. But even without this internal corroboration, the external evidence suffices, and he who rejects it makes God a liar; for it is God who presents the evidence, and presents it as sufficient and true. The second half of the verse is *parenthetical*, to show that the unbeliever, though he has no **witness in himself**, is not therefore excused. In ver. 11 we return to the main proposition at the beginning of ver. 10.

Ver. 11.—"And the substance of the internal testimony is this we are conscious of the Divine gift of eternal life, and this—we have in the Son of God." St. John's ζ ωή αἰώνιος is not "everlasting life;" the idea of endlessness may be included in it, but it is not the main one. The distinction between eternity and time is one which the human mind feels to be real and necessary. But we are apt to lose ourselves when we try to think of eternity. We admit that it is not time, that it is the very antithesis of time, and yet we attempt to measure it while we declare it to be immeasurable. We make it simply a very long time. The main idea of "eternal life" in St. John's writings has no direct reference to time. **Eternal life** is possessed already by believers; it is not a thing of the future (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 17:3). It is that life in God which includes all blessedness, and which is not broken by physical death (John 11:25). Its opposite is exclusion from God.

Ver. 12.—Eternal life is not granted to the whole world, or even to all Christians *on masse*; it is given to individuals, soul by soul, according as each does or does not accept **the Son of God**. The order of the Greek is noteworthy—in the first half of the verse the emphasis is on "hath," in the second on "life." Here, as in John 1:4, the article before ζ ωή should be translated, "hath *the* life ... hath not *the* life." The insertion of τ ο υ Θ ε ο υ in the second half of the verse points to the magnitude of the loss: the possessor has no need to be told *whose* Son he has.

Vers. 13–21.—4. CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE; without, however, any marked break between this section and the last. On the contrary, the prominent thought of *eternal life through faith in the Son of God* is continued for final development. This topic is the main idea alike of the Gospel (20:31) and of the Epistle, with this difference—in the Gospel the purpose is that we may *have* eternal life.

Ver. 13.—**These things I have written to you sums up the Epistle as a whole.** At the outset the apostle said, "These things we write, that our joy [yours as well as mine] may be fulfilled;" and now, as he draws to a close, he says the same thing in other words. Their joy is the knowledge that they **have eternal life** through belief in **the Son of God**. There is considerable variety of reading in this verse, but that of the

T.R., represented by the Authorized Version, is a manifest simplification. That represented by the Revised Version is probably right. The awkwardness of the last clause produced various alterations with a view to greater smoothness. The verse, both as regards construction and meaning, should be carefully compared with John 1:12. In both we have the exegetical addition at the end. In both we have St. John's favourite  $\pi \iota \sigma \tau \epsilon \acute{\upsilon} \epsilon \iota \nu \epsilon \iota \varsigma$  expressing the very strongest belief; motion to and repose upon the object of belief. In both we have the remarkable expression, "believe on his *Name*." This is no mere periphrasis for "believe on him." Names in Jewish history were so often significant, being sometimes given by God himself, that they served not merely to distinguish one man from another, but to indicate his character. So also with the Divine Name: it suggests the Divine attributes. "To believe on the Name of the Son of God" is to give entire adhesion to him as having the qualities of the Divine Son.<sup>3</sup>

**4** This leads on to *victory*. The neuter 'whatever' (NIV, *everyone*) makes the statement quite general (cf. 1:1). *Our faith* (the noun occurs only here in 1 John; it is not found in the gospel or 2 or 3 John) stands last with emphasis. *Has overcome* means that the decisive victory is in the past, when Jesus died to overcome evil, and in the case of the individual believer when that believer came to trust in him. **5** The rhetorical question leads to emphasis on the place of faith. Victory comes to the one who *believes that Jesus is the Son of God*. Once more there is emphasis on a right view of his person. We see here again John's habit of emphasis by repetition; in these two verses he has three references to overcoming the world. We cannot miss it. It is important.

### **5:6–12 The witness to the Son**

Since a right view of Jesus matters so much it is important that it be attested. John cites some of the testimony that establishes who Jesus is.

**6** That Jesus came *by water* surely refers to his baptism, and likewise *blood* to his death. At his baptism he heard the heavenly voice and he solemnly entered his life's work. Some heretics apparently held that the divine Christ came on Jesus when he was baptized, but left him before his death. John contests this with his emphasis on blood: *not by water only, but by water and blood*. It was (and is) this that is the heart of the gospel. There were apparently no doubts about the *water* but the *blood* seems to have been the stumbling block; heretics evidently found it impossible to hold that

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<sup>3</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). [1 John](#) (pp. 139–141). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

the divine Christ could die. John brings out the fact that *the water* did not stand alone. The *water* and the *blood* go together. Further, *it is the Spirit who testifies* (the present tense points to a continuing activity). He has an excellent qualification for this for *the Spirit is the truth* (as is Jesus; Jn. 14:6). **7** The κ<sub>1</sub>ν includes additional material which the ν<sub>1</sub>ν puts in the mg. The words are rarely found outside the later Latin MSS and they are clearly no part of the true text. **8** There are in fact *three that testify*. *The Spirit* is listed first, perhaps because he has just been mentioned, perhaps because he is a person and thus a more explicit witness than *water* or *blood*. But in any case the witness is harmonious. The inner witness of the Spirit, and all that is involved in Christ's baptism and his death are not three unrelated items. Together they point to one great act of God in Christ for our salvation.

**9** John appeals to the well-known fact of human trust. We accept the testimony of other people and much more should we accept the testimony of which John has been speaking, for it is *the testimony of God* and *God's testimony is greater*. The testimony in question is testimony *about his Son*. Now the giving of testimony commits, so this means that God has committed himself in Christ; he has borne witness that this is what he himself is like. **10** Whoever trusts God's Son *has this testimony in his heart*, which seems to show that the witness of the Spirit (6–7) is a witness to the believer's own spirit. *Anyone who believes in the Son of God* and *Anyone who does not believe God* appear to be opposites, which means that John puts no great difference between believing in and believing, or between faith in the Son of God and faith in God. For him Jesus Christ was God incarnate, so that to believe in Christ is to believe in God. But to disbelieve is to make him out to be a *liar* (cf. 1:10). The perfect tense in *has made him out* views this as lasting. The unbeliever takes up the position of permanently having a wrong view of God. **11** The content of *the testimony* is perhaps a little unexpected for it is what God has done, not what he has said: he *has given us eternal life*. Eternal life is God's own deed and God's own gift. As we contemplate it we see a revelation of God. The addition, *this life is in his Son*, is important. We cannot think of eternal life apart from the Son nor can we think of *the testimony* apart from him (cf. v 9). Life eternal is life with Christ and in Christ. **12** This is emphasized in a crisp couplet. Life and the Son go together. It is impossible to have the one without the other.

### **5:13–21 The knowledge of eternal life**

John's gospel was written so that its readers might believe and so have life (Jn. 20:31). By contrast this letter was written to readers who already believe in order to give them assurance, the certainty that they have eternal life. John brings this out as his letter draws to a close.

**5:13–15 Confidence. 13** This letter is written to *you who believe*; it is not an evangelistic tract, but a letter to Christians. There has been a good deal about knowledge and now we find that the whole is written *so that you may know that you have eternal life*. Assurance of salvation is important, important enough to have caused this whole letter. This is the only place in the letter where the writer speaks of believing *in the name* of Jesus, *i.e.* in his full person, all that the name stands for (in the similar wording of 3:23 the Gk. means 'believe the name').<sup>4</sup>

- c. he who has been begotten of God overcomes the world—5:4–5
  - 1) it is not the person, but his/her birth from God, that overcomes the world—5:4a

Here we see the reason stated for the assertion in v. 3. The reason why his commandments are not burdensome is because we now have the power, by virtue of the new birth and the resultant "seed" of God and indwelling Holy Spirit, to keep them! The phrase "whatever is born of God" is neuter, most likely pointing to the *power* of the new birth itself.

- 2) the victory which overcomes the world is our faith—5:4b

This "faith" is our faith in Christ, in particular, our faith in who he is (God in human flesh = the incarnation) and what he has done (propitiation for our sins = atonement). But what precisely is the "victory" or "overcoming" that we experience? Is it 1) conversion (hence a victory over sin and death); 2) decisive rejection of the false teachers; 3) an ongoing victory over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life; 4) an ongoing victory over the temptation of the world; 5) victory over Satan? Or is it all of the above?

- 3) he who has such a victory is he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God—5:5

#### D. A Digression: Christ, three witnesses, and a verdict—5:6–12

Having briefly mentioned faith in Christ or belief in his full deity in 5:5, John proceeds to discuss the testimony borne to him and its inevitable verdict.

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<sup>4</sup> Morris, L. L. (1994). [1 John](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 1408–1409). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

1. the nature of the testimony: the witnesses to Christ are 3-5:6-9
  - a. Christ is he who came by both water and blood—5:6

Among the many theories about this statement, I mention three.

- Some say water and blood refer to the two sacraments or ordinances of the church: water = baptism and blood = the Lord's Supper. This was the view of both Luther and Calvin. Whereas "water" may well point to baptism, "blood" is an odd way of describing the Lord's Supper. After all, blood is one of the things signified, not the sign or symbol itself. And what of Christ's body? Also, John says Christ "came" by water and blood. How did he "come" by the ordinance of the Lord's Supper?
- Some say water and blood refer to that which poured from the side of Jesus when pierced with the spear during his crucifixion. This is possible, but the water and blood came "out" of him. He did not come "by/through" them. Furthermore, as Burge notes, the closing phrase of v. 6 ("not by water *only* but by water *and blood*") indicates that "John is making a counterpoint to some claim involving only (or primarily) water" (202).
- Others say water and blood refer, respectively, to the *baptism* and *death* of Jesus, the former that by which he was commissioned and empowered for his work and the latter that by which his work was finished. This would certainly refute the false teachers by showing that Jesus was the "Christ" before and during the baptism and during and after the cross. It wasn't "at" the water (baptism) that Jesus "became" the Christ, but Jesus who "is" the Christ came through the water. The second half of v. 5 is a repetitive and emphatic declaration by John required because of the gnostic notion that the "Christ" left or departed from Jesus before the cross. John says No. It wasn't just Jesus who bled. It was Jesus *Christ!*

Some have suggested that "water" is indeed a reference to baptism, but rather than the baptism that Jesus himself experienced it is the ministry of baptism that Jesus himself performed (cf. John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2). But it seems strange to say that Jesus "came by water" = he performed the baptism of others.

- b. the three which agree in their witness to Christ are (1) the Spirit who is truth, (2) the water, and (3) the blood—5:7-8

- c. it is God who has thus borne witness to his Son, a far more compelling testimony than any man could give—5:9

The reason why the three agree is because it is God who is behind them. The three form a single testimony to Christ. God bore witness to his Son at his baptism, at his death, and now through his Spirit.

- 2. the result of the testimony: he who believes in the Son has both the witness in himself and eternal life, whereas the unbeliever makes God a liar and does not have life—5:10–12
  - a. the contrasted results of belief and unbelief are startling: he who believes has the witness in himself; he who does not believe has made a liar of God—5:10

The believer is given a yet deeper assurance by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit that he/she was right in trusting Christ! On the other hand, to refuse God's testimony concerning his Son is to say, "God, you are a liar!"

Kruse does not believe that the "witness" or "testimony" that the believer has "in himself" is the inner witness of the Spirit. He believes that "the testimony believers have in themselves is the true testimony concerning Jesus Christ which they heard from the eyewitnesses and have accepted and internalised" (181).

- b. since life is in the Son, he who believes has life, he who believes not has not life—5:11–12

#### E. A Digression: assurance of eternal life and confidence in prayer—5:13–17

- 1. the purpose for this epistle is to lead people into the certain and confident knowledge that they have eternal life—5:13

John's point is not that we might grow gradually in assurance, incrementally as it were, but that through reading what he has written, through examining our lives in the light of what God has done for and in us, we might possess here and now a present and firm certainty of the life we have received in Christ. He's talking not just about a present assurance of present salvation, but a present assurance of final salvation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Storms, S. (2016). *Biblical Studies: First John* (1 Jn 5:1–21). Edmond, OK: Sam Storms.

**4 because everyone who is fathered by God** Being born again makes us something more than God's creatures; we are God's children. You know that blessed truth of adoption, by which God takes men and adopts them into His family, but regeneration is a great deal more than adoption. We are not only God's adopted children; if we are indeed born from above, we are God's newborn children. The divine nature is actually put into us when we are born of God; is that not a wonderful thing? And that miracle of mercy must be wrought in all of us who are ever to conquer the world.

**conquers the world** How is it that the same gospel that always speaks of peace here proclaims warfare? How can it be? Simply because there is something in the world that is antagonistic to love. There are principles that cannot bear light; therefore, before light can come, it must chase the darkness. Before summer reigns, it has to do battle with old winter and to send it howling away in the winds of March, shedding its tears in April showers. So also, before any great or good thing can have the mastery of this world, it must do battle for it.

What is this "world" that we have to overcome? Did God not make the world, and did He not see "every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31)? Yes, He did. But after sin entered this world, men came under its power, and now by "the world" is meant all mankind who remain under the power of sin and are enemies to God. "The world" means the whole corrupt mass of human society out of which God has taken a people whom He has chosen for Himself, whom He quickens by His Divine Spirit, and whose business it is to overcome the world. They will find that the world—the power of evil—will war against them, and they also must war against it, and the issue of the battle must not long be doubtful. There remains for us only one of two courses: either the world must overcome us and we must yield to it, or else we must overcome the world and cause it to submit to us.

## **What Conquering the World Is Not**

Preaching Themes: Giving, Greed, Humility, Victory and Defeat

Alexander the Great, when he was master of the whole world, was the greatest slave in it, for he was discontented even with his victories. The pride of conquest held him in captivity by its iron chain.

He who aims at the highest greatness in this world may only be more greatly selfish than the rest of mankind, and what is that but to be really little?

He is truly great who is the most unselfish, and he is the least of all who lives for himself alone.

**And this is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith** The instrument with which this new nature fights against the world is faith. Faith conquers, first, *by regarding the unseen reward that awaits us*. The world comes and offers pleasure as the reward of sin, but faith says, "There are greater pleasures to be had by abstaining from sin." The world says, "Take this gain today," but faith says, "No, I will put what I have out at interest. There is something infinitely better to be had after this." In its beginning, faith generally works in that way; it despises all the treasures of Egypt and values far more the eternal rewards that Christ has laid up for it in heaven.

But as faith grows, it attains to something better than that, for *it recognizes the unseen Presence that is with us*. The world says, "Come with us, and go our way. We will pat you on the back and say that you are a good fellow, and you will have a fine time if you come with us." But faith says, "I do not care how I appear to your eye, for there is another eye that I can see, but you cannot see. God is looking at me, and I am most of all concerned to be right in His sight." Faith realizes that the newborn nature is in the divine presence, and thus makes God's presence to be just as real and just as vivid as the presence of men. That presence of God altogether outweighs the presence of men. That is a higher position than the one I first mentioned, for faith not only regards the unseen reward that awaits the believer, but faith recognizes the unseen presence of God and is moved by an all-constraining desire to please Him.

## Hitting the Center

Preaching Themes: Commitment

I once saw a colonel shooting at a target. There were two targets near each other, and he hit the center of one of them. The attendant called out, "Which target was that gentleman shooting at?" "The one on the left," was the answer. "I thought so," said the man, "for he hit the one on the right."

There are some people who are always shooting at the world, and it seems to be their great aim to hit it, but the Christian man is always aiming at Christ. If he has not hit the center yet, he will shoot again and again until he does, for his great desire is that he may live for Christ alone, and be found in

Him, not having his own righteousness “that is of the law, but that is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God on the basis of faith” (Phil 3:9).

**5 Now who is the one who conquers the world** What is it to conquer the world? The first thing that is necessary with many who are seeking to overcome the world is *to cut themselves loose from the world's customs*. Every man, sooner or later, finds himself in a world of sin. There are ungodly companions with whom he is linked—evil associations to which he is bound. There are some men who, in their unconverted state, give themselves up entirely to the pleasures of the world, the amusements and frivolities of what is called “society.” Now, if such men ever expect to overcome the world, the very first thing they must do is to cut their old connections altogether, to sever all the bonds that unite them to those who lead them into sin.

But that emancipation is merely a beginning. Overcoming the world further consists in *maintaining that freedom*. That fight is the difficulty, and nobody can be victorious in that fight unless he is one of a peculiar race—those who are born of God, born from above. This is a stern battle: when the world surrounds us everywhere, when pleasure tempts us, when gain tries to corrupt us, when poverty assails us, when evil company seeks to sway us. It is hard for us to come out of all our former associations and then to keep out, remaining conquerors over the world throughout the whole of the rest of our life, and being conquerors even in death, having vanquished the world even on our dying bed.

**except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God** It is faith in Jesus that is, first of all, the evidence of the new birth, and that is, afterward, the weapon wielded by the newborn soul with which it fights until it gains the victory over the world.

## Application

### ***Love All Who Are Fathered by God***

We look around us and see many others who have believed in Jesus Christ; let us love them because they are of the same kindred. “But some of them are unsound in doctrine; they make gross mistakes as to the Master’s ordinances.” We are not to love their faults, nor should we expect them to love ours, but we are nevertheless to love them. First I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God’s truth and to keep God’s gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also myself “surrounded by

weakness" (Heb 5:2). Life is the reason for love. The common life that is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other.

Let me beg the members of the church to exhibit mutual love to one another. Are there any feeble among you? Comfort them. Are there any who need instruction? Bring your knowledge to their help. Are there any in distress? Assist them. Are they backsliding? Restore them. "Love one another" is the rule of Christ's family; may we observe it. May the love of God that has been "poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom 5:5) reveal itself by our love to all the saints. And remember, He has "other sheep that are not from this fold" (John 10:16); He must bring them in also. Let us love those who have yet to be brought in and lovingly go forth at once to seek them. In whatever other form of service God has given us, let us with loving eyes look after our prodigal brothers. Who knows? We may bring into the family this very day some for whom there will be "joy in the presence of the angels of God" because the lost one has been found (Luke 15:10).

### ***Overcoming the World***

Do you not see that you must overcome the world, or else you will perish? But you cannot overcome the world as you are. You must, therefore, be born again. Your only hope lies in your being born of God. This, if it is ever to take place, must be God's work. It is God alone who can do it. You are like ships on their beam-ends; you cannot right yourselves. Cry, therefore, with your whole heart unto God, and ask Him to work this miracle in you. He can save you. He can take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. He can breathe on the dry bones and make them live. He, the mysterious Father of our spirits, can create in us a new spirit that shall be begotten by Himself and be like Himself. We must have this, or we can never overcome the world.

### ***We Must Be Born Again for Faith to Conquer***

If faith is the conquering weapon, and we intend to be conquerors, we must become believers in the invisible God. In order to exercise faith in the invisible God in Christ Jesus, we must be born again. Until that new nature comes into us, we never do believe in Christ. We may believe a great deal in ourselves; we may believe in worldly society, in its threats or in its bribes, but we do not believe in Christ. Whether you know it or not, that is salvation—to be saved from sin and from self. There is no getting salvation from the groveling meannesses of selfishness except by being born again, for self clings to every man until he is born again, and it is not always gone even then. Satan spoke the truth when he said to the Lord, "Skin for skin! All

that that man has he will give for his life" (Job 2:4). He will not be ready to part with life itself until he gets a higher life, and a better one, imparted to him by the Spirit of God.

If we are to be saved, we must look to God. We must seek salvation at His hands. We must ask Him for faith; what a mercy it is that He waits to give it! Be nothing, and God will be everything to you. Get to the end of yourself, and that will be a proof that God has already begun with you. Cease to believe in your own merits or your own virtues. Put away all trust in yourself and come and trust in God as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, and you have received that salvation which will keep on progressing until all sin shall be driven out of you, and you shall dwell forever where Jesus is—as unselfish as Jesus is; as pure, as blessed, as glorious as He is. God grant this to us all, for Christ's sake!

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1 John 5:6–12

## Exposition

**6 This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ** By the terms "water" and "blood" I understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ's work for His people. He came to purify them from the power of sin that they might no longer

live in it; this is indicated by the declaration that He “came by water.” He came also to put away the guilt of their sin that they might not be condemned for it; this is set forth by the intimation that He also came “by blood.”

The two ordinances of our holy religion were intended, I take it, to sum up the teaching of Christ. The one is baptism, which represents the cleansing of the conscience as the body is washed with water, the death of the soul to the old carnal life, its burial with Christ, and its resurrection to a life of holiness. Then comes the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which sets forth, in the broken bread and the poured-out wine, the great truth of Christ's atonement: the fact that He has, by His death, perfected forever all those who have been set apart unto Him.

It is very important that we should always carry in our minds the remembrance of these two truths: first, *that Jesus Christ “came by water,”* that is, it was His divine purpose to purify His people and make them holy; and, secondly, *that Jesus Christ “came by blood,”* that is, it was His grand aim and object to deliver His people from the guilt of sin.

**not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood** We might say that all the Lord's prophets who came before Christ in a certain sense “came by water.” That is to say, they all sought the purification of the Lord's people. Whether it was Isaiah, whose lips had been touched with the live coal from the altar; or Jeremiah, whose eyes were fountains of tears as he wept over sinners; or Amos, who spoke as a herdsman; or Ezekiel, whose message was one of grandeur and sublimity, the object of everyone of them was to purge the people from their sins. It was against sin that they all lifted up their voices, yet none of them could pardon sin, and none of them ever professed to be able to do so. Of all of them it must be said that they came by water only, and not by blood.

Jesus Christ does what the prophets could not do. It is true that He does seek to make His people holy, but it is by His blood that all their sins are forever put away. John the Baptist was the last and the greatest of all the prophets who came before Christ, yet he had to say, “The one who comes after me is more powerful than I am, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry” (Matt 3:11). John never spoke of his own blood having any power to take away sin, but he pointed to Christ and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). So far as our Lord's first disciples were concerned, He certainly “came by water,” for contact with His unique personality must have tended to purify their lives. Yet He also came “by blood” as well as by water, for it was by virtue of His atoning sacrifice that their sins were blotted out and that they became “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6 KJV).

**And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth** Now the Spirit of God, wherever He abides upon a man, is *the* mark that that man is accepted by God. We do not say that where the Spirit merely strives at intervals there is any seal of divine favor, but where He abides it is assuredly so. The very fact that we possess the Spirit of God is God's testimony and seal in us that we are His and that, as He has sent His Son into the world, even so He sends us into the world.

**7 For there are three that testify** Our Lord Himself was attested by these three witnesses. If you will carefully read in Exodus 29 or in Leviticus 8, you will see that when a priest was ordained (and a priest was a type of Christ) three things were always used: he was washed with water, a sacrifice was brought, and his ear, his thumb, and his toe were touched with blood. Then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. Thus every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type. If Jesus Christ is indeed the Priest that was to come, He will be known by these three signs.

Godly men in the olden times also understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things. For proof of this we will quote David's prayer, "Purify me with hyssop"—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—"and I shall be clean. Wash me"—there is the water—"and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa 51:7). Then, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and with a willing spirit sustain me" (Psa 51:12). Thus the blood, the water, and the Spirit were recognized of old as necessary to cleanse from guilt. If Jesus of Nazareth is indeed able to save His people from their sins, He must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

**8 the Spirit** Our Lord was attested by *the Spirit*. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies—"Men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21)—and Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies as exactly as a well-made key answers to the wards of a lock. By the power of the Holy Spirit our Lord's humanity was fashioned and prepared for Him, for the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore also the one to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). When our Lord in due time commenced His public ministry, the Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove and rested on Him, and a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). This was indeed one of the surest seals of our Lord's Messiahship, for it had been given by the Spirit of prophecy unto John as a token: "The one upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him—this one is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). The Spirit abode in our Lord without measure, throughout His whole public career, so that He is described as full of the

Spirit and led by the Spirit. Hence His life and ministry were full of power. How truthfully He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because of which he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18). Peter said, "Jesus of Nazareth—how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Mighty signs and miracles were the witness of the divine Spirit to the mission of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit abode with our Lord all His life long. And to crown all, after He had died and risen again, the Holy Ghost gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciples at Pentecost. The Lord had promised to baptize His disciples with the Holy Ghost, and they tarried at Jerusalem in expectation of the gift. They were not disappointed, for all of a sudden "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability to speak out" (Acts 2:4). Those cloven tongues of fire and the "violent rushing wind" (Acts 2:2) were sacred tokens that He who had ascended was Lord and God. The apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32). The word of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, convinced men "concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment" (John 16:8), as the Master had foretold. Then the Spirit comforted the penitents, believed in the exalted Savior, and were baptized the same day. The words of Jesus were abundantly fulfilled: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father—that one will testify about me" (John 15:26). Thus from our Lord's birth, throughout His life, and after His ascension, the Holy Ghost bore conspicuous witness to Him.

**and the water** It is also manifest that our Lord came with *water* too. He was not unclean, and therefore one would have thought He might dispense with this, but to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15) His first step was to be washed in the Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist. He came to the door of His ministry by that baptism in water which indicates that by death, burial, and resurrection, He was about to save His people.

As soon as that baptism had been accomplished—indeed, and before that—you could see that He had come with water, for by water is signified that clean, pure, hallowed life which the outward washing was meant to typify. His first years of obscurity were years of holiness and His years of service were spotless. "In him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5). He did not come by water merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant—by unsullied purity of life. His doctrine was as pure as His example. He was the friend of sinners, but not the apologist for their sins. His tenderness to sinners was that of a physician whose aim is to remove the disease.

His whole doctrine is comparable to purifying and life-giving water, and it operated upon men's hearts in that manner. In this last sense especially He came by water.

It is very remarkable how John's Gospel is both the exposition and the text of John's first epistle, for if you turn to it you find our Lord Jesus coming by water at the outset of His teaching. He says to Nicodemus that a man must be "born of water and spirit" (John 3:), to the woman of Samaria He speaks of "living water" (John 4:10), and on the great day of the feast He cries, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and let him drink" (John 7:37). In His ministry He not only issued the invitation, but to all who believed in Him He gave of the water of the fountain of life freely. Thus our Lord came by water in the sense of communicating a new, pure, and purifying life to men. The water is the emblem of the new life that springs up within the soul of believers, a life fresh and sparkling, leaping up from the eternal fountains of the divine existence. This life will flow on forever, and widen and deepen like Ezekiel's river, and increase in fullness of power and joy until it unites with the ocean of immortal bliss.

Our Lord closed His life with washing His disciples' feet, a fit conclusion to a life that had by its example been cleansing throughout, and still remains as the grandest corrective of the corrupt examples of the world. Even after death our Lord retained the instructive symbol by giving forth from His pierced heart water as well as blood. John evidently thought this very significant, for when he wrote concerning it he said, "The one who has seen it has testified, and his testimony is true, and that person knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe" (John 19:35). From the Jordan to the cross both the symbol and the substance were with our great Master, while His own personal purity and His gift of life to others proved His mission to be from above.

**and the blood** With Jesus also was *the blood*. This distinguished Him from John the Baptist, who came by water, but Jesus came "not with the water only, but with the water and the blood" (1 John 5:6). We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first He came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Now, the lamb that takes away sin is a slaughtered lamb, a bleeding lamb, so that John saw that He must bleed for human sin at the time when the baptismal waters were upon Him.

Then at last, taking all our sins upon His shoulders in the agony of Gethsemane, the blood bore witness that He was indeed the Lamb of God, and on the tree where He disinterestedly died for His enemies, unselfishly suffering an ignominious doom that He might redeem those who had rejected and scoffed at Him, His invincible love triumphed over death itself. However pure the life He led, if He had never died

He could not have been the Savior appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must flow with the water, the suffering with the serving. The most pious example would not have proved Him to be the divine Shepherd if He had not laid down His life for the sheep. Take away the atonement and Jesus is no more than any other prophet. The essential point of His mission is gone. It is evident that He who was to come was to "put an end to the transgression" and to "make atonement for guilt" (Dan 9:24). This could not be done except by an expiation, and as Jesus has made such an expiation by His own blood, we know Him to be the Christ of God. His blood is the seal of His mission, the very life of his work.

**and the three are in agreement** Therefore every true believer should have the witness of each one, and if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. For instance, persons have arisen who have said the Spirit of God has led them to do this and that. We inquire of them, what are your lives? Does the water bear witness? Are you pardoned? Does the blood testify for you? If these questions cannot be answered, they may rave as they like about the Spirit of God, but the witness to their salvation is open to the gravest suspicion.

## **The Inner Witness Stands Against Flimsy Arguments**

Preaching Themes: Holy Spirit, Philosophy

When they bring out a new book to disprove Genesis, and another to evaporate the atonement, do not be afraid. As long as the gospel is in the world the devil will find somebody to write books against it. Take no notice of them; they cannot stand against facts. A philosopher once wrote a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and a certain reader believed it until he happened to knock his head against the bedpost, and then he abandoned the theory.

When a man feels the power of the Holy Spirit, or the power of the inner life, he does not care to argue. He has a homespun philosophy of facts that answers his purpose better.

**9 If we receive the testimony of people** We are accustomed to receive the testimony of people. David said, "Everyone is a liar" (Psa 116:11), but he spoke in haste. There would be no history if we did not receive the testimony of people. If we neglected human evidence there could be no courts of law, no trading except for ready money, confidence would cease, and the bands that unite the social fabric

would be snapped. We do and must believe the testimony of people as a general rule, and it is only right that we should account witnesses honest until they have proved themselves false. The principle may be pushed too far very readily, and we may take the testimony of people and find ourselves deceived. Still, for all that, the evidence of honest men is weighty, and "by the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be established" (Matt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1).

Now God has been pleased to give us a measure of the testimony of people with regard to His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the witness of such men as the four evangelists and the twelve apostles. These men saw Jesus Christ. Some of them were familiar with Him for years. They saw evidence of His deity, for they saw Him walk the waters and heard Him say to the winds and the waves, "Be quiet! Be silent!" (Mark 4:39) and there was a great calm. These witnesses say that they saw Him heal lepers with a touch and open blind men's eyes, and even raise the dead. Three of them tell us that they were on the mountain of transfiguration with Him and saw His glory, and heard a voice out of heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him" (Matt 17:5).

## **The Importance of Human Testimony to the Things of God**

Preaching Themes: Doubt, Evangelism, Faith

Some years ago there went into a Methodist class meeting a lawyer who was a doubter, but at the same time a man of candid spirit. Sitting down on one of the benches, he listened to a certain number of poor people, his neighbors, whom he knew to be honest people. He heard some 13 or 14 of these persons speak about the power of divine grace in their souls, and about their conversion, and so on. He jotted down the particulars, went home, sat down, and said to himself, "These people all bear witness; I will weigh their evidence." It struck him that if he could get those people into the witness box to testify on his side in any question before a court, he could carry anything. They were persons of different degrees of intellect and education, but they were all persons whom he would like to have as witnesses, persons who could bear cross-examination and by their very tone and manner would win the confidence of the jury. "Very well," he said to himself, "I am as much bound to believe these people about their religious experience as about anything else." He did so, and that led to his believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart.

You see, the testimony of God to us does in a measure come through people, and we are bound to receive it.

**the testimony of God is greater** God is to be believed if all men contradict him. "Let God be true but every human being a liar" (Rom 3:4). One word of God ought to sweep away ten thousand words of men whether they are philosophers of today or sages of antiquity. God's word is to be trusted against them all, for He knows infallibly. He knows His own Son as no one else can; He knows our condition before Him; He knows the way to pardon us. There is nothing in God that could lead Him to err or make a mistake, and it would be blasphemy to suppose that He would mislead us. It would be an insult to Him to suppose that He would willfully mislead His poor creatures by a proclamation of mercy that meant nothing, or by presenting to them a Christ who could not redeem them. The gospel, with God for its witness, cannot be false. Whatever may be the witness against it, the witness of God is greater! We must believe the witness of God.

**because this is the testimony of God that he has testified concerning his Son** What is the testimony of God with regard to Christ? How does He prove to us that Jesus Christ really came into the world to save us? He proves it in three ways, according to the context. God's witnesses are *the Spirit*, the water, and the blood. Whenever God the Holy Ghost is pleased to work, whether in revivals or by individual conversions (the wonderful phenomena wrought by Him that are miracles in the world of mind as astonishing as the miracles of Christ in the world of matter), God is saying by them, "I declare Christ to be my Son and your Savior, for I have sent the Holy Ghost to prove it."

Then *the water*—that is to say, the purifying power of the gospel is also God's witness to the truth of the gospel. If it does not change men's characters when they receive it, it is not true. If it does not purify and produce virtue and holiness, do not believe it. But because God everywhere—among the most savage tribes or among the most refined of mankind—makes the gospel to be a sacred bath of cleansing to the hearts and lives of men, He gives another witness that his Son is really divine and that His gospel is true.

*The blood* also witnesses. Does believing in Jesus Christ do what the blood was said to do, namely, give peace with God through the pardon of sin? Does it or not? Hundreds and thousands all over the world affirm that they had no peace of conscience until they looked to the streaming veins of Jesus. Then they saw how God can be just and yet forgive sin. Wherever God gives peace through the blood, that blood witnesses with the Spirit and the water on God's behalf.

**10 The one who believes in the Son of God** Believing in the Son of God comes before the inner testimony. No one can read these words without seeing that a man

must be a believer before he has the testimony in himself. *The basis of faith is the testimony of God concerning His Son*—the testimony of God as we find it in holy Scripture. I do not believe Christ Jesus to be the Son of God because of anything I feel within myself, but because God Himself declares Him to be such. Neither do I trust my soul with Jesus because of certain emotions felt within, but because God, in the book that I accept as his testimony, declares that He has set forth Jesus to be the propitiation for sin. In the Bible I see that God Himself witnesses that everyone who trusts Jesus is thereby forgiven, accepted, and saved, and therefore I trust Him. We have no other foundation for our faith to rest upon than the witness of God.

Now, *this basis of faith is abundantly sufficient*. Has God said it? Then to ask any confirmation of it is a direct insult to Him, a gratuitous impertinence against the majesty of heaven. Has God said it? Then we are more bound to believe than if all the scientific men in the world for centuries had witnessed to it. Has God said it? We are surer of it than if all the traditions of all nations had handed it down to us. Has God said it? Then we are surer of it than if our reason proved it by mathematical demonstration. Has God said it? Then we are more certain of it than if we saw it with our eyes, for they might be deceived, or than if we heard it with our ears, for they might be imposed upon. Our senses are deceivable, but God is not deceivable. He must be true, and we may wisely cast the weight of our souls upon His faithfulness, and take all the consequences, fully assured that what the Lord has promised He is able also to perform.

## **Expecting the Cure Before Taking the Medicine**

Preaching Themes: Assurance, Doubt, Faith, Revelation

We may not ask for any witness to begin with beyond the testimony of God, nor will any other witness be given. I charge you not to say, "I will believe in God when I obtain the inward witness." No, you are bound to believe in God first, on the sure testimony of His Word. If you believe His Word you shall know the sweets of grace.

To ask for more evidence first is as though a man should say, "Here is a medicine prepared by a physician of great repute, and it is said to be very powerful for driving out the disease from which I suffer. I will take it as soon as I see that I am improving by its means." The man has lost his reason, has he not? He cannot expect even a partial cure until he has taken the medicine. He cannot expect the result to come before the cause. You must take the good Physician's medicine as a matter of faith, and afterward your faith will be increased by the beneficial result.

**has the testimony in himself** The inner witness naturally follows upon faith. And you cannot have this witness apart from faith, because the Holy Ghost never sets His seal to a blank sheet of paper. There must first of all be the writing of faith upon the heart, and then the Spirit of God puts His attesting seal to it. Would you have God the Holy Ghost witness to a falsehood? And yet it would be witnessing to a lie if He gave an inner witness of salvation to a man who is still an unbeliever, and who consequently is condemned already. If you refuse to believe God's Word, how can you think that the Spirit will bear witness of anything in you unless it is to your condemnation? There must be faith going before, and then the witness will follow after.

The inward evidence lies very much this way. First, *a wondrous sense of change* comes over the believer. Having believed in Jesus Christ on the simple evidence of God, there is a work of regeneration performed on him and he feels himself altogether transformed.

Then there is a *wondrous power that goes with the word of God*—not always, but often. Are you not conscious of often feeling when you are reading the Word, or hearing it, as you never did feel when listening to any other form of speech? Get to the foot of the cross, for instance, and look up, and view the flowing of your Savior's precious blood. Do you not feel then as nothing else can make you feel? You are reading a religious book and it has a holy effect on you, but if you reflect you will see that it is only powerful because it is borrowed from the Word of God.

A similar witness is borne by *a sense of being put into our right place*. You were all out of place before, but having believed in Jesus Christ you are put in your right position. You stand in harmony with the divine system, and this you feel could only be effected by the truth, for a lie works to disorder and not to right.

The *deep feeling of peace* that comes to us through believing in Jesus makes us feel quite sure again that He can save and that we are secure in Him. We took God at His word when we had no feeling, but having believed in Jesus Christ we are now conscious of a wonderful rest—"The peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Phil 4:7). We see that we are forgiven, justly forgiven, saved by mercy, but still not to the violation of the justice of God, and therefore we are perfectly at ease.

## **Not Having the Inner Witness**

Preaching Themes: Assurance

You might be the possessor of a large estate, and an adversary might contest your right to it, and you might not be able to find your title deeds. The estate might be yours clearly enough, but those deeds of yours might be mislaid and locked up in a forgotten drawer, and perhaps you might be sorely put to it until the day of trial settled the dispute as to whether it is yours or not.

I believe that many children of God have plenty of witness in their own soul, but they do not have the wisdom to perceive it. They have plenty of witness, but through ignorance or carelessness they do not collect it and refresh themselves with it. They believe they have the witness within themselves, and they will be comforted if they have light enough to know what the witness is, but often through negligence in searching the word of God they have the witness, but cannot discover it.

**The one who does not believe God has made him a liar** They are guilty of this sin who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Savior, the Son of God. Out of heaven God Himself declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17; 17:5). Peter truly said at Pentecost that Jesus of Nazareth was "a man attested to you by God with deeds of power and wonders and signs that God did through him" (Acts 2:22). God says in many ways, "He is my beloved Son," and if you say He is not you make God a liar. That is clear enough.

If you continue to say you cannot believe God and that Christ is not to be trusted, what will happen to you? It is written, "The one who refuses to believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). May you never know what that means, but you will know it as sure as you live if you continue in unbelief. God is not a liar, but if He does not damn the man who dies an unbeliever He will be. Therefore depend upon it that He will do it. If He is false He may let you escape, but if He is true He will cast you into hell. There is nothing else before you.

**because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning his Son** There are some who deny His deity. Over and over in Scripture we are told that Jesus Christ is God "revealed in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). "The Word was God" (John 1:1). "All things in the heavens and on the earth were created by him, things visible and things invisible" (Col. 1:16). He is "called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God" (Isa 9:6). The miracles that Christ wrought, and especially His resurrection from the dead, all prove His deity, the Father bearing witness that He is his equal.

I will pass on. A poor trembling, weeping sinner comes to me, and among other things he says, "My sins are so great that I do not believe they can be pardoned." I meet him this way:

God says, "Even though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white like snow; even though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isa 1:18).

"But my sin is very great indeed."

"The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

"But my transgressions have been exceedingly aggravated."

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of sin his thoughts. And let him return to Yahweh, that he may take pity on him, and to our God, for he will forgive manifold" (Isa 55:7).

"I cannot believe it."

Stand up, then, and tell the Lord so in the plainest manner, "God, you have said you will abundantly pardon, but it is a lie." I challenge you to make that avowal outright, for you are making it in your hearts. It is idle to deny it, for it is so. God says, "I will and I can pardon," and you say He cannot—what is that but accusing the Lord of falsehood?

## Seeing According to Your Eyes

Preaching Themes: Doubt, Faith, Pride, Vision

When a dove flies over a landscape it sees the clear streams and the fields of corn, but when a vulture passes over the same landscape what does it see? A dead horse here and there, a carcass, or a piece of carrion. Everybody sees according to his eyes. A graceless, impure-minded man cannot see purity.

Christ said to the proud Pharisees, "How are you able to believe if you accept glory from one another?" (John 5:44) Their pride stood in the way. In every case in which a man declares concerning the Lord Jesus, "I cannot believe," the difficulty is in himself, not in the facts to be believed or in the evidence of those facts.

**11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son** Our only hope lies in Christ. There is life for us in Christ, and life eternal, if we

only believe in Him. That is the gospel in brief, what Luther would have called a little Bible, containing a condensation of the whole revelation of God.

**12 The one who has the Son has the life** Of course, by "life" here is meant not mere existence or natural life, for we all have that whether we have the Son of God or no. We are all created living souls in the image of the first Adam, and continue in life until the Lord recalls the breath from our nostrils. The life here intended is spiritual life, the life received at the new birth, by which we perceive and enter into the heavenly kingdom, come under new and spiritual laws, are moved by new motives, and exist in a new world.

By the term "has the Son" we understand possessing the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith appropriates the finished work of Jesus. We trust in Christ, and Christ becomes ours. As the result of grace in our souls, we choose the Lord Jesus as the ground of our dependence, and then we accept him as the Lord of our hearts, the guide of our actions, and supreme delight of our souls. The one who has the Son, then, is a man who is trusting alone in Jesus, in whom Jesus Christ rules and reigns. Such a man is most surely the possessor of spiritual and eternal life at the present moment. It is not said "shall have life"—he *has* it, he enjoys it now, he is at this hour a quickened spirit. God has breathed into him a new life, by which he is made a partaker of the divine nature and is one of the seed according to promise, and he has this life by virtue of his having received the Son of God to be his all.

## **Faith Is the Mark on the Battlefield**

Preaching Themes: Assurance, Comfort, Encouragement, Faith

See the battlefield, strewn with men who have fallen in the terrible conflict! Many have been slain; many more are wounded. There they lie in ghastly confusion, the dead all stark and stiff, covered with their own crimson, and the wounded faint and bleeding, unable to leave the spot where they have fallen. Surgeons have gone over the field rapidly, ascertaining which are corpses beyond the reach of mercy's healing hand and which are men who are faint with loss of blood. Each living man has a paper fastened conspicuously on his breast, and when the soldiers are sent out with the ambulances to gather up the wounded, they do not need to stay and judge which may be living and which may be dead. They see a mark on the living, and they bear them to the hospital where their wounds may be dressed.

Now faith in the Son is God's infallible mark, which He has set upon every poor wounded sinner whose bleeding heart has received the Lord Jesus. Though he faints and feels as lifeless as though he were mortally wounded,

yet he most surely lives if he believes, for the possession of Jesus is the token that cannot deceive. Faith is God's mark witnessing in unmistakable language—"this soul lives."

It is a great mercy that having the Son is abiding evidence. "The one who has the Son *has* the life." I know what it is to see every other evidence I ever gloried in go drifting down the stream far out of sight. It is frequently my inward experience to see sin and unworthiness marked upon everything I have ever done for God. As far as He has done any good thing by me or in me, it lives, but often as I look back on my years of ministry and see multitudes of sermons, and prayers, and other efforts, I have thought of them all as being less than nothing and vanity, tainted, and marred, and spoiled by my personal imperfections. I could not depend on them to make so much as a feather's weight toward my salvation. When you begin to doubt your inward graces and to judge all your past life and find it wanting, it is sweet even then to say, "One thing I know: I rest in Jesus."

**the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life** That is, he does not have spiritual life. The sentence of death is recorded against him in the book of God. His natural life is spared him in this world, but he is condemned already and is in the eye of the law dead while he lives. The unbeliever has no spiritual life; he neither laments his soul's need nor rejoices that it may be supplied. He lives without prayer and he knows nothing of secret fellowship with God because he has no inward life to produce these priceless things.

## Application

### ***By Water and By Blood***

Jesus Christ must come to you "by blood" or else He will never come to you "by water." Christ never gives a man holiness of life unless that man accepts Him as the great propitiation for sin. If you ask how Christ can come to you by water and by blood, the only way that I know is the one that I have pointed out to you over and over again. It is this: You are a sinner, lost and undone; Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. To do this, He had to take the sinner's place, bear the sinner's guilt, and suffer the penalty that the sinner deserved to suffer. "He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his wounds we were healed" (Isa 53:5).

And rest assured that there never was a sinner who trusted Christ and then was told that he had no right to trust Him. He Himself said, "The one who comes to me I will never throw out" (John 6:37), and He will not cast you out if you come to Him. Can you believe that His blood was shed for you? Do you dare to rest your soul's salvation on the great work of which He said, "It is finished," before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost (John 19:30)? Will you now trust Christ as your Substitute and Savior?

If you have received Christ in this way as coming to you by blood, I feel sure that you will also believe that He has come to you by water, to purify you from all defilement. Therefore, you will not any longer knowingly and willfully continue in sin. The gratitude that you must feel in your heart for all that Christ has done for you will constrain you to walk before Him in holiness and humility and to seek to obey His will at all times.

### ***Never Substitute the Inner Testimony for the Word's Testimony***

Excellent as the inner witness is, it must never be put in the place of the divine witness in the Word. Why not? Because it would insult the Lord and be contrary to His rule of salvation by faith. Moreover, it is not always with us in equal clearness; or rather, we cannot equally discern it. If the brightest Christian begins to base his faith upon his experience and his attainments, he will be in bondage before long.

Build on what God has said, not on your inward joys. Accept these precious things not as foundation stones but as pinnacles of your spiritual temple. Let the main thing be to believe because God has spoken. If any other evidence comes to your net, accept it, but go you on fishing by faith: faith in God, in God's naked Word.

Then, if the Lord's hand should turn, and in providence you should be stripped bare like Job so that you sit on a dunghill covered with sore boils, you will be able to say, "I believed that God loved me when he gave me children; I believed God loved me when I had sheep and oxen; I believed that God loved me when I had camels and donkeys; still these were not the grand reasons of my faith, but God Himself. Therefore I still believe that He loves me, now that every child is dead and all my property is swept away, and I myself am sick. 'Though he kill me, I will hope in him' " (Job 13:15). That is faith. God grant you to have faith that can sing, "Though the fig tree does not blossom ... and there is no cattle in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in Yahweh" (Hab 3:16-17). Though there are no evidences of grace in me, though there are no joys, though there is a broken peace, though there is sin to mourn over, though there is hardness of heart to stagger me, yet still I took the Lord Jesus as a sinner's Savior at first, and I take him as a sinner's Savior still. I did not trust Him at

first because I was a saint, and now I will not doubt Him because I find out more and more that I am a sinner. But I will still go to Him just as I am and rest on the great salvation that God has provided for me.

### ***The Unbeliever Lost Because of Unbelief***

Not only will the unbeliever be lost, but he will be lost by his unbelief. Thus says the Lord, "The one who does not believe has already been judged." Why? "Because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God" (John 3:18). Has he not committed a great deal else that will condemn him? Yes, a thousand other sins are upon him, but justice looks for the most flagrant offense to write it as a superscription over his condemned head. It selects this monster sin and writes, "*Judged, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.*"

When the Spirit of God came into the world to convince men of sin, he began by convincing them of the greatest of all. Which did He choose as the most glaring? "Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me" (John 16:9). I am only telling you what I find in the Scriptures. His word is sharper than a two-edged sword, and I ask Him to make it cut to your very marrow—to wound and kill, so that afterward Christ may make alive. By your reason that is yet left to you, by your love for yourselves, by heaven and by hell, by the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and by the truth of God, I entreat you accept Jesus. May the Holy Ghost go with my entreaties that your souls may relent, that your stony hearts may melt before the cross, and you may receive Jesus Christ to be your all in all this day.

### ***The Living Among the Dead***

Since the living are constrained to live among the dead, since the children of God are mixed up by providence with the heirs of wrath, what manner of persons should they be? In the first place, let us take care that we do not become contaminated by the corruption of the dead. You who have the Son of God, take care that you are not injured by those who do not have the Son. I have heard of some professed Christians wanting to see the ways of the ungodly, going into low places of amusement to judge for themselves. Such conduct is dangerous and worse. I would feel very much afraid to go into hell, to put my head between the lion's jaws for the sake of looking down his throat. I would think I was guilty of a gross presumption if I went into the company of the lewd and the profane to see what they were doing. I would fear that perhaps it might turn out that I was only a mere professing Christian, and so should taint myself with the dead matter of the sin of those with whom I mingled and perish in my iniquity. " 'Come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord, 'and do not touch what is unclean' " (2 Cor 6:17). The resort of the

ungodly is not the place for you. "Follow me," said Christ, "and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt 8:22).

If we must in this life, in a measure, mingle with the dead, let us take care that we never allow the supremacy of the dead to be acknowledged over the living. It would be a strange thing if the dead were to rule the living. Yet sometimes I have seen the dead have the dominion of this world. They have set the fashion, and living Christians have followed. The carnal world has said, "This is the way of trade!" and the Christian man has replied, "I will follow the custom." Christian, this must not be. You might say, "I must do as others do, for you know we must live." This also is not true, for there is no necessity for our living. There is a very great necessity for our dying sooner than living, if we cannot live without doing wrong. Christian, you must never permit corruption to conquer grace. By God's grace, if you get at all under the power of custom, you must cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me?" (Rom 7:24) You must wrestle until you conquer, and cry, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

What I think we should do toward dead souls is this—we should pity them. When the early Christians dwelled in the catacombs where they could not go about without seeing graves, they must have had strange thoughts arising in their minds. Now, you are in a similar plight. You cannot walk through London without thinking, "Most of those I meet are dead in sin." Some of these dead souls live in your own house. When you go out to work, you have to stand at the same bench with spiritually dead men. You cannot turn aside from your daily labor to enter the house of God without meeting the dead even there. Should this not make us pray for them: "Eternal Spirit, quicken them! They cannot have life unless they have the Son of God. Bring them to receive the Son of God"?

In connection with such prayer, be diligent to deliver the quickening message. The quickening message is, "Believe and live." "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is fathered by God" (1 John 5:1). Should you living ones not be perpetually repeating the great life-word, depending on the Holy Spirit to put energy into it? Seek to win souls, and from this day, separating yourselves from the world as to its maxims and its customs, plunge into the very thick of it where you can serve your Master, plucking brands from the burning and winning souls from going down to the pit.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Spurgeon, C. (2014). [Spurgeon Commentary: 1 John](#). (E. Ritzema, Ed.) (1 Jn 5:4–12). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.